
BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

J. G. VOS, Editor and Manager

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VOLUME 11

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NUMBER 1

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Matthew 5:11,12

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Eye Hath Not Seen

By Christina G. Rossetti

Our feet shall tread upon the stars
Less bright than we.
The everlasting shore shall bound
A fairer sea
Than that which cold
Now glimmers in the sun like gold.
Oh good, oh blest! but who shall say
How fair, how fair,
Is the light-region where no cloud
Darkens the air,
Where weary eyes
Rest on the green of Paradise?
There cometh not the wind nor rain
Nor sun nor snow:
The Trees of Knowledge and of Life
Bud there and blow,
Their leaves and fruit
Fed from an undecaying root.
There Angels flying to and fro
Are not more white
Than Penitents some while ago,
Now Saints in light:
Once soiled and sad —
Cleansed now and crowned, fulfilled and glad.
Now yearning through the perfect rest
Perhaps they gaze
Earthwards upon their best-beloved
In all earth's ways:
Longing, but not
With pain, as used to be their lot.
The hush of that beatitude
Is ages long,
Sufficing Virgins, Prophets, Saints,
Till the new song
Shall be sent up
From lips which drained the bitter cup.

If but the thought of Paradise
Gives joy on earth,
What shall it be to enter there
Through second birth?
To find once more
Our dearest treasures gone before?
To find the Shepherd of the sheep,
The Lamb once slain,
Who leads His own by living streams —
Never again
To thirst, or need
Aught in green pastures where they feed.
But from the altar comes a cry
Awful and strong
From martyred Saints: 'How long,' they say,
'O Lord, how long,
Holy and True,
Shall vengeance for our blood be due?'
Then the Lord gives them robes of white
And bids them stay
In patience till the time be full
For the last day —
The day of dread
When the last sentence shall be said;
When heaven and earth shall flee away,
And the great deep
Shall render up her dead, and earth
Her sons that sleep,
And day of grace
Be hid for ever from Thy face.
Oh hide us, till Thy wrath be past,
Our grief, our shame,
With Peter and with Magdalene,
And him whose name
No record tells
Who by Thy promise with Thee dwells.

I Look for the Lord

By Christina G. Rossetti

Our wealth has wasted all away,
Our pleasures have found wings;
The night is long until the day;
Lord, give us better things —
A ray of light in thirsty night
And secret water-springs.

Our love is dead, or sleeps, or else
Is hidden from our eyes:
Our silent love, while no man tells
Or if it lives or dies.
Oh give us love, O Lord, above
In changeless Paradise.

Our house is left us desolate,
Even as Thy Word hath said.
Before our face the way is great;
Around us are the dead.
Oh guide us, save us from the grave,
As Thou Thy saints hast led.

Lead us where pleasures evermore
And wealth indeed are placed,
And home on an eternal shore,
And love that cannot waste:
Where joy Thou art unto the heart,
And sweetness to the taste.

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The Reformed Faith and Evangelism

By The Rev. Joseph A. Hill

Is an evangelistic Calvinist a clerical contradiction? The Calvinist is seldom pictured as an evangelist. He is more often pictured as a theological hermit engrossed in the study of high-sounding doctrines and having little concern for lost souls in the world outside of his study. The Calvinist is the man who defends predestination, while the evangelist preaches Christ. One is a theological preacher, the other a missionary preacher. Such are the distinctions often made between the Calvinist and the evangelist.

Are such distinctions valid? Cannot a Calvinist be an evangelist, and an evangelist a Calvinist? Luke was an historian when he wrote his Gospel, but he was also an evangelist; and the Reformed preacher is a theologian who is at the same time an evangelist.

Calvinism and Evangelism not Contradictory

The Reformed faith and evangelism are not related antithetically. They are not mutually exclusive factors in Christianity, but rather one is an application of the other. The Reformed faith is the true evangel; evangelism is the work of propagating it. To set Calvinism in antithesis to evangelism is as unreasonable as it would be to regard journalism as antithetical to the work of publication. Just as journalism includes the publishing of news of current events, so Calvinism includes the publishing of the good news of Christianity.

The Calvinistic or Reformed faith is an evangelistic faith. Calvinism is centered about the glory of God as man's chief end, and this provides the stimulus for Calvinism's evangelistic task of proclaiming the Gospel, to the end that men might be saved to the service and glory of God. Evangelism is vital to true Calvinism. Calvinism without evangelism is like faith without works. Calvinism without evangelism is a dead Calvinism. But true Calvinism includes a lively evangelism.

