



REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 51

MARCH 29, 2025

*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5*

CONTENTS

-
- 3 MEDITATION
Strict Justice
-
- 4 FROM THE EDITOR
-
- 5 EDITORIAL
As Often As Ye Eat This Bread and Drink This Cup (5)
-
- 9 HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES
Article 103: The New King and His Kingdom: Melchisedec (continued) and
Reply to Rev. H. Hoeksema
-



Editor: Rev. Andrew Lanning
From the Ramparts Editor: Dewey Engelsma

See reformedpavilion.com for all contact and subscription information.

MEDITATION

Thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

—Exodus 21:23b–25

Strict Justice

The law of God is perfectly just. The judgments that God delivered to Moses required that the punishments inflicted upon criminals be meted out with strictest equity. If a man took his neighbor's life, then the killer's life must be taken. Life for life! If a man crushed his neighbor's eye, then his eye must be crushed. Eye for eye! If a man knocked out his neighbor's tooth, then his tooth must be extracted. Tooth for tooth! And hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. Under God's perfectly just law, the punishment must exactly match the crime.

The meaning of the law was not necessarily that every criminal must be bodily mutilated. Strict justice allowed for other forms of restitution than the offender's losing his hand or his foot. For example, a man who smote out his slave's tooth could make it right by setting his slave free (Ex. 21:27). The point of the law was not mutilation but justice. The offense and the punishment must match, for the law of God is just.

It is no wonder that the law of God is perfectly just, for God is a perfectly just God. God does not judge as man judges. Man is arbitrary. Man respects persons. Man changes his mind. Man is too lenient. Man is too harsh. But not God! God is perfectly, exactly, consistently, infinitely just! "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut. 32:4).

The perfectly just God judges sin according to the principle of strict justice. "His justice

requires that sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul" (L.D. 4, Q&A 11).

The principle of strict justice cannot be set aside, for God is a just God. And how lovely is the just God! How unspeakably beautiful he is in his perfect justice!

How lovely?! How beautiful?! Should it not rather be: How awful! How terrifying! For we are sinners! And if God should mark our iniquities according to his perfect justice, reflected in his perfect law, then who shall stand?!

Ah, but listen to the gospel, and you will find God's strict justice to be most lovely indeed. For the gospel is that God has not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities (Ps. 103:10). Oh, God has dealt with our sins, and he has rewarded our iniquities! For God is just! But God has dealt with our sins by laying them upon Jesus Christ. And God has rewarded our iniquities by cursing his only begotten Son in our stead. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). Behold God's justice in cursing our sin, and behold his mercy in delivering us from that curse through Jesus Christ. How lovely! How beautiful! For there in Jesus Christ God's justice and his mercy have met. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10).

And what shall be our response to such mercy and justice? Why, it is this: that in gratitude we leave all vengeance to God; that we not take

our brother's eye when he takes ours; that we resist not the evil done to us but suffer it; that we respond to evil—and indeed, overcome evil—with good (Matt. 5:38–42; Rom. 12:17–21).

For God is just. He knows what men have done against us, and he will judge. And God is merciful. He knows what we have done against him, and he has saved us by his Son.

—AL

FROM THE EDITOR

A hearty welcome to our readers on this final Saturday in March. The year is a quarter gone. How swiftly our days pass upon this earth, and how brief is their span. But the word of the Lord endureth forever, and his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

In the reprint of Herman Hoeksema's *Banner* article this week, the reader will notice a cryptic entry by Ralph Janssen. The entirety of Janssen's contribution is, "Articles under this head are discontinued." It is a confusing and entirely unexpected statement. Janssen had been in the middle of taking Hoeksema to task for Hoeksema's denial of common grace. Janssen had promised further elucidation of his points. But without finishing his project and without a word of explanation, Janssen informed Hoeksema and the readers of the *Banner* that his articles would be discontinued. If today's reader of *Reformed Pavilion* is confused, more than a century after the fact, so were readers of the *Banner* in Hoeksema's day.

