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MEDITATIE

Zoodanig Een Hoogepriester

Want zoodanig een hoogepriester betaamde ons, heilig, onnoozel, onbesmet, afgescheiden van de zondaren, en hooger dan de hemelen geworden.

Hebr. 7:26.

Zulk een hoogepriester!

Dat is, een hoogepriester, die volkomenlijk kan zalig maken degenen, die door Hem tot God gaan, en die altijd leeft om voor hen te bidden. . . .

Zulk een hoogepriester betaamde ons.

Aan zoodanig een hoogepriester hadden wij behoefte. Hij past precies bij onzen toestand. Niemand anders had onze hoogepriester kunnen zijn. Er mocht aan dat "volkomenlijk zalig maken" niets haperen of ontbreken. Hij moet het alleen doen. En Hij moet het geheel doen, ten einde toe. Ook al zou Hij slechts in het allerminste falen, Hij zou onze hoogepriester niet kunnen zijn.

Volkomen moet Hij zalig maken, degenen, die door Hem tot God gaan. Maar juist daarom moet Hij een hoogepriester zijn, die ook is heilig, onnoozel, onbesmet, afgescheiden van de zondaren, en hooger dan de hemelen geworden.

Zulk een hoogepriester was ons noodig.
De Christus Gods!

Gezegende hoogepriester!

Hij maakt volkomen zalig!

Zalig maakt Hij hen, die tot God gaan door Hem!

O, wie zalig wil worden, moet tot God gaan! Want bij God is het leven!

Wie ver van U de weelde zoekt,
Vergaat eerlang, en wordt vervloekt.
Gij roeit hen uit, die afhoereeren,
En U den trotschen nek toekeeren.
Maar 't is mij goed, mijn zaligst lot,
Nabij te wezen bij mijn God.
'k Vertrouw op Hem geheel en al,
Den Heer, Wiens werk ik roemen zal.

En de zondaar is ver van God!

Ach neen, niet in den zin, dat het hem ooit zou gelukken om God te ontvliesen. Dat is voor eeuwig onmogelijk, onmogelijk ook tot in de hel toe! Hij kan God wel den trotschen nek toekeeren. Hij kan wel zeggen in zijn verdwaasd hart, dat er geen God is. Hij kan wel weigeren om met God te rekenen, om Zijn opperhooge souvereiniteit te erkennen, om Hem te dienen en te danken. Maar ook voor hem, den verwaten zondaar blijft het waar, dat hij in God leeft en zich beweegt en bestaat; dat God hem doorgrondt en kent, zijn zitten en zijn opstaan weet, van verre zijne gedachten verstaat, zijn gaan en zijn liggen omringt, hem van achteren en van voren bezet, Zijne machtige en zware hand op hem zet.

Dat is juist de namelooze ellende van den goddelooze!

Nergens kan hij zich wenden, of daar is God. Geen plaats kan hij in het gansch heelal vinden, waar hij zich zou kunnen verbergen van voor Gods aangezicht. Al zou hij ten hemel opvaren, daar omringt hem God. Al zou hij zich in de diepte der hel bedden, ook daar zou hij God ontmoeten. De duisternis des nachts kan hem voor Gods oog niet bedekken, want voor den Allerhoogste is de nacht licht als de dag.

En toch is hij ver van God!

Banneling is hij!

In Gods huis heeft hij geen plaats. Van Gods woning is hij verbannen. En toch daar in Gods woning, in het huis van Gods verbond alleen is er voor den mensch leven en zaligheid. Op dat verbond, op dat leven der vriendschap is hij in zijn diepste bestaan

aangelegd. Want God formeerde hem zoo, dat hij er op aangelegd was, om Gods beeld te dragen, om den Heere zijnen God recht te kennen, Hem van harte lief te hebben, Hem te dienen, Zijne gunst te smaken, en in de gemeenschap Zijner vriendschap de waarachtige zaligheid te smaken. En die zaligheid heeft hij niet geacht. In moedwillige ongehoorzaamheid keerde hij zich af van den God zijns levens, om ver van God de weelde te zoeken, maakte zich Gods gunst onwaardig en des doods schuldig, werd uit Gods huis verbannen, om als een kind des toorns in de duisternis rond te dwalen, zonder uitkomst, en met geen ander uitzicht dan de eeuwige dood in de buitenste duisternis!

En de zaligheid is nog altijd bij God!

Ja, toch; Hij is de God der volkomene zaligheid! Want, schoon de eerste mensch Gods huis en de zaligheid van Gods verbond verachtte, God had wat beters over Zijn volk voorzien. Schoon de mensch Zijn verbond met voeten trad, Hij handhaafde Zijn verbond. En de overtreding des eersten menschen moest Hem dienen in het bereiden van een beter, een schooner, een zaliger huis dan in het eerste paradijs gezien werd, of ook ooit had kunnen gezien worden. En dat heerlijker huis bouwt Hij. En straks wordt dat huis in al zijn schoonheid geopenbaard, als de tabernakel Gods bij de menschen zijn zal. Daar is de gemeenschap volkomen. Daar wordt Hij gezien aangezicht tot aangezicht; daar zullen de inwoners Hem kennen, zooals zij ook gekend zijn. Daar is de dood niet meer, noch rouw, noch gekrijt. Daar wischt Hij alle tranen van de oogen af. Daar wandelt Hij onder de Zijnen, en noemt Hij hen eeuwiglijk zonen en dochteren!

En nu moet de zondaar, van nature ver van God, naar Hem terug, naar dat eeuwig Huis!

Want bij God, en bij Hem alleen is nog altijd de zaligheid!

Naar God te gaan is zalig te worden!

Doch hoe zal hij ooit naar God kunnen gaan? Of is het dan niet voor eeuwig onmogelijk, dat de mensch, die eens zich van God afkeert, Zijne gunst verachtend, weer tot Hem zou terugkeeren? Is de weg voor den zondaar tot God dan niet de weg van Zijne onkreukbare gerechtigheid? En eischt dan niet het recht Gods, dat de ziel, die zondigt sterven zal? En is er dan wel een andere weg naar huis, dan die der volkomene genoegdoening? En is de weg der volkomene genoegdoening dan een andere dan die, welke door de diepte der hel leidt? . . .

De weg naar huis is de weg door de hel!

En zal iemand metterdaad kunnen spreken van een weg door de hel, dan zal hij vrijwilliglijk dien weg moeten zoeken, om Gods wil, uit liefde tot Hem, en dan zal hij ten einde toe de smarten der hel moeten dragen in volkomene gehoorzaamheid!

Hij, die *Neen* tot den Allerhoogste zei in het paradijs, zal nu *Ja* moeten zeggen in de hel, om weer thuis te komen!

En de zondaar is daartoe niet alleen volkomen onmachtig, maar ook volstrekt onwillig!

Als de zaligheid voor hem daarin ligt, dat hij naar God ga, en daar alleen ligt dan is hij, de bloote zondaar, voor eeuwig verloren!

Hij moet gered worden!

Hij heeft behoefte aan iemand, die hem volkomenlijk kan redden, zalig maken: *door wien hij den weg der hel kan en wil bewandelen naar God toe!*

En dat is de Christus Gods! Hij kan volkomen zalig maken degenen, die *door Hem* tot God gaan! Hij toch is de Zoon Gods in het vleesch. En Hij is door den weg des doods en der hel tot God gegaan, den weg bereidend voor ons. Hij ging dien weg vrijwilliglijk, uit liefde tot den Vader, en tot de Zijnen. En Hij bewandelde dien diepen en vreeselijken weg in volkomene gehoorzaamheid ten einde toe. Daarom kon ook de hel Hem niet houden. Hij ging door. En Hij is door den Vader gerechtvaardigd, toen Hij Hem uit de dooden opwekte.

En wij gaan tot God door Hem.

Want ook wij moeten den weg van Gods recht langs, dien diepen en vreeselijken weg, dien weg der hel. Doch wij gaan nu niet alleen, niet op eigen verantwoordelijkheid, niet persoonlijk.

Door Hem!

Want toen Hij door de diepte der hel tot God ging, waren wij in Hem, en droeg Hij ons in Zichzelf door den dood tot God.

En door het geloof zijn we Hem ingelijfd, nemen we Hem en al Zijn werk, Zijn lijden en sterven en opstanding, Zijne gerechtigheid en Zijn leven, aan, eigenen we ons alles toe, wat in Hem is, en gaan we met vrijmoedigheid tot God, zoo zeker, dat Hij ons zal aannemen, en een plaats geven in Zijne eeuwige woning, als hadden we in eigen persoon den weg door de hel in volkomene gehoorzaamheid zelf bewandeld!

Door Hem tot God!

Maar dan moet Hij ook volkomen kunnen zalig maken degenen, die alzoo door Hem tot God gaan!

Hij alleen moet alles volbracht hebben en volbrengen, wat tot onze zaligheid van noode is. Hij moet zijn onze gerechtigheid, onze waardigheid om tot God te gaan; en Hij moet ons ook bekwaam maken om in Gods huis te wonen, en in Zijne gemeenschap te verkeer.

Uit diepste ellende moet Hij ons kunnen opvoeren tot de hoogste heerlijkheid.

Alleen door Hem gaan wij tot God.

De volkomen Zaligmaker!

Betamelijke hoogepriester!

Want wel waarlijk moest Hij onze hogepriester zijn, om ons alzoo volkomen zalig te maken.

Immers, zullen wij door Hem tot God gaan, en niet omkomen, dan is het beslist eisch, dat Hij van God de volmacht ontvange om ons voor Gods aangezicht te vertegenwoordigen. De hogepriester onder het oude verbond stond aan het hoofd van de geheele priester-schaar, deze, en door haar geheel het priesterlijk volk van Israel voor God vertegenwoordigend. Daartoe was hij van God verordineerd, opdat hij de dingen zou doen, die bij God te doen waren. Maar al de hogepriesters der oude bedeeing waren slechts typen en schaduwen van Hem, Die over het geheele huis Gods gesteld was, van eeuwigheid gezelfd om te staan aan het hoofd van een gansch zeer groote gemeente.

Zoodanig een hogepriester betaamde ons, die ons volkomenlijk kon zalig maken in het gaan tot God, maar die juist daarom hogepriester moest zijn.