Calvinistic Evangelists

Some of the greatest evangelists of history have been Calvinists, and some of the greatest Calvinists have been great evangelists.

John Calvin himself was a zealous evangelist. Those who know Calvin as an austere scholar interested only in theological studies do not really know this man of God. Calvin was not a recluse

who withdrew from society into his own little doctrinal world. He went out into the world and preached the Gospel to all classes of people. Calvin was first and foremost an evangelist. He preached Jesus Christ when he wrote his pastoral letters. He preached Christ when as a theologian he lectured to his classes in the Academy at Geneva. He preached Christ when he stood in the pulpit of St. Peter's Church. He preached Christ when he sat at his table and penned his theological writings. It makes very little difference where you turn in Calvin's *Institutes*, you find on every page the work of an evangelist. Opening the volume at random, my eyes fall upon this sample of Calvin's evangelistic thrust: "Now, if we doubt whether Christ has received us into his charge and custody, he obviates this doubt, by freely offering himself as our Shepherd, and declaring that if we hear his voice, we shall be numbered among his sheep. We therefore embrace Christ, thus kindly offered to us and advancing to meet us; and he will number us with his sheep, and preserve us enclosed in his fold" (Book III, chapter XXIV.6). Such words flow from the heart of a soulwinner.

Not only was Calvin an evangelist himself, but he trained others for this work. In his town of Geneva there were in 1544 twelve pastors. Schaff informs us that in his association with these colleagues "Calvin gradually trained a corps of enthusiastic evangelists" (*History of the Christian Church*, Vol. VIII, sec. 96).

The greatest evangelistic revival in post-reformation history was spurred by a Calvinist. The Methodist Church began in this revival. The first and chief actor in this revival, however, was not Wesley but George Whitefield, an uncompromising Calvinist. It was Whitefield who enlisted John and Charles Wesley in the evangelistic movement. The Wesleys were strongly prejudiced against the idea of preaching anywhere but in a church building, and only with great difficulty did Whitefield persuade them to engage with him in the field movement. It was not the Wesleys but Whitefield the Calvinist who was the real leader of this stirring Gospel revival which swept over England and the colonies in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Another great Calvinist who was also a great evangelist is Jonathan Edwards. After serving an established congregation with brilliant zeal for

nearly a quarter of the eighteenth century, he moved to humbler surroundings in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he became a missionary to the Indians. Jonathan Edwards was a keen theologian, yet his sermons breathed the warm appeal of the Gospel. Many who know Jonathan Edwards only from his sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" judge him as "a stern, harsh Calvinist". But many of his sermons still glow with the intense passion of a soulwinner. Listen to the ringing phrases of his sermon on "The Excellency of Christ", in which he gives the invitation of the Gospel in the words of Christ, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," etc. — "O thou poor distressed soul, whoever thou art, that art afraid that you shall never be saved, consider this that Christ mentions is your very case, when he calls them that labor, and are heavy laden! And how he repeatedly promises you rest if you come to him . . . 'I will give you rest' . . . 'Ye shall find rest to your souls.' This is what you want. This is the thing that you have been so long in vain seeking after. O how sweet would rest be to you, if you could but obtain it! Come to Christ, and you shall obtain it." (Jonathan Edwards, by Faust and Johnson, American Book Co., 1935, p. 128). This is a typical sample of the oft-repeated appeals to accept and receive the salvation of Christ that were made by this ardent soulwinning Calvinist. Under his preaching thousands repented of their sins and sought the salvation of Christ. Jonathan Edwards was a rigid Calvinist, and he was an effective evangelist.