Janssen's cryptic announcement would set off a flurry of activity in the *Banner* for a few months. The following week, Hoeksema would express amazement at Janssen's sudden

disappearance, and he would begin replying to Janssen's arguments from previous articles. A few weeks after that, strangely, Janssen would reappear on the scene as if nothing had happened, picking up his argument without a word of explanation for why he had left or for why he had returned. After a few months of Janssen's spinning his wheels and Hoeksema's trying to keep the discussion on track, the editorial staff of the *Banner* would shut down the whole debate. Today's reader can expect a few months of very interesting reading as the Janssen case heated up in the early months of 1921.

The early months of 1921! How quickly age gives way to age upon this earth. We read over the shoulders of those men from long ago as if we were there and as if we were watching the debate unfold in real time, but it is already more than a century since those events transpired. And in our own day? In our own day the year is already a quarter gone. How swiftly our days pass upon this earth, and how brief is their span.

But the word of the Lord endureth forever, and his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting!

—AL



As Often As Ye Eat This Bread and Drink This Cup (5)

We have been investigating the Reformed tradition of administering the Lord's supper infrequently—only four to six times out of over one hundred worship services per year. Thus far we have seen that the practice of the early church was to administer the Lord's supper at least once every Lord's day, that the medieval church eventually reduced the frequency to only once per year, that Martin Luther and John Calvin argued for administering the Lord's supper at least weekly, and that the Dutch Reformed tradition of only four to six administrations per year followed the preference of Geneva's city council but not of John Calvin. This time let us turn our attention to the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper to see what it might imply about the frequency of administration.

The Gospel of the Lord's Supper

The Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper is one of the richest doctrines of the Reformed faith. The Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper is every bit as rich as the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone. The Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper is every bit as rich as the Reformed doctrine of God's covenant of grace. The Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper is every bit as rich as the Reformed doctrine of sovereign election and reprobation. Among all the many bright gems of the Reformed faith, the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper shines as one of the brightest.

If that estimation of the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper seems over-the-top, then consider how effusive the Reformed confessions wax in their praise of the supper. The Belgic Confession:

This feast is a spiritual table, at which Christ communicates himself with all

his benefits to us, and gives us there to enjoy both himself and the merits of his sufferings and death, nourishing, strengthening, and comforting our poor comfortless souls by the eating of his flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of his blood. (Belgic Confession 35)

The Heidelberg Catechism:

The Lord's supper testifies to us that we have a full pardon of all sin by the only sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself has once accomplished on the cross; and that we by the Holy Ghost are ingrafted into Christ, who according to his human nature is now not on earth, but in heaven at the right hand of God his Father, and will there be worshiped by us. (L.D. 30, Q&A 80)

The Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper:

From this institution of the holy supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see that he directs our faith and trust to his perfect sacrifice (once offered on the cross) as to the only ground and foundation of our salvation, wherein he is become to our hungry and thirsty souls the true meat and drink of life eternal. For by his death he hath taken away the cause of our eternal death and misery, namely, sin, and obtained for us the quickening Spirit, that we by the same (who dwelleth in Christ as in the head, and in us as his members) might have true communion with him, and be made partakers of all his blessings, of life eternal, righteousness, and glory.

The Reformed confessions can hardly contain themselves in extolling this heavenly meal that is the Lord's supper. And no wonder that the Reformed confessions so highly extol the sacrament, for so did our Lord. How simply but profoundly our Lord spoke of nourishing his hungry people: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). How heartily our Lord desired to eat the last supper with his disciples, at which supper he instituted the new supper. "And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). With what blessing our Lord brake and gave the bread to his bride, and with what thanksgiving he gave her the wine.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matt. 26:26–28)

What makes the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper so glorious is that the Lord's supper is the gospel. The Lord's supper says one thing: Jesus Christ crucified. The Lord's supper is the glad tidings of great joy. The Lord's supper is the good news that God has reconciled sinners to himself through his only begotten Son. Both the preaching of the gospel and the Lord's supper are "ordained and appointed for this end, that they may direct our faith to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation" (Lord's Day 25, Q&A 67).