Juist als hogepriester mocht en kon Hij voor ons tot God gaan. Zoo deed de hogepriester onder de oude bedeeing, wanneer hij althans eens per jaar inging in het binnenste heiligdom, den weg besprengend met bloed van het offerdier, dat in 't voorhof geslacht was. Doch ook in dit zijn doen was hij slechts wijzend op Hem, Die te komen stond, en Die, niet het bloed van stieren en bokken, maar Zijn eigen bloed zou indragen in het hemelsch heiligdom, niet met handen gemaakt. Zoodanig een hogepriester betaamde ons, die niet slechts in een aardsch heiligdom, maar in den eeuwigen tabernakel Gods kon ingaan voor ons, en dat, niet om Zelf terug te keeren, maar om eeuwiglijk in Gods huis te blijven, en ons allen tot Zich te trekken!

Die eeuwig leeft om voor ons te bidden!

Want ook dat behoorde tot de roeping des hogepriesters, dat hij voor het volk zou bidden. En daarom ging hij dan ook het binnenste heiligdom des tempels in met reukwerk van 't gouden altaar, ontstoken met vuur van 't brandofferaltaar genomen. Maar ook daarin was hij slechts een flauw en zeer onvolmaakt beeld van Hem, Die te komen stond. Zijn reukwerk vervloog, en zijn gebed had in zichzelf geen kracht. Maar deze hogepriester, de Christus Gods, is eenmaal in de hoogste hemelen ingegaan, om altijd voor het aangezicht Gods ten onzen behoeve te staan, en eeuwiglijk onze Voorbidder bij den Vader te zijn!

Zoodanig een hogepriester betaamde ons!

Want Hij moest ons immers kunnen zegenen. Ja ook de hogepriester der oude bedeeing had de opdracht om het volk te zegenen met opgeheven handen. Doch hij kon dat slechts uit kracht der belofte, dat een betere hogepriester zou komen, Die eeuwig leeft om voor het volk te bidden, zeggende: "Vader, Ik wil, dat waar Ik ben, ook die bij Mij Zijn, die Gij Mij gegeven hebt!"

Hij is machtig om ons te zegenen, zoo te zegenen,

dat wij door Hem tot God mogen gaan, begeeren te gaan, kunnen gaan!

Want Hij heeft de belofte des Heiligen Geestes ontvangen.

En is Zelf de levendmakende Geest geworden!

En Hij deelt Zichzelven en al Zijne weldaden, gerechtigheid en kennis, licht en leven, aan ons mede!

Genade voor genade!

Gezegende hogepriester!

Zoodanig een hogepriester!

Zulk een, en geen ander, betaamde!

Een hogepriester, die ons volkomenlijk kon zalig maken, omdat Hij Zelf voor ons is ingegaan in het hemelsch heiligdom; Zelf eeuwig leeft om voor ons te bidden; en Zelf ook met Zijne zegening ons kan vervullen!

Maar om zulk een hogepriester te kunnen zijn, moest Hij tevens zijn: Heilig, onnoozel, onbesmet. . . .

Afgescheiden van de zondaren. . . .

En hooger dan de hemelen geworden!

De Zondelooze temidden van zondaren! *Heilig*, dat is, zonder zonde in Zijne betrekking tot God, volkomen Hem toegewijd, zoodat het Zijne spijs was om den wil des Vaders te doen, en de ijver van Gods huis Hem verteerde. Of hoe zou Hij anders den diepen weg der hel en des doods ten einde toe hebben kunnen bewandelen in volkomene en vrijwillige gehoorzaamheid der liefde? Onnoozel, dat is, volgens de beteekenis van het oorspronkelijke woord, zonder boosheid in betrekking tot de menschen, zonder eenige begeerte of neiging om hen kwaad te doen. Of hoe zou Hij anders hebben kunnen lijden van de menschen zonder ook maar een hand tot wedervergelding uit te steken. En hoe zou Hij anders, zelf op het oogenblik, dat men de wreede nagels Hem door de handen sloeg, voor de overtreders hebben kunnen bidden? Onbesmet, zonder persoonlijke schuld of onreinheid. Of hoe zou Hij anders het volmaakte offer, en dat voor anderen hebben kunnen brengen?

Afgescheiden van de zondaren! Neen, niet in plaatselijken zin, want Hij was midden onder hen, een vriend van tollenaars en zondaren; maar wel in principieelen zin, zoodat Hij niet slechts zonder zonde was, maar de zonde Hem ook niet kon raken of bezoedelen.

En hooger dan de hemelen geworden!

Of hoe zou Hij ons anders kunnen vervullen met Zijne eeuwige en hemelsche zegeningen, en ons allen tot Zich trekken!

Zoodanige hogepriester betaamde ons!

Rijke Heiland!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

As To Our Moral Obligation

Of all the arguments and would-be arguments the opponents of the movement for schools of our own wherever possible adduce for their position, that concerning the moral obligation to the existing schools, is the weakest of all.

As far as I can see, it is in this argument that they reveal that they are not interested in school education of our children along strictly Protestant Reformed lines. They do not admit the necessity of Protestant Reformed instruction also in the schools. They cannot see that the school has anything to do with Protestant Reformed principles. That the principles adopted by the Christian Reformed Churches, because of which adoption and consequent action against us we have become separated, are so serious that they affect the basis of education, they do not see. Whatever may separate us as churches, in the sphere of education we can unite again, which means that we can safely submit our children to the influence of a Christian Reformed education in the schools.

That the opposing brethren are not Protestant Reformed I do not state here at all.

That they are not interested in strictly Protestant Reformed instruction for our children and youth also in and through the medium of the school, and that, therefore, they do not see the seriousness of the difference and separation caused by the "Three Points" with respect to education,—this, as I see it, is the clear implication of their argument of our moral obligation to the existing schools.

Consider the argument for a moment.

It runs as follows: *We have no moral right to organize our own school movement and to establish our own schools as Protestant Reformed people, until we have done our utmost, and exhausted every means at our command, to improve the existing schools.*

According to this argument, let it be noted, we not only have a moral obligation to the existing Christian schools, but this obligation makes it impossible for us in the meantime to establish our own schools, or even to make preparations for the establishment of our own schools. Until the situation has proved to be absolutely hopeless, we must continue to cooperate, and refrain from organizing our own school societies. And until the hopelessness of the attempt has become quite plain, our children must continue to attend the existing schools.

Now, I deny this entire argument.

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I deny that, apart from the question whether the existing schools can be improved or not, a Protestant Reformed group of people does not have the moral right to establish schools of their own, or that there can possibly rest upon them any moral obligation to the existing schools that must restrain them from organizing their own movement.

Why may not the Protestant Reformed people, pray, have their own system of education from top to bottom, something for which undersigned has argued almost from the very beginning of our separate existence as churches?

What moral obligation to any existing schools could restrain them from striving for this ideal, at least?

But to this I hope to come back later.

The point I want to make now is that, apart from all other considerations, the above argument of the opponents of the movement to establish schools of our own wherever possible tacitly denies that our Protestant Reformed principles have any real significance for school education, and proceeds on the assumption that a Protestant Reformed school education is not necessary.

Cooperation as long as possible, is their slogan.

But what does this cooperation mean, as far as we, Protestant Reformed people, are concerned?

It means that we may, perhaps, protest against certain evils found in the existing schools, such as the singing of Arminian hymns, the introduction of plays and drama's, the teaching of evolutionistic conceptions or of grossly Arminian tenets, encouragement of movie attendance, etc. Perhaps, if we are strong enough we may even demand that the doctrine of common grace shall not be taught or mentioned in the particular school with which we cooperate and to which our children are sent. We may request that the "Three Points" shall be carefully avoided.

But granted that all this might be done, and might be done successfully, which in by far the majority of cases would be impossible, this would surely be the limit of the influence we might exert on the existing schools.

It is plain that we could not possibly ask that the instruction in the existing schools shall follow Protestant Reformed lines.

And this is impossible, not merely because we are usually but few in number, and must suffer defeat if the matter were brought to a vote, but because we have no right to make such a demand. It would be contrary to the idea of cooperation.

This is quite important.

It means not only that in Biblical instruction all questions concerning particular and common grace, concerning total depravity and the ability or inability of man to do any good before God, must be carefully avoided; but it also implies that the same attitude of

neutrality be assumed in the instruction in many other subjects that pertain to our view of the world, history, civil government, the unions, and other matters.

It should be quite plain from all this, that the opponents of the movement to establish schools of our own, by their argument as to our moral obligation to cooperate with the existing schools, do not care for, are not interested in, do not see the need of specific Protestant Reformed education for our children.

This is the very least that can be said.

At the very best they consider the schools institutions that may be satisfied with some general Christian instruction.

As soon as we are not satisfied with this, but look upon the school as a matter of specific principle, the sole conclusion anyone can possibly draw is that we must establish our own schools.

And as to our moral right to do so, I hope to make a few remarks next time, D. V.

H. H.

The C.L.A. and The Strike Weapon

From *The Christian Labor Herald* we learn that the annual meeting of the C.L.A. will have to consider and decide upon a proposal from one of its locals to eliminate the strike clause from its constitution.

In the May issue of *The Christian Herald* there occurs an article by a certain Frank Rottier in favor of the proposal and arguing for its adoption by the annual meeting, while in replying to that contribution the editor, Mr. J. Gritter, voices his opposition to it.

It is not my purpose to review the arguments pro and con, and to weigh their value. Briefly stated, they are that Mr. Rottier considers the use of force in a labor dispute un-Christian and contrary to Scripture: the battle for righteousness and the kingdom of God cannot be fought by physical force or coercion; while Mr. Gritter defends the position that a Christian not only may, but it is called to create better and more just social conditions by the use of force, and all the power at our command.

There is, however, especially one point to which I wish to call attention at this time. I have had in mind to bring up this particular point before, especially when a discussion was carried on about it in our paper, in which Mr. Gritter defended the same position he now takes in his answer to Mr. Rottier. I am referring to Mr. Gritter's explanation of the strike as favored and conceived of by the C.L.A. He writes:

"It is evident from the article of Mr. Rottier that he still does seem to grasp that the C.L.A.'s position in regard to the use of the strike weapon is *not* the position taken by the neutral organizations. When we use the term 'strike' we do not have in mind vindictive, revengeful action. Absolutely not. The C.L.A. does not propagate revolution. Its actions are always reformatory. And reformatory action, which is militant action, not passive non-activity, may demand, when a great injustice is being done, as a last resort, after every other means to secure justice has failed, that there be a collective cessation of work."