Charles H. Spurgeon was another noteworthy Calvinistic evangelist. It is highly significant that one of Spurgeon's most stirring evangelistic sermons was a sermon on the doctrine of election, at the close of which he made a hearty appeal to his hearers to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. His words are still alive with hope to lost sinners — ". . . Take courage, take hope, O thou sinner, that there is election! So far from dispiriting and discouraging thee, it is a very hopeful and joyous thing that there is an election . . . There is a multitude of elect, beyond all counting — a host that no mortal can number. Therefore, take heart, thou poor sinner . . . Then, not only take heart, but go and try the master . . . O sinner, come to the throne of electing mercy . . . Go to God . . . If thou goest to him, and asked him, thou shalt receive; for he has never spurned one yet! Is that not hope for you? . . . Let your hope rest on the cross of Christ. Think not on election, but on Christ Jesus. Rest on Jesus — Jesus first, midst, and without end." Here is true evangelism from the lips of a thoroughgoing Calvinist. Let no one think that the doctrines of the Reformed faith are inimical to true evangelism. Wherever they have been defended and propagated, men have been won to Christ and heaven.

Reformed Evangelism

The Reformed faith is the true evangel; evangelism is the work of propagating it. The Reformed faith and evangelism belong together. Reformed evangelism is the task of all who love the true evangel. Far from being alien to true evangelism, the doctrines of the Reformed faith are the most effective means of soulwinning. The first great Christian revival, in which three thousand were converted to Christ, occurred in Jerusalem under the preaching of Peter, who said: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). That is Calvinism rigid enough. But it proved to be true evangelism that moved a multitude to repentance and a steadfast life of faith in Jesus Christ.

The preaching task of the church should not be thought of as an alternating between Calvinism and evangelism, a shifting back and forth from the "deep" doctrines of the Reformed faith to the simple faith of the Gospel. Rather, the preaching task of the church should be understood as the propagation of the deep truths of the Gospel, simply stated, in harmony with the Reformed faith. In Peter's preaching at Pentecost in the second chapter of Acts, the truth of foreordination and the Gospel of Christ crucified are one and the same thing. So in the preaching of the church, the message and the task are identical, simply because the evangel and evangelism are inseparable. The church must never try to strike a "balance" between Calvinism on the one hand, and evangelism on the other, as though Calvinism and evangelism were competitive factors in the program of the church. Evangelistic preaching is doctrinal preaching in its highest and best form.

In both public and personal evangelism the gospel offer of salvation is wholly consistent with the doctrines of the Reformed faith. The Calvinistic doctrines of unconditional election and particular redemption do not stand in the way of our preaching the good news that "whosoever will" may come and receive the Gospel promise of salvation. Underlying Calvinism's offer of salvation to all men is the Reformed doctrine of divine sovereignty. God has a sovereign claim on every man, woman and child. He is their Creator and Preserver. All men are under solemn obligation to Him. All men ought to acknowledge, love and serve Him. All are under urgent obligation to repent of their sins and to believe on Christ the Savior. And the Reformed preacher is under urgent obligation to press this claim home to his hearers, whether in public or in private.

I have not set forth here the basic principles of Reformed evangelism or the full content of its message. My purpose is only to affirm that evan-

gelism is not inconsistent with the Reformed faith. The Reformed faith calls for a decisive preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God. The Reformed preacher as an evangelist must unhesitatingly compel men, in the name of the sovereign God, to make a firm decision to accept salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. For it is the sovereign God, speaking by the preached Word and acting by His Spirit, who renews the sinner's heart and calls forth his decision. The decision is the sinner's reply to the voice of the speaking God. It is his response to the work of the electing God.

We should realize, of course, that conversion is far more than a decision. It is fundamentally a

change of heart which God alone can give and does give to His people in His own time. And we should also realize that a decision to accept Christ does not mean "going forward" or raising the hand during an altar-call. The real decision is made in the secret places of the heart. Finally, we must remember that true evangelism is the propagation of truth. It is true to God's Word at every point. The evangelist who says, "If you do not accept salvation, God cannot save you," is not propagating truth. Such appeals are not in harmony with God's Word, or the Reformed faith, or true evangelism. The Reformed faith is truth, and the propagation of the Reformed faith is true evangelism.

Sketches of the Covenanters

By J. C. McFeeters

Chapter XVII

High Ideals by the Covenanted Fathers — A. D. 1643.

The Solemn League and Covenant of Scotland, England, and Ireland is the high-water mark in the moral progress of nations. But the flood of Divine glory, which then covered these three kingdoms, quickly subsided and has remained ever since far below that conspicuous mark. God honored these nations with the greatest privilege accorded to Civil society, and brought them into the most blessed relation to himself. But they lightly esteemed the favor and revolted from the Covenant. He therefore hid His countenance, withdrawing the assistance and protection which they so gratefully accepted in distress, but deceitfully rejected when prosperity returned. The relapse threw them suddenly into direful conditions of misrule, oppression, and profuse bloodshed, which continued nearly half a century.