It is exactly because the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper is the gospel that the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper is the equal of the great Reformed doctrines of justification by faith alone, the unconditional covenant of grace, and sovereign predestination. Justification by faith alone is the gospel, and the

Lord's supper is the gospel. The unconditional covenant of grace is the gospel, and the Lord's supper is the gospel. Sovereign predestination is the gospel, and the Lord's supper is the gospel. How rich and how lovely is the Reformed gospel of the Lord's supper!

It is also exactly because the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper is the gospel that those Reformed churches that turn the Lord's supper into the law are so cruel. There are churches that go by the name Reformed but that use the Lord's supper to terrorize the consciences of the people. These churches teach that one's worthiness to come to the table of the Lord must be found in oneself. One must pray enough, be mindful enough, prepare enough, obey enough, improve enough, or be good enough to come to the table. The better one is, the more worthy he is to eat and to drink Christ. The worse one is, the less worthy he is to eat and to drink Christ. The preparatory service the week before the Lord's supper becomes a prison, and the Lord's supper becomes a scourge. How cruel! How cruel that men should turn the gospel into the law and life into death! Such men give ashes for beauty, mourning for the oil of joy, and the spirit of heaviness for the garment of praise.

But behold the lovely truth of the Lord's supper. The Lord's supper is the gospel. The Lord's supper teaches us that our worthiness to come to the table is not found in ourselves, in our obedience, in our improvement, in our goodness. The Lord's supper teaches us that our worthiness to come to the table is entirely the goodness, the obedience, the atonement, the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Our worthiness is not within us but without us. My worthiness is not me but he. The child of God has Christ and all his worth and blessing by faith alone, not by working or obeying or improving. What a lovely gospel! How refreshing to the hungry soul! How comforting to the ungodly sinner!

What God Does by the Lord's Supper

The fact that the Lord's supper is the gospel means that the Lord's supper is a means of grace

by which God saves and blesses his people. The Lord's supper is not an empty meal but a fountain that overflows with comfort and peace. Behold the riches that our gracious savior bestows on his poor people by his supper. Our Lord gave his supper "to seal unto us his promises." The Lord's supper is a pledge "of the good will and grace of God toward us." The supper is "to nourish and strengthen our faith" and has been "joined to the word of the gospel, the better to present to our senses both that which he signifies to us by his word and that which he works inwardly in our hearts, thereby assuring and confirming in us the salvation which he imparts to us." By means of the Lord's supper "God worketh in us by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Belgic Confession 33).

Our Lord Jesus Christ "did ordain and institute the sacrament of the holy supper to nourish and support those whom he hath already regenerated and incorporated into his family, which is his church." By the Lord's supper Jesus "nourishes and strengthens the spiritual life of believers when they eat him, that is to say, when they apply and receive him by faith in the spirit." Jesus gave the bread and wine "to testify by them unto us, that, as certainly as we receive and hold this sacrament in our hands and eat and drink the same with our mouths, by which our life is afterwards nourished, we also do as certainly receive by faith (which is the hand and mouth of our soul) the true body and blood of Christ our only savior in our souls, for the support of our spiritual life." Our Lord "works in us all that he represents to us by these holy signs." In the Lord's supper we eat and drink "the proper and natural body and the proper blood of Christ...by the spirit through faith" (Belgic Confession 35).

The Holy Ghost confirms faith in our hearts "by the use of the sacraments." God appointed the Lord's supper that "he may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, namely, that he grants us freely the remission of sin and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross."

Both the preaching of the gospel and the Lord's supper are "ordained and appointed for this end, that they may direct our faith to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation." And "the Holy Ghost teaches us in the gospel, and assures us by the sacraments, that the whole of our salvation depends upon that one sacrifice of Christ which he offered for us on the cross" (Lord's Day 25).

By the Lord's supper the Lord "feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, with his crucified body and shed blood, as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ." By the Lord's supper we "obtain the pardon of sin and life eternal." By the Lord's supper we "become more and more united to his sacred body by the Holy Ghost, who dwells both in Christ and in us" (Lord's Day 28).