There are several expressions in the above paragraph with which I might express disagreement. Above all would I disagree with Mr. Gritter on what he calls "passive non-activity." I am ready to take the stand that what he considers "passive non-activity" is purest activity in the highest sense of the word, and, for that reason the only effective reformatory action.

But I must let this pass in order to concentrate on the one point in which I am now interested: the C.L.A.'s specific and distinctive conception of the strike.

I have read Mr. Gritter on this point before, and I have heard him talk on the subject. And I must confess that I, too, am in the same class as Mr. Rottier: I have never yet grasped the difference between the C.L.A. and the worldly unions in regard to the strike.

The difference cannot be that the strike according to the conception of the worldly unions is revolutionary, while according to the C.L.A. it is reformatory. The worldly union would never admit this. It cannot be that the worldly union means to strike as the only means to improve conditions, while the C.L.A. means to use this weapon only as a last resort. The worldly union also officially claims to use the strike weapon only when all other means are exhausted.

The difference must be this, that while the worldly unions consider the strike a temporary cessation of work of such a nature that the strikers retain their claim to the job, the C.L.A. regards the strike simply as a cessation of work: the strikers quit their job and lay no further claim to it. As I understand Mr. Gritter, this is the point he has been trying to make clear.

Now, with regard to this I have two questions.

The first is this: is this actually the conception of the strike favored by the C.L.A.? When its members organize a strike, do they simply quit their job? If so, why picketing? Why do they not seek another job? Why do they try to "dissuade" other men from taking their relinquished job? Frankly, I do not believe the C.L.A. practices what Mr. Gritter preaches. I believe also that the C.L.A. considers the strike as a temporary cessation of work to compel the employer to

grant their demands, so that they may then return to their job.

And my second question is this: Is the conception which Mr. Gritter offers of the strike the official view of the C.L.A.? Can it be found anywhere black and white as their official expression? If so, where? It is not in the constitution. Would it not be very desirable, if this is really the strike-conception of the C.L.A. officially, that a clear cut clause to this effect were inserted in the by laws?

I would like to have light on these questions.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

OF MAN'S REDEMPTION

Lord's Day XII

3.

Christ Our Chief Prophet (cont.).

As God's prophet, Christ is far more excellent than the first man Adam in paradise. For He is the Person of the Son of God, Who is eternally in the bosom of the Father, the eternal Word, the express image of His substance, the effulgence of the Father's glory, God of God, Who knows the Father with an infinitely perfect knowledge. It is this Person of the Son of God Who from eternity to eternity is essentially and truly God, assumed the flesh and blood of the children, took upon Himself our nature, and united that human nature with the divine in His own Person. In Him, therefore, there is the closest possible union of God and man, the most intimate communion between the divine and the human natures. In Him the Person of the Son, very God, lived with us, walked with us, talked with us, thought in our mind, willed with our will, had human desires and passions, human love and human sympathies, spoke to us by human mouth and in human language. Is not He the most perfect Prophet conceivable? Who could be more excellently equipped to be our "chief Prophet and Teacher," and who could be more able than He to reveal unto us "the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption?" He knows the Father as none other

could know Him. His human consciousness is enlightened and filled with the knowledge of God from within. Because of the union of the divine and human natures the knowledge of God in Christ is direct, and in the highest sense of the word perfect. In the darkness of the world He is the light. Over against the lie of the false prophet He is the truth, the faithful witness. He glorifies the Father over against a blaspheming world of sin. And to His own He imparts the knowledge of the God of their salvation.

Thus He functioned in the old dispensation through the prophets and shadows.

As our Prophet He spoke to us face to face in the days of His flesh, and in His public ministry He revealed the Father through His person, His word, and His work.

But His prophetic office does not terminate with His death and resurrection, is not limited to His ministry among us in the flesh. On the contrary, He is our eternal Prophet. For He died and was raised from the dead; and He was exalted at the right hand of God, and received the promise of the Holy Spirit, and in that Spirit He returned to us on the day of Pentecost to dwell in the Church, and abide with her for ever. And He is with us as our chief Prophet, our Teacher, Who instructs us by His Spirit and Word. For a time after His exaltation at the right hand of God, He gave to His Church apostles, that through them He might more fully reveal unto us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption. Then, when His revelation is complete, He functions as our chief Prophet in and through the Church, by His Spirit and in and through the Word preached according to the Holy Scriptures. There is no instruction, there is no preaching of the Word, there is no exhortation or consolation, except of Him, our only and chief Prophet. And even unto all ages of ages it will be of Him and through Him as our Prophet that we shall receive and rejoice in the perfect knowledge of the God of our salvation.

4.

Melchisedec.

The Catechism continues to expound for us the meaning of the name Christ by calling our attention to the priesthood of our Lord. He is not only our chief Prophet and Teacher, but also "our only High Priest, who by the one sacrifice of his body, has redeemed us, and makes continual intercession with the Father for us." Here again, we notice that the Heidelberg views the priesthood of Christ exclusively from the viewpoint of His work of redemption. As such Christ was priest according to the order of Aaron, for also the high priest of the old dispensation sacrificed and made intercession for the people. And this view is perfectly correct. Only, the priesthood of

Christ was not limited to the order of Aaron. He was more than Israel's high priest. And this greater excellency of Christ's priesthood is expressed in the Scriptural statement that He was a priest "after the order of Melchizedek." Even though the Catechism does not directly refer to this aspect of the priesthood of Christ, we will do well to ask ourselves the question: what is the meaning of this statement?

That this is an important question should be evident from the repeated emphasis of Scripture on this excellency of the priesthood of Christ. That the Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchisedec was already revealed in the old dispensation. For David spoke concerning Him: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Ps. 110:1-4. We may notice at once that the priesthood of Christ is here presented as an everlasting priesthood, and that it is closely connected with His royal exaltation to power and glory.

This higher and more glorious aspect of the priesthood of our Lord is emphasized, too, in the Word of God through the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews. For he writes: "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason thereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sins. And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day I have begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Heb. 5:1-6. In these words the divine ordination of Christ as priest is evidently emphasized. The same is true of vs. 10 of the same chapter: "Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec." He is our forerunner, Who has entered into the inner sanctuary in heaven, "made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Heb. 6:20. For perfection did not come through the Levitical priesthood. If it had, there would have been no need "that another priest should arise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron." 7:11. It is, moreover, evident that Christ, of whom these things are spoken, is not from the tribe of Levi, as was a requisite for the Aaronitic priest-

hood, but from another tribe, of which no man served at the altar. "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Here again, the idea receives emphasis that the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec is everlasting. Besides, in distinction from other priests, Christ was made high priest with an oath, by which it is manifest that He was made surety of a better covenant. "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much Jesus was made a surety of a better testament." 7:20-22.

The fact, therefore, that Christ was a priest, not after the Aaronitic order, but after the similitude of Melchisedec, is strongly emphasized in Scripture.

Before we try to answer the question just what is implied in this for the priesthood of Christ, it may help us to ask: who was this Melchisedec, and how must his excellent and peculiar priesthood be explained?

In the Hebrews we are told many things may be said of this Melchisedec, things that are hard to be uttered. For he was king of Salem, priest of the most high God, and he blessed Abraham as the latter returned from the slaughter of the kings. And Abraham acknowledged his superior priesthood by giving him tithes of all. Moreover, it is explained that his name denotes him as a king of righteousness, while the fact that he was king of Salem designates that he was king of peace. Stranger still, we are told that he was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." Heb. 5:11; 7:1-3. In view of all this, we need not be surprised that the person of Melchisedec as he appears in Gen. 14 has been variously explained. One theory has it that this Melchisedec is the son of Cainan (Gen. 5:11), who guarded the hill Golgotha, where Adam was buried who died in the days of Cainan. According to others he is the same as Shem, the son of Noah, who certainly was living in the days of Abraham. Still others dare not make of Melchisedec, of whom such wonderful things are written, a mere man. They make him an angel, or some sort of incarnation of the Holy Ghost, or of the Word, or some higher God. All these allegorical interpretations and conjectures, however, have no sound basis in Holy Writ. There can be no question

about the fact that Scripture in Gen. 14 pictures Melchisedec as a real man of flesh and blood, who lived in the days of Abraham, was king of Salem, and a priest of the most high God.

But how to explain this priest-king and his priesthood, in view of the fact that he appears outside of the line of Abraham in the land of Canaan, among what we probably would be inclined to consider wicked nations and tribes?

Dr. Kuyper Sr. (*Dictaten Dogmatiek, III Locus de Christo* 92; and *De Gemeene Gratie*, I, 332ff.) explains the priesthood of the historical Melchisedec as a remnant of the original priesthood of Adam in the state of rectitude. Adam, too, was priest of God. His priesthood was, of course, not that of redemption, and had nothing to do with atoning sacrifices for sin. It simply consisted in Adam's calling and ability to love God, and to consecrate himself and the whole creation to the living God. Now, this priesthood, according to Kuyper, was not at once completely lost through sin. A remnant of it remained, and continued to reveal and express itself even unto the days of Melchisedec, in whom there is an especially glorious manifestation of this priestly office and function. And the fact that such a wonderful manifestation of the original priesthood of man could be preserved till so late a date, Kuyper explains from the restraining and preserving power and influence of common grace. This marvellous power commenced to assert itself immediately after the fall of Adam to check the corrupting influence of sin in human nature, so that man did not become so totally corrupt as without this influence of grace he would have been. And so, even of his original priesthood, according to which he consecrated himself in love to the Most High, man retained a remnant. Much of it was lost, indeed, but a glittering of the original glory remained. And a beautiful manifestation and expression of this priesthood of creation we find in Melchisedec.

With this explanation of the historical appearance of Melchisedec and his priesthood we cannot possibly agree.

First of all, the proposition that such a priesthood of creation existed, or can possibly have existed at the time of Melchisedec, or even immediately after the fall, must, in the light of all that Scripture teaches us concerning the state of fallen man, be regarded as utterly false, a mere myth.