The Covenant of the three kingdoms, though shortlived in its beneficent effect, was of immense value to the world. Like the morning star, it heralded the coming of a bright day to all nations. The star may be hidden by thickening clouds, but the sun will not fail to rise. This Covenant stands as a pledge of the ultimate condition of all nations, points the way into the shining heights of God's favor, and warns against the aggravated sin of breaking relation with the Lord. It was the first blast of the trumpet that will one day announce the submission of the kingdoms of the world to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Scottish fathers evidently regarded Covenanted union as the normal relation existing between God and man, God and the Church, God and all the nations. Any thing less than this was, in their estimation, sub-normal, imperfect, un-

worthy, dangerous, disastrous to man, and offensive to God. They loved their Covenant, flew to it in time of danger as doves to the clefts of the rock, and reproached themselves for lightly esteeming the inestimable privilege.

These Covenanters took their position at the throne of the Lord Jesus, and contemplated with rapturous delight His many crowns and the magnificence of His kingdom. Their vast horizon took in heaven and earth, time and eternity, God and man. In their eyes the affairs of the world fell into subordinate relations, while the interests of the Church loomed up in over-awing proportions.

The high ideal for nations entertained by the Covenanters of Scotland will hardly be excelled while the world lasts. The Lord gave them a vision of what their country should be: enlightened with the Gospel, governed in righteousness, protected by Omnipotence, adorned with churches, a school in every parish, and a college in every city. The land in that vision was married to the Lord—Beulah was her name. All destroying vices had fled, all public evils were rooted out. The heavens were beneficent, the soil yielded its increase, business was prosperous, the armies were victorious, the rulers were God's ministers, the homes were filled with peace and plenty, and resounded with the melody of praise. Such was their conception of the blessed nation whose God is the Lord.

All this was embodied in the Solemn League and Covenant. By analyzing that international bond we find that it expresses or implies the following:

Nations originate with God, are dependent on His will, subject to His authority, and accountable at His throne.

They are placed under Jesus Christ to be employed by Him to the glory of God the Father.

The chief end of Civil Government is to suppress wickedness and promote righteousness, and thus prepare the way for the coming of the kingdom of our Lord.

Civil rulers are God's ministers, and as such, should serve the Lord Jesus Christ by conserving true religion.

Civil rulers should be interested in the union of the Churches, in Doctrine, Worship, Discipline, and Government, according to the Scriptures.

Civil Government should suppress in Church and State all features of society that are openly criminal or publicly injurious.

The people should enter into a solemn Covenant with their rulers and with God, to place themselves and their possessions in readiness to sustain the government in its legitimate work.

The nation that keeps Covenant with God shall dwell in safety, grow in power, and enjoy enduring prosperity.

Such was the Solemn League and Covenant.

Have the principles of Civil government ever had an enunciation so candid and heroic, so sublime and comprehensive, so ennobling to man and honoring to God? These principles were not flashes of a high-wrought imagination; they were practical. The Covenanted fathers reduced them to practice. These nations embodied them. The time was short, yet long enough for a demonstration.

What dignity rests on the State that is federally and loyally connected with the empire of the Lord Jesus Christ! How great the security and excellence of the government that abides under the banner of Christ! How powerful and happy the people who are exalted into favor with heaven by a Covenant that binds God and man! Such was the ideal entertained by the Scottish fathers; and by heroic self-sacrificing effort, they exalted the three kingdoms into the untrodden heights. These nations caught glimpses of the glory, basked for a season in the brilliancy, tasted the sweetness of the banquet, breathed the exhilarating air, then fell back. By the perfidy of man the vision was shattered and the idealization wrecked.

We shudder at the loss incurred by these kingdoms in their decline from their Covenant. What would have been their eminence among nations had the terms of the Covenant been fulfilled? What would have been their power and prestige had they, by keeping their Covenant, been sheltered for the last two and a half centuries from the ravages of rum and Rome, misrule and tyranny, the violence of unscrupulous men and the wrath of the offended Lord? What numerous posterity!

what fruitful fields! what prodigious wealth; what industrial prosperity! what educational institutions! what unparalleled progress! what inexhaustible resources for development at home and achievements abroad! Enjoying the glorious millennium two hundred and fifty years ahead of the rest of the world — what such a start would have done for the British Isles is past finding out.