By the Lord's supper Christ teaches us that "his crucified body and shed blood are the true meat and drink whereby our souls are fed to eternal life." By "these visible signs and pledges" of the Lord's supper, Christ assures us "that we are...really partakers of his true body and blood." By the Lord's supper Christ assures us "that all his sufferings and obedience are as certainly ours as if we had in our own persons suffered and made satisfaction for our sins to God" (Lord's Day 29).

"The Lord's supper testifies to us that we have a full pardon of all sin by the only sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself has once accomplished on the cross." The Lord's supper testifies to us "that we by the Holy Ghost are ingrafted into Christ, who according to his human nature is now not on earth, but in heaven at the right hand of God his Father" (Lord's Day 30).

By the Lord's supper Christ assures us "that, whereas you should otherwise have suffered eternal death, I have given my body to the death of the cross and shed my blood for you." By the Lord's supper Christ assures us that "I...as certainly feed and nourish your hungry and thirsty souls with my crucified body and shed blood to

everlasting life, as this bread is broken before your eyes, and this cup is given to you, and you eat and drink the same with your mouth in remembrance of me.” By the Lord’s supper Jesus “directs our faith and trust to his perfect sacrifice (once offered on the cross) as to the only ground and foundation of our salvation, wherein he is become to our hungry and thirsty souls the true meat and drink of life eternal” (Form for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper).

What a wealth of riches for us poor, hungry, thirsty, mourning, lowly, wretched sinners! What a merciful savior is our Lord, who graciously instituted such an abundant spiritual feast for the happiness and refreshment of his poor church!

This feast is a spiritual table, at which Christ communicates himself with all his benefits to us, and gives us there to enjoy both himself and the merits of his sufferings and death, nourishing, strengthening, and comforting our poor comfortless souls by the eating of his flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of his blood. (Belgic Confession 35)

As Often As Ye Eat...

Our Lord is not stingy or miserly in distributing the meat of his flesh and the drink of his blood to his hungry and thirsty people. Every single time the Lord’s supper is administered, our savior bestows upon us an overflowing abundance of the riches of his grace. “This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me” (I Cor. 11:25). “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come” (v. 26). “As often as ye eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you shall thereby, as by a sure remembrance and pledge, be admonished and assured of this my hearty love and faithfulness towards you” (Form for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper).

It is hard for us to fathom how *effectual* the Lord’s supper is as a means of grace. We are so weak, so impotent of heart, so dry of spirit, so

doubting, so fearful, so unbelieving, so slow to understand, so sensual, so earthly-minded. But our Lord in pity has spread for us his heavenly table with exactly the elements to meet our earthly weakness. Are we sensual and earthly-minded? Our Lord gave us bread and wine to speak to our senses. The bread’s texture in the hand, the wine’s aroma as it passes under the nose, the bread’s flavor on the tongue, the wine’s blossom in the throat—all so that our senses are overcome with the reality of bread and wine. Are we slow to understand and full of unbelief? Our Lord fills our senses with the reality of bread and wine that we slow-hearts might understand and believe that as real as the bread and wine are, so real are the true flesh and blood of our Lord, given for our salvation. Are we dry of spirit? Our Lord fills our mouths with the sense-arousing bread and merry-making wine that we dusty spirits might be refreshed by faith in the sustaining body and enlivening blood of our savior. Our Lord has given us an effectual supper, by which he accomplishes his gracious purpose of wonderfully comforting our poor, comfortless hearts.

Now, in possession of such a gracious, effectual, generous meal that the Lord has appointed to her, why should the church forego the administration of that wonderful meal? Which church would ever say to God’s hungry and thirsty people, “We think that you have had enough Christ to last you for a few months, so we will not be spreading his table for you this week”? Or which child of God would ever say, “Though Christ has appointed a meal of his body and blood for my refreshment, I can do without his meal for several months”? A Reformed church would not think of foregoing the preaching of the gospel, would it? Week in and week out, service by service, sermon by sermon, even psalm by psalm, a Reformed church feeds the congregation with the food of the gospel that Christ has appointed. If the church is so zealous to feed Christ’s sheep in the green pastures of the gospel that the good shepherd has appointed, then why is the church not equally zealous to prepare

for the sheep the table that the good shepherd has appointed? The Lord is abundant and generous in his supper. Why should the church even appear to be meager and ungenerous in administering his supper?