True, as we have stated before, in his original state of rectitude man was certainly a priest of the most high God. He was God's officebearer, his friend-servant, and lived in covenant fellowship with God. And as such it was his calling, not only to know and to glorify the name of his God in the midst of all the earthly creation as God's prophet; but also as priest to offer himself and all things a living sacrifice to the

Most High. There is no dispute about this. There was an original priesthood of creation. But through sin this whole relation to God was turned into reverse. He not merely lost the image of God, but his knowledge of God changed into darkness, his righteousness into perversion, his holiness into pollution and love of sin and corruption. And even as through sin he became the false prophet, loving the lie, so he became the false priest. Instead of consecrating himself and all things unto God in love, he became an enemy of God, and devotes himself to the service of sin and the devil.

Such is the clear teaching of Scripture concerning natural man.

There is no remnant of his original priesthood left in him.

Nor is it historically correct to maintain that after the fall there was a manifestation of this priesthood of creation in the line of fallen man, that this beautiful after-glow of man's original glory disappeared only slowly and gradually, and that in the priesthood of Melchisedec we find a final and marvellous reflection of this priesthood. On the contrary, history as revealed in Scripture plainly traces another line of development after the fall with respect to this original priesthood of creation, the line of a false and wholly corrupt priesthood, that has its commencement with Cain, continues in his generations, reaches a climax in the vainly boasting Lamech, and perishes in the flood. And after the deluge there is the same line of development. In the world of heathendom, outside of the covenant line that runs through the generations of Abraham, men turn away from the living God, corrupt the glory of the invisible One, make themselves gods after their own hearts, and consecrate themselves, through their idolatrous priests and shrines, to gods of wood and stone, worship sun, moon, and stars, man, beasts, and creeping things, corrupting themselves in the lust of their flesh, in immorality and bestiality of every imaginable sort. It would seem quite impossible to find room for a figure like that of Melchisedec in this line of development.

But also among Israel there is found, alongside of the central line of the covenant and of the true priesthood, a continuous line of this carnal and wicked priesthood, represented by a veritable multitude of official priests that defile the sanctuary, make of God's house a den of robbers, lead the people in their worship of golden calves, and introduce into the holy land literally all the gods of the nations round about Israel. And when, in the fulness of time the true High Priest comes to His temple, it is this line of false and corrupt priests that hates Him, rejects Him, and ultimately nails Him to the accursed tree.

And as it was in the old dispensation, so it still is in the new. Always the great majority of mankind still makes its own gods. Paganism is polytheism.

But also in the midst of nominal Christendom the line of the false priests continues. The Christ of the Scriptures is rejected openly, or transformed into the modern Jesus; the blood of atonement is despised and trampled under foot. And although the man of modern culture does not make his gods of wood and stone, or literally bow himself before calves and oxen, he is, nevertheless an idolater, whose carnal mind is enmity against the true and living God, and prefers to corrupt himself in the worship and service of the gods of his own imagination and philosophy. And we are told in the book of Revelation that this modern idolater, this false priest, will ultimately even make an image for men to worship, and persecute to the death all that refuse to bow down before it. The false prophet of the antichristian dominion is also, and that, too, necessarily so, a false priest.

In this entire historical line of development, from the fall in paradise to the final manifestation of the man of sin in the antichristian dominion, there is no room for the priesthood of Melchisedec.

But how could one even expect to find Melchisedec in this line and among the representatives of the false priesthood. Does not the epistle to the Hebrews plainly teach us, and does not already Ps. 110 presuppose, that this man Melchisedec, as he appears in history according to Gen. 14, must be regarded a type of Christ, and that, too, one of the most glorious types that ever appeared? How, then, could he be found, or expected to be found, in the line of the generations of Cain, of Ham, of Babylon, of the Antichrist? Type and antitype, shadow and reality, belong together, are inseparably connected, and occur on the same line in history. Cain is no type of Christ. Sodom and Gomorrha are not shadows of Jerusalem. Babylon is the antithesis of the city of God that comes down out of heaven. The one cannot be a picture of the other. Type and antitype are one. The latter bears the former, receives its *raison d'être*, and the very possibility of its being from the former. If Melchisedec does not stand on the line of grace, but on that of sin, and the development of fallen man, he cannot possibly point forward to the Christ as the High Priest that is to come. Then he points very really in the opposite direction. It surely cannot be said that, in that case, Christ is priest after the order of Melchisedec, for that would be tantamount to saying that the Christ of God is priest after the order of antichrist! And to say this is blasphemy!

H. H.

O let me have no part
With those that hate the right;
For as their works, so their reward
Jehovah will requite.

The Significance of Deborah

To bring out this significance, attention must be directed to the relaxation of the national bond and internal disorder that characterized the period of the judges. By the death of Joshua the people of Israel were deprived of their second national leader. After his death there subsisted in the nation a certain government, which is indicated by the name "elders." They were not chosen by the people but were the born princes and representatives of the people. Their task was to preside and watch over the general interests of the nation and so to continue the rule of Moses and Joshua. For the settlement of matters of general concern, they congregated in the central point of the land, which, in the time of the judges, was Shechem. They formed, did the elders, a High Council in Israel which, in great crises, could confer its authority on a single individual. To cite one example, during the invasion of the Ammonites, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob and proposed to him that he be their head in the contemplated war of liberation. This council of elders was not a law-making body. Israel's sole king and legislator was Jehovah. His laws he had already communicated to the nation through the agency of Moses, and the elders were bound to act by the existing legislation as supplemented, in all matters of public importance, by the will of God as revealed through the instrumentality of the "breastplate of Judgment," or Urim and Thummim. As this device could be directly consulted solely by the highpriest, the finally decisive word of God could be had only from this dignitary, who thus, in a sense, came to take the place of Moses in the popular assemblies of the nation.

Besides the council of elder as headed by the highpriest, the nation had also its judges which, according to the commandment of Moses (Deut. 16:18) the people chose for themselves in all their gate throughout the tribes. If the task of the council of elders was to watch over the general interests of the nation, that of the judges was to determine, in the light of Moses' laws, questions of dispute in contests of law between individuals. This being their task, they were cautioned by Jehovah against wresting judgment, respecting persons, and taking gifts, Deut. 16:19.

In this connection attention must also be called to the Levites and to the cities of refuge. Although this is nowhere expressly stated, it is certain that the common Levites, as assistants to the priests, were given the task of teaching the nation the law and were therefore distributed among all the tribes. Segregated in cities of their own, they lived alone among their people and could thus maintain the proper balance between the kind of familiarity that breeds contempt

and the aloofness that estranges the pastor from his flock. And as the whole nation could contribute to their support, it was not necessary for them to become burdensome to a few tribes by too great a concentration.

The purpose of the appointment of the cities of refuge was to prevent the shedding of innocent blood, that is, the blood of one who had killed his brother unintentionally. The need of such cities rose from the following circumstance: If a man were slain, the duty of avenging him lay upon the nearest relative, thus upon one who, as blinded by passion, might do a man to death in revenge for what was the purest accident. To prevent such a thing and to ensure a right administration of justice, these cities were instituted. From time immemorial and thus not by any law given by Moses the duty of avenging a man who had been slain rested upon the nearest kin—from time immemorial, thus before the appearance of the public magistrature. Instead of abolishing the custom the Lord, by stepping in with His law, humanized it and made it serve the ends of justice.

Certainly, though there was no king in Israel, the nation was not without its institutions for righteous administration, maintenance of order and preservation of national unity. But, as we have seen, order was not maintained but gave way to chaos and discord of carnal self-will licentiousness and passion. This is brought out by the two narratives that form the conclusion of our book. The first is that Micah's private temple and image-worship that the migration of the tribe of Dan. The second is that of the rape of the Levite's concubine and its terrible consequences for the tribe of Benjamin. There was, in this period, a general relaxation of the national bond as is so evident from the song of Deborah and from other data contained in our book. The nation assumed the form of several independent and even rival little kingdoms.

It is in the light of these observations that the significance of Deborah is seen. Her significance lies in the fact that, being endowed, in distinction from her predecessors, with the prophetic spirit, she proclaimed, in the audience of the nation, God's word, His great works of the future but also of the past—those wonders of His grace by which Israel had been brought into being as the Lord's heritage. Because of the negligence of the teachers of the law, the nation, with the passing of the years, retained but a dim memory of its glorious history. It had little understanding of the idea of its history, of God's worship, and of His promises. It was this ignorance—an ignorance that was wilful on the part of the carnal seed—that formed the root of the nation's woes. How could Israel be one by a common faith in God, if it was ignorant of the Lord and of all His works, ignorant of the great principles of truth that lay embedded in

his history (Judges 2:10)? If the truth, as spiritually discerned and sanctified to their mind and heart, made them free, how could their lost liberties be regained if they knew not the truth, knew not God? Israel must again be made acquainted with his history, with the fact of his origin—which was God's election—and with the fact of his being the product of the wonder of God's grace. This was Deborah's task. For she was a prophetess. Her voice was the voice of prophecy which for many years now had been silent. Her labors, of course, could bear fruit worthy of repentance only in the spiritual Israel, and so they did. The uprising to which she aroused this Israel from the farthest north even to Benjamin was something extraordinary both in itself and in its consequences, to judge from her song and from the narrative in Judges IV. But the carnal Israel was ill-effected by her exultant discourse. Forty years after the victory over Jabin, "the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. . ." They even petitioned Gideon, the next deliverer, to be their king and thus anticipated the sinful request that their spiritual kin were to make to Samuel. But the believers in Israel could take heart from the concluding strophe of Deborah's song, "So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." The power of Jabin, the Canaanite king, was wholly destroyed, so that this king was the last of that race by whom the northern tribes were troubled.

Now a word about Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite and the slayer of Sisera, the captain of Jabin's host. Sisera, lighting down from his chariot, fled away on foot in order to escape by roads other than that along which the chariots could flee. He purposely pursued a course that led to the tents of the house of Heber, where he thought to find a safe hiding place. For there was peace between the house of Heber the Kenite and Jabin. The Kenite therefore was not sharing the oppression that Israel suffered. It must have been three days after the battle that Sisera, anxious only not to be overtaken by Barak, reached the chosen destination. Doubtless he had not thought to find protection in the tent of a woman; yet it was here that he obtained shelter. For the woman went forth to meet him with friendly mien and invited him urgently, and allayed his distrust. "Turn in my lord, turn in to me; fear not." She confirmed him in his security by obliging services. "Give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty," he said to her. "And she opened a bottle of milk and gave him drink and covered him." But the man still seemed apprehensive. For he felt that he ought to instruct her how to answer any inquirer that might come. "Stand at the door of the tent," he said to her, "and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? Thou shalt say, No." Sleep

came to him. And it came uninvited, if he still had his misgivings. But he yielded, for he was weary and exhausted. Then the woman drove a tent-nail into his brains and fastened it into the ground. "So he died."