Priest-ridden Ireland failed because at that time her best blood was soaking the roots of her green meadows; the massacre of her Protestants by the Romanists had left her low. Half-hearted England failed because treachery was lurking in her ranks from the beginning. But Scotland! Oh, Scotland, wherefore didst thou doubt? Wherefore turned ye back, ye sons of the mighty, lacking neither bows nor other arms? Heroes of the Covenant, why fainted ye in the day of battle? Shame on Scotland. The high places of the field, where once the banner for Christ's Crown and Covenant triumphantly waved, testify against thy treason.

But the Standard unfurled by the Covenanters of Scotland has not been altogether forsaken. A devoted band of Christ's soldiers still remain underneath its waving folds. Few, yet fearless, they hold the ground. There they sustain, day and night, the attacks of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Their position is ridiculed as impractical; they are galled by the fire of deserters; they are assailed by the arguments of statesmen; they are reproached by their own brethren; they are shelled by Satan's heaviest guns. A thousand voices are shouting, "Abandon your impracticable position. Come down; ye men of the Covenant, come down." But the reply is returned in unfaltering tones, "We will not; we cannot. These heights of righteousness have once been reached by three kingdoms; they will yet return to the Lord and renew their Covenant, leading other nations in triumphal procession. They are coming; they are coming. 'All the kings of the earth shall praise thee O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth; yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord.'"

Alexander Henderson, who wrote the Solemn League and Covenant, displayed therein statesmanship of the highest order. Great men are scarce who can be compared with Henderson to advantage. Wellington, Nelson, Howard, Gladstone, and Livingstone; these form a brilliant constellation; but Henderson is bright as a morning star. He set the pace for the future statesmen, who will yet lead the nations to God in Covenant and place the crown of national homage on the head of Jesus Christ.

The Covenanter who abides by his Covenant is the truest patriot. The greatest service that can be rendered to the country is the presentation of God's ideal for nations.

Points for the Class

1. How long did the Solemn League and Covenant remain in force?
2. What is its permanent use to the nations?
3. What was the Covenanters' ideal for nations?

4. Give the substance of the Solemn League and Covenant.

5. What caused these nations to abandon the Covenant?

6. Is the Covenant position still held by any?

7. How is truest patriotism best displayed?

Psalm Eleven

A Vision of Judgment upon Those Who Would Destroy the Righteous From the Earth

By the Rev. Frank D. Frazer

David was a prophet, that is, a seer. He was awake with eyes open to see not only what is coming but what is going on now. He was also a psalmist, and wrote down, in the poetry of the Psalms, what God showed him. He wrote this psalm of faith after he had found security in the refuge of Jehovah — security even in the midst of a world of enemies, of snares and traps, of danger, darkness, deceit, and rampant wickedness. As a prophet he was moved by the Spirit of Jehovah, who spoke by him, whose word was on his tongue. He here recounts his reply to certain ones who had tried to frighten him and so induce him to flee from the place where, under God's care and protection, he was doing what God had put him there to do. He was God's servant, messenger, and witness.

Some of those who approached him with regard to his peril, may have been would-be friends, faint of heart, and little of faith, but they were ill-advised, or allowing themselves to be used as tools for doing the work of crafty enemies, who, in order to destroy righteousness from the earth, were determined to get rid of every righteous man. David was one of those to whom God had given His righteousness through faith.

His reply is bold, without a tremor of fear, "**I have taken refuge in Jehovah,**" or, "**I have put my trust in Jehovah.**" He was not wanting a safer place. "**How then say ye to my soul** (what is said to the timid little birds, when hunters are near,) "**Fly in fright to your mountains, little birds!**" The mountains afford many hiding places for security and points of vantage not found elsewhere. Hence are often indicated in Scripture as the refuge for men. God also provided refuge for His little birds in the mountain ranges. To them He gave a strong instinct of fear, and wings to get away. The usual course of flight of little birds is not in straight lines, but up and down, to and fro. So here, the word translated "Flee," is a word that indicates that kind of movement, flight

in trepidation, zig-zag, now this way, now that, not to be followed easily.