The Reformed tradition of administering the Lord's supper infrequently is deeply ingrained in us through long centuries of practice. But the Reformed tradition of infrequent administration is not consistent with the rich Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper. It is easy for the church to become set in her ways and for her tradition to seem to her the best way and even the only way. But let the gloriously rich Reformed doctrine of

the Lord's supper be the standard, and let Reformed churches adapt their tradition to their doctrine. Christ has given his church a spiritual table; let the table be spread! Christ has given his church a spiritual feast; let her eat and drink her fill! The Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper is the abundant gospel of Jesus Christ. Why should not a Reformed church consider administering the Lord's supper abundantly as well?

In the next article, Lord willing, let us answer some objections to the frequent administration of the Lord's supper.

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

The Banner

January 20, 1921

(p. 40)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article CIII: The New King and His Kingdom: Melchisedec (continued)

It seems to us the great trouble in explaining Melchisedec as historical person, as priest of the Most High and king of righteousness, has always been that we pictured the period in which he appears in such dark colors as are by no means justified by the Word of God. A little reconstruction of the historical conditions of that period, especially with a view to the Kingdom of God and his covenant as it existed at that time, will help us to understand how it was possible that in Abram's time a man like Melchisedec, a priest of the true God, could appear in Canaan.

The common impression regarding conditions at the time of Abraham is that it was a time of general idolatry. Abram is a lonely follower of Jehovah, a solitary representative of the people of God in the world. The holy line of God's covenant had practically become extinct. About Abraham everywhere the knowledge and the service of the true God had been lost and abandoned. Whatever knowledge of God there

still existed must be attributed to the effect of common grace. In Ur of the Chaldees there was still some knowledge of God, naturally. But the line of special grace had practically disappeared. Generally people were given to the service of idols. It is even suggested that Abram himself, before he was called and received revelations from Jehovah, knew very little of the true God, outside of the natural knowledge that was the common property of all men. He himself probably served idols like his father Terah. He becomes the servant of Jehovah when Jehovah calls him from his idolatrous surroundings and makes him party in his covenant of grace. With his calling we have something altogether new. Special grace and special revelation become operative with his being separated from his land and from his father's house. In Abraham we have not so much a continuation of the holy line, and a further developed phase of God's covenant, but something new. God separates a

lonely man from a wicked world that is lapsing fast into idolatry. To preserve his people God will now literally separate them from the world for a time, in order that Israel may become a blessing for the nations in the future. At any rate, the line of God's covenant had well-nigh disappeared when God begins something new with the calling of Abraham and the establishment of the covenant with him.

It stands to reason that Melchisedec fits but badly in such a setting. If Abraham, even in Ur of the Chaldees, stood alone, yea, if even he was given to the service of idols before his calling, how must a man like Melchisedec be explained in the land of Canaan, a priest of the true God and a king of righteousness? It is thus, that he is explained from purely natural development, without special grace, and that in his priesthood a remnant is seen of the original priesthood of creation. And in the same historical setting not only a figure like Melchisedec is a complete mystery, unless the full significance of his priesthood is explained away, but still more that of Rebekah, who some sixty years later comes from that same idolatrous Mesopotamia and appears to know Jehovah and becomes the most beautiful illustration of a covenant-woman the Bible knows.

Fact is, however, that this picture of conditions is not at all in harmony with the facts. Reference is generally made to Joshua 24:2, 14, 15. There we read that Joshua, the gray-haired general, who will soon be ready to depart, addresses the tribes assembled in Shechem as follows: "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt of old time beyond the river, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they served other gods" (Vs. 2). And in Vss. 14 and 15: "Now therefore hear Jehovah and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." Now, it is plain that this passage informs us that the generation of Terah, the father of Abraham, was

given to idolatry. There was apostasy, there was a tendency in the holy line, of which Terah was the last representative before Abraham, to depart from the service of the true God and to turn to the service of idols. So much is plain. But more than this the passage does not say. The only persons that are mentioned as serving idols are Abraham's father Terah and Nahor, and the fathers in Egypt. That the people of God were practically extinct, that there were no people of God's grace, who through grace knew Jehovah and served him, the text does not say. The generation of Terah was inclined to serve idols, actually did serve them, apostatized from the God of the covenant and followed other gods. This must not be overlooked. Terah, the father of Abraham, must not simply be explained like any Babylonian, who only had the light of "common grace" and who in that light served idols. No, he belonged to the holy line, to the company of God's people, even as the fathers in Egypt, and even as Israel, no matter how idolatrous the people might become. And, therefore, the idolatry of Terah was a matter of apostasy within the sphere of God's special revelation and covenant.