It was a terrible deed. Harsh things have been said about Jael on account of it. "All possible explanations made," says one writer, "it remains a murder, a wild savage thing for a woman to do, and we may ask whether among the tents of Zaanannim Jael was not looked on from that day as a woman stained and shadowed,—one who had been treacherous to a guest." But Deborah says of her, "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent." Deborah delights in the deed. She draws a picture of Sisera's death with startling vividness. "He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead."

It will not do to say that especially in these lines the song does not breathe the ideal of true religion. Deborah was a prophetess. She spake God's word. The song was breathed into her heart by His Spirit. Therefore Jael must be criticized with caution. True the woman lied to the fugitive. She dealt deceitfully with him. Though his enemy in her heart, bent on his destruction, she posed as his friend and the saviour of his life. The confidence which she won through obliging services, she betrayed. These were her sins and they were cursed. In war a certain type of craft is consistent with the ethics of true religion and thus allowable, such as the craft employed, even at the command of God, in the capture of Ai by Joshua. That was not properly deception. For it was not the breaking of a promise previously given to the adversary, but simply the execution of a plan of action that had been adopted for the taking of a particular heathen stronghold. To call it sin is to be obliged to maintain that, in war, a general finds himself under the moral necessity of revealing to the enemy all his contemplated strategic movements. But, as I wrote in a former article in expatiating on the subject, the parties to a war do not expect this of each other. Each knows that it is a part of his business to watch the other and to imagine his real purpose. If the one or the other is too careless to watch, he must suffer the consequences. But when conditions have been reached on both sides, when promises have been made, and treaties signed, the case is all together different. Then the enemy has a right to

expect that he will not be misled. A word of honor has been given. A pledge has been made. And to disregard this pledge is sin.

Jael had promised—virtually promised—to shelter Sisera from his pursuers. Her promise she broke, and used it to bring the man to his doom. This was her sin and it was cured. But she was blessed because by faith she was for Christ and against the oppressor of His people. It was her faith and not her sins that Deborah extolled—her living faith as it attained expression in her slaying him who had killed God's people and who, if allowed to escape, would have collected fresh troops and attacked Israel anew. She would not have it said of her that she had spared this foe. The elements of sin in the woman's deed were not of faith but were solely the issues of the flesh and are to be condemned. Not here then can be found the moral that the end justifies the means or that we may do evil with good intent which never was a Bible doctrine nor never can be. A man cannot sin with a good intent, be moved in his lying by a worthy motive.

But was the slaying of Sisera the task of Jael? It was. For there was war between Israel and Sisera, a war of liberation ordered by Jehovah. In taking up arms against Sisera, the woman was simply helping Israel to fight this war. That certainly was her duty. Had she shirked it she would have been for Sisera, for darkness and against God in that holy warfare. Her friendship of the world would have been enmity of God. In slaying Sisera, therefore she did not commit murder, for murder is unlawful killing. What the woman did in slaying Sisera, was to join herself, in a war between Israel and the heathen, to Israel, a people with whom her race in its history had been from time memorial interwoven. Blessed, therefore, yea, blessed shall she be above women in the tent. Her sin was that, in doing battle with God's adversaries, she had resorted to a kind of tactic that took her far beyond the limits of lawful military strategy, lawful in the sight of God. And of this sin she had to repent. And by the grace of God she did so, we must believe. A final remark. It is plain that, as some do, we need not argue, to justify Jael's act, that she had received a special revelation from God to perform the act. Her act is to be justified solely on the ground that it was her calling to war God's warfare and that God had directed Sisera's steps to her tent.

G. M. O.

Gideon

If Deborah had definite and special significance for Israel and the kingdom of God in general, so, too, Gideon (and for that matter all the heroes and prophets of God). Deborah was prophetess, who told the glories of Israel's God as revealed in all his marvelous redemptive works, and who thus anew united God's believing people, instrumentally, on the foundation of the great principles of truth that, as was said, lay embedded in Israel's history. Gideon and his band of three hundred—the hero cannot be dissociated from this band—was raised up and prepared by the Lord to demonstrate of what great things the army of God, however small and contemptible in itself, is capable, when, under the impulse of a living faith, it is wholly consecrated to God's cause and goes forth to war His warfare solely in His name. Such an army overcomes the world and thus achieves the victory prepared for it by the God of its salvation. In the history of Gideon, the emphasis lies on the insignificant number of this hero's fighting force, and on the daring and wonderful achievement of its faith notwithstanding. The great lesson for Israel was that its help cometh solely from the sanctuary and that thus, if it would only turn from his idols and serve and trust in Jehovah, he—Israel—would ride and continue to ride on the highplaces of the earth. There are still other lessons, which will be uncovered as we progress in the treatment of this section of the history of God's people of old. Let us turn to this history and see how it bears out the truth of the above statements.

The sacred narrator makes no mention of the death of Deborah and Barak. The benefit of the salvation—peace in the land—which the Lord wrought through them lasted forty years. Then fresh bondage and misery came, for the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. The deeds by which the liberty of the nation had been regained, were willingly forgotten and with them Jehovah whose Spirit had begotten them. The Hebrews again openly fell into their sinful habits of forbidden intercourse with the Canaanites and their idols. "And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years." The Midianites were nomad tent-dwellers in the desert beyond Ammon and Moab. These two nations having been greatly weakened in their wars with Israel, the Midianites might, for this reason become stronger and more formidable to Israel. At any rate, in the hand of God they became for seven years the scourge of apostate Israel. The Midianites came not alone, for by themselves they are only a small nation occupying only a small territory in north-western Arabia. But they possessed the faculty of effecting a

My end, Lord, make me know,
My days, how soon they fail;
And to my thoughtful spirit show
How weak I am and frail.

a great coalition of Arabian tribes under their own leadership and of employing them in war to advance their own interests. For we read, "the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them" (chap. 6:3). They thus came in great hordes "as grasshoppers for multitude: for both they and their camels were without number." "And they came up with their cattle and with their tents" (chap. 6:5). *Their* reason for invading the land of Canaan and initiating a war with Israel is not given. It was of no importance to the sacred author. What had sole weight with him is that the *Lord* sent them and delivered His people into their hands. Perhaps they had been stirred up by the Canaanites, whom Deborah had conquered and who may have had commercial ties with these heathen. They may further have been encouraged by their imagined weakness of Israel. They penetrated Canaan, as is expressly stated (verse 4) as far as Gaza in the extreme south-west. It is also stated that their rule was terrible, far more so than that of Moab and such-like non-nomadic peoples. They encamped against God's people" and left no substance for them, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass." "They destroyed the increase of the earth" (chap. 6:4). As was the habit of all roving races, who had gained the upperhand, they plundered and devastated every part of the land they entered, killing or dragging with them every living thing. They retired with their booty in the autumn, only to reappear again in the spring to swarm over the land and to trample down the young crops with their camels and herds, after the hebrews had ventured forth from the dens in the mountain and the caves and strongholds to sow their grain. The memory which Israel retained of these hordes was that of its worst enemy. The invaders' purpose was not to gather the harvest but only to destroy.

So had the people of Israel again fallen into the old sinful habit of forbidden friendly intercourse with the Canaanites, joining them in their pagan festivals in honor of their gods and wilfully forgetting the Lord God of Israel. Reading aright the narrative contained in Judges IX we make a startling discovery. In the center of the land, we find, was a league of Canaanite and Hebrew cities, with Shechem at their head, which worshipped Baal as the Lord of their coalition. In the northern tribes generally, Jehovah had little recognition. Ophrah Manasseh, the seat of Gideon's family, was a filthy sink of idolatry. Here the true people of God had fallen into such self-oblivion, that the hostile residents of this city—apostate Hebrews and Canaanites alike—dared to demand of the father of Gideon the latter's death because he had done that which it was the duty of every Israelite to do. Nowhere perhaps did idolatry prevail as in Manasseh, the tribe that suffered most from the

present invasion. Here altars of Baal were seen everywhere, authorized and unrestrained. Precisely those places which formed the richest portion of this half tribe, namely the cities of the plain of Jezreel, had never been vacated by the Canaanites. They had continued to dwell in Beth-shean, Taanach, Megido, Jibleam and Dor (ch.1:27). This tribe, it would seem, had done least in expelling the original inhabitants.

Israel was greatly impoverished and cried unto the Lord. And the Lord sent a prophet to them, whose name is not mentioned. In rebuking and admonishing Israel, the unknown preacher touches upon the same great facts and truths that every prophet of God touched upon in rebuking the apostate nation.

The prophet prefaced his admonitory discourse with the solemn declaration, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel," and so cautioned his hearers to be alive to the fact that, as his utterances would unmistakably indicate, they were about to hear the very word of God. What now saith the Lord? that "I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; and I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice." Again the sinful nation was made to hear that it had despised and rejected its very Father and Creator, the God of its salvation, to revere, do homage to, and place its confidence in gods that be no gods. And on the altar of these gods it was placing Jehovah's gifts! There is no reply of the people recorded, as there could be none in the face of these facts that the apostates must now face anew. They stood mute, severely condemned by the voice of conscience that bore loud witness to the truth of the prophet's words.