"For, Look, the wicked have bent the bow. They have fixed the arrow on the string, To shoot, under cover, at the upright in heart." (vs. 2.) "**Have bent the bow,**" literally, "**have set foot against the bow.**" The large bow was held in vertical position, with one end on the ground, and one foot planted against it. With the arrow in place, all was ready to shoot. Better hurry! there is no time to tarry.

But David is a servant of Jehovah. He is not taking orders from men. He will remain where he is until his assignment there is finished. There may come a time to flee, but His God will let him know when it comes, and will go with him. He is not now afraid "for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day." It was necessary for him to flee repeatedly from king Saul. It became necessary for him to flee from his son Absalom. But the place of obedience to God always proved to be his place of safety.

It may become necessary for the righteous to flee when God is about to send His judgments upon the wicked. At one time God told Israel, "Flee ye out of the midst of Babylon, and save every man his life; be not cut off in her iniquity: for it is the time of Jehovah's vengeance; He will render unto her a recompense." (Jer. 51:6.) Jesus warned His disciples, "When ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies . . . then let them that are in Judea flee unto the mountains."

While the first of the Herods, Herod the Great, was king of Judea, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. But Joseph was warned of God, "Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." Later on, Jesus, according as He could best accomplish the work He came to do, sometimes hid Himself from His enemies; sometimes dumb-

founded them by His fearless presence. While He was still teaching and performing His mighty works in Galilee, certain Pharisees came to Him saying, "Get thee out, and go hence, for Herod (Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee,) is wanting to kill thee." (Lk. 13.31-33.) He answered, "Go tell that fox, Behold, I cast out demons, and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the day following I finish my course. Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."

Remember Nehemiah while he was in charge of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. (Neh. 6:1-19.) His enemies, enemies of God and of Jerusalem, tried various devices to make him afraid, using false rumors, and even prophets and priests as their tools to induce him to flee for his life, and come to them for a "conference." But he, putting his trust in God, replied, "Should such a man as I flee? I am doing a great work". "I cannot come". "I will not go". So the wall was finished, for he dwelt in the secret place of the Most High, and was delivered from the snares of the fowlers.

The psalmist, furthermore, answers the jibe, "**When the foundations are being destroyed, The righteous man, — what hath he done?**" (vs 3). Evidently meant to discourage the righteous from any further efforts toward preventing or repairing the breaches. What have they ever done? What can they do? — out-numbered and overwhelmed as a helpless minority. Their word is unheeded. Their power turned back. So what can one man do against such odds? He might better flee. This sounds like wise advice, but every righteous man has a work to do for his Lord, and until that is done, he is safe where he is. One with God is a majority!

The word here translated "**foundations**" is also translated "**pillars**". It is derived from a word meaning "**to set**", "**be set**", "**to be put in place**", as for the stability of a building, an institution. It refers to the foundation **principles** of law and order; the **standards** of right conduct and also to the **persons** in positions of authority and power. See Is. 19:10-15 RV.

In the beginning God Himself laid the foundations and set up the pillars for every institution He ordained for mankind. These, being vested in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God, are indestructible and unchangeable. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." — "The same yesterday, and today, and forever." "He was before all things, and in Him all things stand together", — "**stand together**", once for all, permanently, as the tense of the Greek verb asserts, Col. 1:17. But when men turn their back to God and build for themselves according to their own plans and specifications, they reject the Rock which God put in

place. It is to them "a stone of stumbling and rock of offense". They make other foundations, counterfeits and substitutions, which outwardly may appear beautiful to men; other pillars that outwardly may appear righteous to men, but lack stability. They, of course, use some good substantial materials, but without that **in which and by which** they are held together and stand together, — **without Jesus Christ**. Whatever is built without the Lord Jesus Christ in the holiness and fulness of His being can be destroyed by wicked men, or will crumble and fall in time and weather. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