Still, we must never forget that at the time of Abraham, there was an entire company of people that knew Jehovah, to whom God had revealed himself, that lived, not by what is called common grace, but by the special grace of God's covenant. The line of God's covenant was by no means extinct. There were many families of the true people of God in the earth when Abram was called and when he wandered in Canaan. A few figures will make this entirely evident.

Shem, we are told, lived to be six hundred years old. That means that for some one hundred and fifty years he was the contemporary of Abraham. This means that when Abraham's servant is sent to Mesopotamia to fetch thence a wife for Isaac, Shem is still living. Arphaxad, the son of Shem, was born when his father was one hundred years old. He lived four hundred and thirty-eight years, and, therefore, also he was a contemporary of the father of believers for more

than a century. Shelah was born when Arphaxad was thirty-five years old and lived four hundred and thirty-three years, which makes also of him a contemporary of Abraham, even at the time when he was called from Ur of the Chaldees and Haran. And Eber lived four hundred and sixty-four years, so that the date of his death is twenty-nine years after that of Shem and even some five years later than that of Abraham's death. When Abraham was born, moreover, two other of the patriarchs were still living, namely, Reu and Serug.

In the light of these facts we obtain a different impression of the spiritual condition of the period immediately before the call of Abraham. There must have been a large company of saints in Babylonia. Unless we would maintain that also Shem and the other patriarchs had apostatized from Jehovah, the line of God's covenant was by no means extinct. The name of Jehovah was well known. His covenant was kept, and the covenant God was served by many. From generation to generation the name of the covenant God could have been and undoubtedly was transferred. The world was not entirely sunk into idolatry, and the light of special revelation had not been extinguished. At the time when Abraham met Melchisedec in the land of Canaan there must have been hundreds, and it is in the light of the above facts not too bold to maintain that there must have been thousands that knew and feared the true God. As has already been mentioned, the fact that much later that beautiful example of a covenant woman, Rebekah, is found in the house of Bethuel, in Mesopotamia, is another proof that the line of grace, the power of special grace, was as yet not limited to Abraham as a solitary worshipper of Jehovah.

And now it is true that Melchisedec is not found in Mesopotamia but in Canaan. And Scripture does not inform us, intentionally does not

tell us about his genealogy. He must become type of the priesthood of Christ, and as such he had no need of genealogical records to show his right to the priesthood. We shall make no guesses, therefore, as to his descent. But, however he may have found a place in the land of Canaan, we prefer to explain Melchisedec as a priest of the Most High God, as king of righteousness, as a true servant of the same God Abraham served, not as a mere heathen, in whom there was still some natural light, a remnant of the priesthood of creation; but as belonging to the many that were at this time still living, that were saints of God's covenant and possessed the light of special revelation. Melchisedec belongs to the covenant of grace. In the line of that covenant that was established with Noah and that had as yet not assumed the particular aspect it was presently to assume in Abraham and Israel, Melchisedec knew Jehovah as the result of special grace. In the line of that covenant, Melchisedec was a true priest of the true God also served by Abraham. He consecrated himself to God as priest, with all his life and kingdom, not from the power of so-called common grace, for then we have in Melchisedec a beautiful example of natural religion acceptable to God; but in the power of special grace operating in his heart. At a time when Shem and Arphaxad and Shelah and Eber and many other families were still living and serving the true covenant God, it need not surprise us that we meet with a man like Melchisedec, who is priest of the Most High and king of righteousness.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

Reply to Rev. H. Hoeksema

Articles under this head are discontinued.

—R. Janssen