The scene changes. The sacred author now takes us to Ophrah, the seat of the family of Abiezer, the son of Manasseh, whose allotment was on the west side of the Jordan and included, as was said, the fertile districts of the plain of Jezreel in northern Canaan. There in Ophrah, on the farm of Joash, a scion of Abiezer, Gideon, one of Joash's sons, performed his task of the day. He threshed some wheat in a secluded place where a winepress had been made so that the grain might be concealed from the Midianites always roving in quest of plunder. Glancing up, he saw under an oak a stranger sitting. It was the angel of the Lord Himself and not a mere human messenger. Presently the angel stood beside him and he received the significant greeting, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty hero." But Gideon, it would seem, was far from being a hero. He was despondent, timid and fearful, standing on the brink of despair. In response to the angel's greeting he complained, "Oh my Lord,

if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his wonders which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." Then the Lord looked upon him, and said, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites; have not I sent thee? But he recoiled from the execution of the commission, offering as his reason the poverty of his family and his own insignificance. He was the least in his father's house. So he put the question, "Wherewith shall I save Israel. . . ?" But the Lord was insistent, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." Vain words if coming from a mere human. If he could only be certain that the messenger was He. "If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me." So the Lord touched with the end of His staff the sacrifice that Gideon prepared and there rose fire out of the rock and consumed it. And the Lord departed out of his sight. Perceiving that it was the angel of the Lord, he feared that he would now have to die. The Lord reassured him. "Peace be unto thee, thou shalt not die." He threw down Baal's altar and built an altar to the Lord but it was all done in the night. He feared his father's household, and the men of the city. Still other signs were asked for and given him that he might know that the Lord would save Israel by his hand. But not until he heard the telling of the dream and the interpretation thereof—the dream of a cake of barley bread—did he jubilantly exclaim to his band of three hundred, "Arise, for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian." Midian was subdued "by the sword of God and of Gideon." Gideon the mighty hero! Now the title became him. But certainly also when the Lord first spake to him there on his father's farm by that winepress. The might of Gideon was his living faith in Jehovah, Israel's God and Saviour, faith in His righteous and unchangeable mercy, in His willingness to forgive and His power to save His ill-deserving people that He might be feared. This faith is plainly indicated in his doleful reply to the angel. He confessed the wonderful origin of his people as reported by the fathers and ended with the present plight of the nation not in the Midianites but in God, when he complained: "Now the Lord hath forsaken us and delivered us in the hands of the Midianites." His question, "Why then has all this befallen us," sprang not certainly from a willing ignorance of the nation's guilt, but was occasioned by the greeting of the Lord, "I am with thee." To his mind, the statement is contradicted by the present impotence of his people. That the response proceeded from a living faith and was made under the impulse of love of God and His people, is evident

from the reaction of the angel. "The Lord looked upon him and said, "Go in this thy might and thou shalt save Israel. . . ." "In this thy might," thy might that I gendered in thee—thy living trust in Me— and that I now bring to fruition through my Spirit and my word—the word that I now speak to thee.' "In this thy faith go." 'And to it, I will respond and grant thee victory. So will thy faith overcome the world as represented by the hordes of the Midianites, thou mighty hero.'

A mighty hero was Gideon, even before he received his commission. In his home and in his city he was surrounded by idolatry. Baal seemed to have triumphed. Amid such surroundings the position of Gideon was extremely difficult. His whole clan was sacrificing to Baal. But he had turned with loathing from that base worship.

Gideon had a great task to perform. "*Thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites,*" *'thou but only through thy faith.'* Thus the thought is that Jehovah will save in answer to a living faith in Him and His word, thus a faith that will translate itself into action to consist in throwing down Baal's altar in Ophrah and in building an altar unto the Lord; second, in calling the tribes concerned to arms, and finally in doing battle with the Midianite hordes with a band of men ridiculously small. God gave Gideon this faith and brought it to full fruition in him, as was said through His word as sanctified to his heart and by signs. By His word: "The Lord is with thee. . . ." "Thou shalt deliver Israel. . . ." "Surely I will be with thee and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." "Peace be unto thee; fear not. Thou shalt not die."

There were also signs. Gideon brought forth his meat offering, flesh and bread, which ascended in fire when touched by the angel. Fire is the element in which divine grace reveals itself. Fire came down on the offering of Solomon, when he had made an end of praying and consumed them (II Chron. VII:1). Fire fell from heaven in answer to Elijah's prayer that the Lord would make it manifest that he was God in Israel, and consumed the sacrifice before the eyes of the apostate people (I Kings XVIII:28). And the angel touched the flesh and cakes. What is symbolized is the baptism of the elect with the grace of Christ. For the meat offering, aflame by the fire of God from heaven and ascending in smoke to the throne, is the type of Christ and His spiritual body the church. It was thus also the symbol of the true believers of the Old dispensation, thus a token of Gideon himself, of the new creature in him, consecrated to the service of God and now being prepared for his great work. The truth and facts symbolized by this sign is that set forth by the word of the angel, "The Lord is with thee. . . ." "Peace be unto thee." "The

Lord is with thee," is the promise of salvation. To be aflame with the fire of God from heaven, is to be saved unto God. Here the fire leaped from the rock; and the rock was Christ. As salvation is solely of God, the sign declared that the speaker was Jehovah who in His mercy would again save His people.

There is evidence in the text that Gideon had adequate understanding of this. These old Testament heroes of faith must be given credit for more knowledge and insight than is commonly given them. This sign was worked in the first instance, for Gideon's benefit. There is ground in the text for the view that he wanted and had asked for this very sign. Said the Lord to him, "Surely, I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites. . . ." Gideon replies, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that *thou* takest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee and bring thee my present (meat offering), and set it before thee." This is plain that his desire is that the sign involve his offering. That he anticipated the very sign that was given is not improbable. What he would know is "that *thou* (art he) who are speaking with me." Also in the consciousness of Gideon, the pronoun *Thou* has reference, not to a common angel but to Jehovah.

Then there is the double sign of the fleece, which has received several meanings. One is that the able commander must be warm and overflowing with zeal and care, even when all besides are indifferent and dry; and on the other hand he must at times maintain the greatest coolness and dryness when all other hearts are overflowing with unseasonable impatience and excitement. According to another interpretation, "Israel was like that fleece of wool, spread upon the wide extent of the nations. But whereas all the ground around was dry, Israel was filled with the dew, as a symbol of divine blessing. And the second sign meant, that it was equally of God, when during Israel's apostasy, the ground all around was wet, and the fleece of Jehovah's flock left dry." In the ancient church this sign became the type of the birth of Jesus from the virgin Mary.

The signs of the Scriptures must be interpreted in the light of the Scriptures. When Israel served God, he received from His hand "the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine," according to the covenant promise, Gen. 27:28. When he forsook the Lord, the dew and the corn were withheld, and his enemies triumphed over him, also according to the word of the Lord. Quoting from Deut. "The Lord shall open thee his good treasures, the heaven to give rain unto thy land in his season . . . and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the Lord shall make thee the head and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only

and not beneath; if thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord. . . ." (ch. 28:13). But on the other hand, "if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. . . the Lord shall smite thee. . . . Thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass. . . . the stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head and thou shalt be the tail" (verse 44). These are the scriptures that go with our sign. That fleece of wool is Israel indeed. When obedient, he was filled with the dew of heaven, the material gifts of the covenant promise; and, in relation to the heathen nations, was above only and not beneath. When he forsook God, the Lord closed unto him the treasures of heaven. Then the fleece of God's flock was dry, and the ground all around was wet i.e., God opened His good treasures to the heathen; and they would prosper materially and get them high above Israel. This is reading the very words of Scripture into our sign. There is more. These material gifts—*as received and held by God's believing people*—betokened the grace of God unto His elect, the spiritual gifts of His kingdom all of which dwell in Christ and which He bestows upon His people, the true members of His body. In the Old Dispensation, this people was the one nation Israel, the remnant according to the election in it. Then, in this spiritual point of view, Israel was the dew-filled fleece among the nations. "And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the gentiles in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men" (Micah 5:7). This, we must mark, is prediction, that went into fulfillment in the new Dispensation. In the final instance the dew-filled fleece, the remnant of Israel in the midst of the nations, is the church of the New Dispensation. The house of the carnal Israel of the Old Dispensation, was left desolate. It is thus the fleece left dry.

The double sign of the fleece, it is clear, was well calculated to stimulate faith in the power and resolve of Jehovah to bring salvation. For it declared, did this sign, that oppression of the adversaries were divine visitations indeed and that, this being true, Israel's help stood solely in the name of its God.

The final evidence, given Gideon, that the victory would be his is the dream of the Midianite. The Lord instructs Gideon to go down into the camp of the adversary. From the enemy's dream he will learn the frame of mind in which they are and his confidence will be perfected. Fearing to go down alone, he was allowed to take with him Phurah his page. The countless numbers and the vast resources of the enemy are once again pointed out. On the one side there are three hundred men on foot, on the other,

a multitude numerous as an army of locusts. The dream was this: A cake of barley rolled itself in the camp of the Midianites and it rolled against the tent and overturned it and it fell and turned it from above—so that its roof was downwards and it was fallen. "It rolled against the tent. . . ." *The* tent, stands collectively for all the tents of the encampment. One tent after another was struck and fell.

The dream was of God and also its interpretation which was given to the companion of the dreamer. "This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all his host."

G. M. O.

Eten En Leven In Eeuwigheid.

"Van den boom der kennis des goeds en des kwaads, daarvan zult gij niet eten; want ten dage, als gij daarvan eet, zult gij den dood sterven". Alzoo sprak God tot Adam in Paradijs voor dat hij viel. Nu, na zijnen val, zegt God, Zie de mensch is geworden als onzer een, kennende het goed en het kwaad. Nu dan, dat hij zijn hand niet uitsteke, en neme ook van den boom des levens en eten en leven in eeuwigheid. Zoo verzond hem den Heere God uit den hof van Edom om den aardbodem te bouwen, waar hij uit genomen was." Gen. 3:22, 23.

Deze twee Schriftuur plaatsen blijken in strijd met elkander te zijn. Allereerst zegt God dat Adam den dood sterven zou in den dag dat hij van den boom der kennis des goeds en des kwaads ete, en nu stelt Hij de zaak voor alsof Adam, na zijn eten, nog niet slechts leven maar eeuwig leven genieten kan.

Er zijn menschen die dit vers in Gen. 3 beschouwen als goddelijke ironie en spot over den gevallen mensch. De duivel zeide tot Eva, "Gij zult niet sterven. Gij zult als God wezen, kennende het goed en het kwaad." Nu, zeggen zij, spreekt God deze woorden van den duivel tot dien gevallen mensch in ironie en spot. Wij kunnen ons met dit niet toestemmen. Het is wel duidelijk uit het vers zelf dat de Drieenige God dit tot Zichzelf spreekt. Hij zegt niet tot den mensch, "Ziet gij zij als onzer een geworden." Hij zegt, "Ziet *de mensch* is gelijk ons" maakt het duidelijk dat deze woorden niet tot Adam waren gesproken. Er kan dan gene ironie en spot in deze woorden opgesloten zijn. Wij zullen in eene andere richting moeten gaan willen wij eene verklaring vinden van het eten en leven in eeuwigheid waarvan dit vers spreekt.