The modernist argument is that the righteous stand in the way of progress, feebly resisting "**destiny**" and the irresistible forces of "**evolution**". The old foundations **must** be destroyed to give place for the new. So today we see the foundations still being destroyed; the pillars still being broken down. The wicked prosper. They get by with their evil deeds with little or no interference or punishment from men. If convicted and sentenced to punishment, they may be paroled or pardoned to go free to repeat their crimes, for laws are made to nullify and defeat the righteous laws which God gave. Those in positions of power, parents in the home, officials and courts in church and state are failing to maintain righteousness. But without Christ they can do nothing. Even a World Church with all its boasted millions and superior organization and resources can do nothing **without the Christ who is**; without Christ in His essential deity as King, Lawgiver, and Judge, in His real humanity, in His atoning sacrifice of Himself for sinners, in His resurrection and ascension to His eternal throne of almighty power and universal dominion, and in His coming again to judge every man. "Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's". "Vengeance belongeth to me; I will repay, saith the Lord." What have righteous men ever done? What can they do, whose righteousness, if they have any at all, is of God and in Christ. There is nothing done about the destruction of wickedness and sin unless God does it. He has done it, is doing it now, and shall continue until sin is taken away and the works of the devil destroyed. There is only ONE RIGHTEOUS; only ONE HOLY. The positive and conclusive answer to the question. What hath the righteous done? now follows. It is the answer of faith in the ONE who is able.

Jehovah is in His holy temple; Jehovah, — His throne is in the heavens: His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men. Jehovah trieth the righteous; but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul abhors." (Vss 4, 5). What hath THE RIGHTEOUS ONE done? THE HOLY ONE, what is He doing?

Let us take the case of Sodom which Scrip-

ture points to as a typical example. The almost unbelievable number of homosexualists in high places today, and the general perversion of mens' minds, from early youth, to all sorts of godlessness and lawlessness are ominous signs of our times.

First, Jehovah,—His throne is in the heavens, —“humbleth Himself to look at the things in heaven and on the earth”. (Ps. 113: 5, 6). He gathers the facts of the situation by His own first hand observations, unmoved by hearsay or the opinions of others. As He told Abraham, “Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and their sin very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which is come to me; and if not I will know.” (Gn. 18: 20, 21.) Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and justice are the foundations of His throne. A fire goeth before Him . . .” (Ps. 99: 2, 3). **“His eyes behold, His eyelids test the children of men”**, both righteous and wicked, according to the fixed obligations of the Everlasting Covenant, which everyone may know, if he will, — both its curse and its blessedness. His eyes behold the wicked to do them exact justice. His eyes behold the righteous to do them good in their latter end. (Dt. 8: 16). **“His eyelids”** are mentioned, that men may understand, since in the case of human eyes, for a searching, penetration look, the lids are instinctively drawn to the point of clearest focus. Jehovah puts the righteous to the test of His fire that the pure may be separated from the vile. “He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver; . . . and they shall offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness.” (Mal. 3: 3).

Then, after the trial, comes the judgment. **“Upon the wicked He raineth snares;”** so that every one is caught in his own trap. **“Fire and brimstone and burning wind are the portion of their cup.”** The desolations of Sodom stand for all time as a warning to all men everywhere. But God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. The Judge of all the earth will do right. **“For Jehovah is righteous; He loveth righteousness.”** God saw some righteousness in Lot, and delivered him out of Sodom, even though he “lingered” and was slow to obey the command, “Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.” (Gn. 18:16, 30). He preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others. And to every righteous man, God says what He said to Noah, “I will establish my covenant with thee; . . . Come thou and all thy house into the ark: for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.” “Come thou into the ark of the covenant” is still open to all who will enter, trusting to the truth and faithfulness of His promise and willing to keep His commands which are all righteous. The blessing is sure to follow.

“The upright shall behold His face.” This expresses the “full assurance of hope unto the end, that ye be not slothful but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Heb. 6:11,12). “When He hath tried me”, said Job, “I shall come forth as gold.” “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” “And they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.” “And we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him even as He is.”

God's Great Plan

By the Rev. J. G. Vos

“The purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” Eph. 1:11.

A college classmate once asked me: “Say, Vos, does anybody still believe in the old-fashioned doctrine of predestination?” He evidently classed predestination along with alchemy and the Holy Roman Empire, and was quite surprised when informed that one of his own classmates believed in it. It is common today to represent the doctrine of predestination as an outworn belief, a mere curiosity of a too-credulous past. But if we take the Bible seriously, we cannot dispose of predestination so easily.

All intelligent work involves previous planning. Before the great allied invasion of Normandy on D-Day in 1944, many months had to be spent in preparing the most detailed and comprehensive

plans. Without those elaborate plans the invasion would certainly have failed. Everything had to be thought of and provided for in advance so that co-ordination would be achieved. If a comprehensive, and detailed plan is needed for a military operation, should we be surprised to find that the Bible speaks of God having a comprehensive and detailed plan for His great operation — “Operation History?”