Allereerst moeten wij niet uit het oog verliezen het feit dat er verschil is tusschen leven en leven, en

ook tusschen eeuwig leven en leven in eeuwigheid. Eene zekere rijke overste vraagde Jezus, "Goede Meester! wat doende zal ik het eeuwig leven beërven?" Let er op, deze overste leefde toen hij Jezus dit vraagde, maar toch wil hij een ander leven ook hebben, en dat leven was niet een verlengen van het leven dat hij op dat oogenblik genoot. Wij kunnen en moeten tusschen leven en leven en boven al tusschen eeuwig leven en leven in eeuwigheid onderscheiden.

Wij moeten het niet vergeten dat leven veel meer is dan bestaan. Leven in den vollen zin des woords, dat is, het eeuwig leven, is gemeenschap met God de bron van alle goed. "Dit is het eeuwig leven, dat zij U kennen, den Eenigen Waarachtigen God, en Jezus Christus, Dien Gij gezonden hebt", zegt Jezus in Johannes 17:3. Deze kennis is eene kennis van ervaring, zoodat het eeuwig leven die staat is waarin wij eeuwiglijk God's gemeenschap, genade en liefde ervaren en genieten. Alzoo zingen wij ook uit Psalm 73:14, "Maar 't is mij goed, mijn zaligst lot, nabij te wezen bij mijn God." Dit zal ons eeuwig leven in de nieuwe Jeruzalem zijn. Die gemeenschap Gods genoot Adam in Paradijs voor dat hij ongehoorzaam werd. Eene rijkere en meer intieme gemeenschap met God ligt er in de toekomst voor al Gods verbonds kinderen wanneer zij met opgewekte, geestelijke lichamen voor zijnen troon staan in heerlijkheid. Met die lichamen zullen wij Gods gemeenschap, genade en liefde ervaren en genieten tot eene mate ver boven die mate die voor Adam in zijnen staat van gerechtigheid mogelijk was. Die gemeenschap zal eene gemeenschap in Christus de Zoon Zijner liefde zijn. Die gemeenschap is het eeuwig leven, en daarom zegt Jezus dat het eeuwig leven hierin bestaat dat wij niet slechts God kennen maar ook dat wij Christus Jezus, Dien Hij gezonden heeft, kennen. Zulk eene innige, intieme en rijke kennis en gemeenschap met God genoot Adam niet. Zijne gemeenschap met God was wel zeer rijk en het leven dat hij in zijnen staat van gerechtigheid genoot was wel wonderlijk. Maar God had een hooger leven, eene meer intieme en rijke gemeenschap en leven voor Zijn volk in Zijnen raad besloten. Daarom moest er eene val zijn, en daarom moest het kruis van Christus komen. Nu, door Christus en Zijnen Geest worden wij tot eene rijkere gemeenschap en leven voor Zijn volk in Zijnen raad besloten. Daarom moest er eene val zijn, en daarom moest het kruis van Christus komen. Nu, door Christus en Zijnen Geest worden wij tot eene rijkere gemeenschap met God dan wij ooit door Adam bereiken konden.

Het is dan wel reeds duidelijk dat als wij in Gen. 3:22 van een leven in eeuwigheid lezen dat wij dit niet moeten verstaan als het eeuwig leven dat bestaat in gemeenschap met God in en door Christus. Dit is duidelijk uit het feit dat het gene gemeenschap was

in en door Christus, maar een leven dat afhankelijk is van den boom des levens. Het eeuwig leven waarvan Jezus in Johannes 17 spreekt was van Hem en Zijn kruis afhankelijk. Duidelijk is het ook uit het feit dat dit eeuwig leven een genieten van Gods gemeenschap liefde en genade is, en dat de mensch door zijne ongehoorzaamheid niet langer het recht had om die gemeenschap, liefde en genade Gods te ervaren en genieten. Om gemeenschap met God te ervaren en genieten moeten wij heilig en rechtvaardig zijn, want God is heilig en rechtvaardig en kan absoluut gene gemeenschap hebben met wat onheilig en onrechtvaardig is. Er is gene gemeenschap tusschen licht en duisternis. Veel min is er gemeenschap tusschen de Vader der lichten en de kinderen der duisternis. Dat wij nu die gemeenschap ervaren is omdat wij in Christus heilig en rechtvaardig zijn en onze gemeenschap met God in en door Christus is.

Daarom zeide God tot Adam dat hij den dood sterven zou ten dage dat hij ongehoorzaam werd. Gemeenschap met God genoot hij bij dien boom des levens in het midden van den hof. Daar openbaarde God Zich tot Adam en daar ging Adam om bij God te zijn en Zijne gemeenschap te ervaren en genieten. Daarom moest hij de vrucht van den boom der kennis des goeds en des kwaads niet eten. Zou hij hier stil staan en zijnen vrucht eten dan zou hij niet slechts geen recht hebben om eenen stap verder te komen tot den boom des levens om Gods gemeenschap te ervaren, maar dan kon hij het ook niet. Ja wel, lichamelijk kon hij dit doen, zoowel als hij nog de kracht had om zich te verbergen in het geboomte des hofs. Maar Gods gemeenschap zou hij missen. God zou Zich wel openbaren bij den boom des levens, maar in plaats van een openbaren van Zichzelf in liefde en genade zou het een openbaren van Zijnen heiligen toorn zijn.

Lichamelijk zou Adam en had Adam nog leven in den zin dat er gene scheiding van lichaam en ziel was, maar het eeuwig leven van gemeenschap met God zou hij niet meer genieten. In dien zin stierf hij ten dage dat hij van dien boom at. Zoodra als hij ongehoorzaam werd was er een einde aan zijne gemeenschap met God en daarom ook aan het genieten en ervaren van Zijne liefde en genade. Zoodra als hij ongehoorzaam werd ging hij ook den geestelijken dood in, dat is, geheel zijne natuur werd verdorven. Zijne ware kennis, heiligheid en rechtvaardigheid had hij niet meer. Geestelijk was hij den dood ingegaan. In slechts eenen zin ging hij den dood niet in het oogenblik dat hij ongehoorzaam werd en dat wel in dezen zin dat lichaam en ziel niet gescheiden waren en dus zijn aardsch leven was niet op dat oogenblik weggenomen. Er was geen einde aan zijn bestaan. Maar toch is het ook waar dat ten dage dat hij van de vrucht van dien boom at dat hij dezen dood ook inging. Want in dit vers lezen wij dat in dien dag God hem uit den

hof verzond dat hij van den boom des levens niet ete en leven in eeuwigheid. Let op, niet dat hij eeuwig leven niet hebbe, maar dat hij niet leve in eeuwigheid, dat is, dat er geen einde aan zijn aardsch bestaan zou zijn.

Deze boom had zekerlijk de kracht om Adams aardsch leven te bestendigen zoolang als hij zijne vrucht at. Dit is wel duidelijk uit den tekst, want God had hem uit den hof verzonden juist opdat dit niet zou geschieden. Ook is het niet moeilijk om dit te verstaan dat er zulke eene boom wezen kon. Meer en meer vinden wij van dag uit wat dit lichaam vereischt om in dit aardsch leven te blijven. Wij moeten zooveel delen van carbohydrates, protiens, calcium, iron, deze vitamin en gene vitamin enz. enz. hebben. Wij zijn uit het stof geschapen. Ons lichaam is samengesteld van de verschillende elementen van het stof. Daarom zijn wij van het stof afhankelijk en keeren wij het stof toe wanneer wij sterven. Maar wij kunnen niet een handvol stof eten en leven. Deze elementen van het stof moeten voor ons in eenen bijzonderen vorm veranderd wezen. Dit doet God door de boomen en planten die Hij daartoe geschapen heeft. Deze boom des levens was dan ook door God geschapen om iets uit het stof te nemen dat ons lichaam absoluut noodig heeft en schijnbaar alleen door dezen boom voortgebracht was. Eten wij de vruchten van de boomen en planten en het vleesch van dieren van dag dan gaan wij nog den dood in want dat element, dat ons lichaam eeuwiglijk kon bestendigen, eten wij niet meer en geheel ons leven is een keeren tot het stof waarvan wij uitgenomen waren.

In Texas is er eene stad genoemd. "De stad zonder kiespijn". De grond van dat landstreek heeft men gevonden is rijk in phosporus, calcium en flourides. Deze elementen zijn daarom ook in eene rijke mate te vinden in de vrucht van de planten van dat landstreek, en daarom zegt men is er gene verderving van de tanden en natuurlijk gene tandpijn. Hoe dit alles in den boom des levens werkte weten wij niet, maar het vorige maakt het wel duidelijk dat er zulke eenen boom kon wezen. Een ding is wel duidelijk en dat is dat dit boom vruchten voortbracht die niet waren voortgebracht door eenig ander boom, en dat die vrucht de kracht had om Adams aardsch leven te bestendigen. Deze boom had niet de kracht om leven te geven. God moet het leven geven, maar door dien boom gaf Hij ook iets dat absoluut noodig was om geheel ons lichaam in gezondheid te houden en om het te bekwamen om al de verschillende "germs" van ziekte te overwinnen. In dien zin zou Adam leven in eeuwigheid zoolang als hij de vrucht van dien boom at, maar het eeuwig leven van gemeenschap met God in en door Christus zou hij nooit door dien boom bereiken. Dat leven bereiken wij door die andere soort boom des levens, het kruis van Christus.

J. A. H.

Pentecost

Although Scriptures record of the great event of Pentecost is simple and brief, Pentecost is, nevertheless, the most significant event in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ. Of all Christian holidays it is the most glorious. Its benediction is of eternal value. Its significance is far-reaching. Without Pentecost the day of Christmas is meaningless; without it the joys of Easter are vain and the hope of the resurrection is deceptive. Undoubtedly, Christmas, Easter and the Ascension are indispensable to our salvation, yet, without Pentecost and its gift of the Holy Spirit we are yet in our sin, we are hopelessly lost. Without Pentecost all the work of Christ is as a budding flower which never blooms.

Yet, important as Pentecost is, in our day it is forgotten, if not ignored. Weeks beforehand we prepare for Christmas; and Easter cannot be passed unnoticed, but Pentecost seems of no account.

When one considers these facts he speaks very mildly by condemning the disregardance of Pentecost as very foolish. Would one plow his fields and sow therein the precious seed, and yet, in time of harvest fail to reap the gains? Would you rise up early every morning, trudge your way to work and labor in the sweat of your brow all day only to despise your due reward? Yet, this is the condition of the church and every individual Christian if there is no Pentecost. It is plowing and sowing without harvest, it is laboring without due reward, it is the cross without the crown, it is bitter strife without victory.

Pentecost is the crowning day of the Church of Jesus Christ and of every individual believer. As mighty kings and monarchs have their day of coronation in which they are crowned and arrayed with royal power, so, too, the Church of Christ has her crowning day, and that day is Pentecost. Not in the sense that the Church and each individual receives the crown and due reward for work they performed but they receive the crown of the work of Christ, the glorious fruits of all His labors of love. On Christmas day our mighty Prince of Peace entered upon the field of battle, on Golgotha the strife was at its peak; on Easter we see the Captain of our salvation as Conqueror of death and hell; with His ascension we see Him exalted in power and glory, but. . . .blessed day of Pentecost, for then every soldier in the ranks of Christ Jesus, every subject of His kingdom receives the fruits of Christ's labors, the blessings of His conquest.

That blessing is the gift of the Holy Spirit, the crown, the glory, the life of the Church.

How, then, can we minimize the day of Pentecost? Any student of Scripture having seen the marvelous

and almost unbelievable change that was wrought by the Pentecostal Spirit cannot deny the importance of the day. Before Pentecost Christ's own disciples had not understood Him. To Peter and John, as well as to all their fellows, the cross had been a mystery. Even greater had been the mystery of the open grave, for after numerous appearances of the risen Christ many still doubted. Was it any different when from Mount Olivet the Christ ascended to receive all power and glory in heaven and on earth? Had not their eyes been dimmed with tears because they did not understand? But on the day of Pentecost, having received the gift of the Spirit, all is changed. Then, for the first time, Peter and his fellow disciples understand Christ and His cross, the resurrection and the ascension. They had received the Spirit of truth who was able to lead in *all* truth.

Never before had the Church nor any individual saint received this Spirit. Not that Pentecost marks the birth or beginning of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is eternal, very God, the third Person of the blessed Trinity. Even before the day of Pentecost it was the Spirit who worked regeneration and faith in the hearts of the Old Testament saints. From the very beginning of time it was the Holy Spirit Who comforted the Church, Who bound the broken of heart. But, however true this is, there was a marked difference in the operation of this Spirit before and after the day of Pentecost. Before Pentecost the Spirit merely came with *promises* of salvation. In consoling the Church of the Old Dispensation the Spirit merely *pointed* to good things to come, things that lay in the faraway future. In temple, priest and sacrifice the Spirit brought them nothing essentially *real*, but only *shadows, pictures* of the *real* and *true* salvation that was to come. All that the Spirit ever brought in the Old Testament was promises and pledges sworn to by God while the actual fulfillment thereof lay in the future.

Why did the Spirit in the Old Testament merely make promises? Why did He not bring the reality instead? The answer is: the reality was not yet. All that was real was sin, curse, depravity and damnation. Thousands upon thousands of animals had been slain for sin, yet. . .not one single drop of atoning blood had they brought. Never had one sin been paid for. Hence, in that sense there was no real salvation, there was no real, actual, true atonement. . . .for Christ had not come. He, who alone can pay for sin, whose blood can cleanse and make us whole, had not been born, had not suffered, died and rose again.

On Pentecost, however, everything is changed. Christ had come. He had died, was buried and had risen from the dead; yea, as the mighty Conqueror of sin, death and hell He had ascended to heaven and was given all power in heaven and on earth. *Then*

salvation was an *accomplished* fact. Sin had been paid for, atonement was made, therefore, the Spirit, coming to the Church on the day of Pentecost did not come with the *promise* of salvation, but He came with the real, full and free salvation in Christ. Beginning with Pentecost He no longer promises peace with God but He brings peace. He no longer pledges life, but He gives to every saint the resurrected life of the risen Lord. He no longer promises Christ, but He brings Christ *into* our very heart and life and He makes us live Christ.

For this reason Pentecost is far more glorious than Christmas. On Christmas Christ came *to* us, but on Pentecost the glorious, resurrected Christ comes *in* us and our very life is changed from an earthly to a heavenly. No longer is the believer an orphan with the promise of a good home for on Pentecost the Father is brought to us in all His love and grace.

The priceless treasure of the gift of the Holy Spirit becomes evident when one considers in the light of Scripture the benefits which the Spirit imparts. Christ calls Him: the Comforter, who shall abide with us forever; the Spirit of Truth, the Power from on high. Of Him Scripture further testifies: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ He is none of His," and again: "No man can say Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." In Galatians 4:5, 7 we read: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Without this Spirit the hope of life eternal is vain; Scripture emphatically says: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Yet in the face of all this the Church of today continues to forget, slight or ignore the day of Pentecost. The reason, no doubt, for this attitude can only be explained from the heretical doctrine sweeping through the Church, and especially the doctrine of the free-will of man. No more than that the doctrine of Phariseism, clinging tenaciously to the doctrine of righteousness by the works of the law, celebrates Christmas with its Christ of redemption; no more does the church which lauds man's free-will need and care for the day of Pentecost with its outpouring of the Spirit of Christ. In fact, a rigid preaching of Pentecost's miraculous power would necessarily sound the death knell of Arminianism. While, on the other hand, rigid adherence to the doctrine of man's free will must necessarily shut out the celebration of the day of Pentecost as it has already done in many circles.

But not only in such circles where Pentecost is not celebrated at all is the church left without the true significance of the day and its glorious comfort. There

are other circles who seem to keep the day who have little more to offer the fold on this score than those who do not keep the day at all. They proclaim the Spirit to be nothing more than a divine means, method or power, and of such caliber that the reception of the Spirit is entirely dependent upon the will of man. With this doctrine, too, the glory and real comfort of Pentecost has been obliterated. It robs the very work of Christ of its crown and glory and leaves man as far from the possibility of being saved as the denial of the redemption in the blood of Christ.

The glory of Pentecost is the fact that the Spirit who was poured out into the Church is no less than God Himself, the third Person of the Trinity, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, the everwise and good God. He is the mighty life-giving, ever-impelling Spirit of *all* creation and of every creature. The Spirit who engendered into the lifeless chaos of Genesis One the life that burst forth on mountain and plain, in valley and forest, on land and in the sea! Therefore, we are sure that He who of nothing made heaven and earth can also turn sinful man to the fear of God and instill in his dead soul a life that shall never end, the very life of the blessed Covenant God. And since this Spirit raised Christ from the dead we know that he, too, shall be able to raise us with Him in a life that loves and seeks God.

No great wonder then that this Spirit came with the sign of the sound of a mighty rushing wind. For as the raging tempest is not restrained by the will and ways of man, so, too, this Spirit, mightier than the mightiest tempest, is not limited by human conditions or laws but dispenses His gifts in superb disregard of all that we are and of any condition of the heart. And sinful though we may be He assures us by the signs of the living flaming, cloven tongues of fire that He is able to burn away all filth of sin and turn our darkness into light and cause us to walk in the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

And it is upon the Church only that this Spirit was poured out, even as Christ had said: "Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." To this the apostle adds: "*Because ye are sons.* God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." And that little word "because" does not reflect upon our work, but upon God's work in His people. Therefore the apostle reminded us in the preceding verse: "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them which were under the law." And why, what is the purpose? "That we might *receive* the adoption of sons." Hence, it is of God to His Church, and where the grace of Christ and His atoning blood is not found there men look in vain for this Spirit.

But wheresoever the grace of Christ and His atoning blood has worked its marvelous deeds of redemption there He hath sent His Spirit with joy and peace untold and with life that never ends, for where the Spirit dwells there God Himself dwells and we with Him.

Thus the day of Pentecost is the crowning day, the day of our victory in Christ and even though here on earth the life which we have in Christ through the Spirit is hid we know that when He shall appear we shall appear with Him in glory. One day our tongues shall be perfectly loosed from the curse of Babel's confusion and we shall speak the praises of God in heavenly perfection. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God." Theirs is the inheritance eternal and their peace shall be like a river for theirs is the victory in Christ through the Spirit of Pentecost.

A. C.

— NOTICE —

Young men desiring to prepare for the ministry of the Word in our Churches, and therefore seeking admittance into our Theological School are requested to appear at the next meeting of the Theological School Committee on the evening of May 22, at 8 o'clock on the First Protestant Reformed Churches of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Applicants must present a certificate of membership and recommendation from their own consistory and a certificate of health from a reputed physician.

The Theological School Committee.

— NOTICE —

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids hereby wishes to notify the Churches that Synod will meet D.V. on Wednesday June 7, 1944. The Pre-Synodical sermon will be preached on the previous evening at 7:45 by the President of the Synod of 1943, Rev. G. Vos.

G. Stonehouse, Clerk.

IN MEMORIAM

On Friday evening, April 21, 1944, the Lord in His infinite wisdom took unto Himself my beloved wife

DIRKJE HOOGLAND

at the age of 77 years and eleven months. She was prepared to enter the house with many mansions and to be with Christ. Therein I rejoice and find my comfort.

Ralph Hoogland

Grand Rapids, Mich.

IN MEMORIAM

In His infinite wisdom and love it pleased our Covenant Father to take unto Himself on the 5th of April, 1944, our beloved wife and sister

SUSIE NEWHOUSE

at the age of 56 years.

We feel our loss but are comforted by the words of Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Mr. Richard Newhouse

Miss Ida Ruiters

Mrs. Z. Evans

Mrs. B. Squires

Grand Rapids, Mich.

ECHTVEREENIGING

Den 19den Mei, 1944, herdenken onze geliefde ouders,

MR. DOEDE DE BEER

en

MRS. DIRKJE DE BEER, nee Anema

hunne 45 jarige echtvereeniging.

Wij verheugen ons met hen en danken God voor dit groote voorrecht. Onze bede is dat God hun verder moge zegenen en ondersteunen bij het klimmen hunner jaren.

Hunne dankbare kinderen:

Mr. en Mrs. Ed. Fennema, Chicago

Mr. en Mrs. Abe Vree, Chicago

Mr. en Mrs. Nick De Beer,

Grand Rapids

12 grand-children.

845 Logan St., S. E.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.