All human planning is necessarily limited and imperfect because all human planners are limited and imperfect. There are always some factors that man cannot foresee or control that may enter the situation and change everything. After months of planning, General Eisenhower and his staff almost had to postpone the Normandy invasion because of unfavorable weather. They could control

ships, planes, troops and ammunition but they could not control the weather, nor even predict it with absolute certainty. But as God is the infinite, perfect and almighty Being, there are no factors beyond His control that can frustrate His plan. His planning is not only all-inclusive and perfect but it is never frustrated; it is always put into execution, to the smallest detail, without deviation or failure.

The Bible teaches us that God's plan is an eternal plan. It is eternal because God is eternal. What we call "time" — the distinction between past, present and future — is a part of God's creation. Time applies to God's creatures, but not to God Himself. God Himself lives above time, in an eternal present; past, present and future are all equally present to God. He thinks of these distinctions of time only in relation to His creatures, not in relation to Himself. When we say that God's plan is an eternal plan, we mean that it is above, or prior to, everything that exists in time and space. Time, space, and everything in them, are God's execution of the great plan.

Because it is an eternal plan, it is also an unchangeable plan. Human planners sometimes have to stop and change their plans after the plan has been partly put into operation. At the time of the Pearl Harbor attack, a great ship was being built to be a luxurious passenger liner. In a few months it would have been completed. Then orders arrived from Washington, and the de luxe furnishings which had been installed were removed. The ship was stripped of all luxury equipment, and completed as a troop transport. Unforeseen events forced a change in the plan after part of the plan had been put into operation.

But that can never happen to God's plan, because it is an eternal plan, and it includes everything that will ever happen in the created universe. So there are no unforeseen events. Every event that will ever happen is already a part of the great plan of God. It includes even what we sometimes call "chance" happenings (Proverbs 16:33), for there is no such thing as "chance" from God's point of view. It also includes all the decisions and actions of human beings, even to the sinful acts of wicked men (Acts 2: 23; 4: 27-28).

This truth that God has a great eternal plan which includes all that ever comes to pass is very plainly and emphatically taught in the Bible. It is really involved in the Bible idea of God. If God does not have such a perfect plan, He is not really God in the true sense of the term "God."

Many people have raised objections to this doctrine. Among the main objections raised are claims (1) that predestination is contrary to belief in natural law, such as the law of gravity; (2) that it is contrary to human freedom and responsibility; (3) that it makes God responsible

for sin and evil; (4) that it is contrary to the Scripture promise that whosoever believes on Christ shall be saved. We shall consider part of these objections in the present article, and part of them, D. V., in an article to be published in our next issue.

IS PREDESTINATION CONTRARY TO NATURAL LAW?

The doctrine of predestination (also called foreordination) is based upon texts of Scripture. We do not believe it because it is reasonable, though it is, but because God's Word teaches it. The Bible, not human reason, is our authority for faith and life. The first question we must face is not "Is it reasonable?" but "Does the Bible teach it?" If the Bible teaches it, that settles the matter for a Christian; he must accept it on the authority of God's Word. Once we have made up our mind to accept the teachings of God's Word in humble, childlike faith, it may be helpful to us to consider some of the objections that have been raised against the doctrine of predestination, and to note how these objections can be answered.

There is not space in this article for a full presentation of the Bible data on this subject. This doctrine is stated in outline form in **The Westminster Confession of Faith**, Chapter III, where 60 passages of Scripture are cited. We shall mention just a few passages here.

God's foreordination includes all that ever happens, Eph. 1:11. It was decreed in eternity, before the creation. Eph. 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20. It includes the choice of particular individuals to eternal life. Psalm 65:4; Mark 13:20; John 6:37-39; 17:2. It includes the determination of "chance" events, Proverbs 16:33. It includes the foreordination of the sinful acts of men, Genesis 45:8; Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28.

Failure to look at the whole picture is the cause of a common objection to the doctrine of predestination. The objector says: "It is raining today, not because God foreordained today's weather, but because of natural causes which produce rain." Another objector says: "Abraham Lincoln died on April 15, 1865, not because God had foreordained his death, but because he was fatally wounded by an assassin's bullet."

What these objectors fail to realize is that God's foreordination includes not only the final result, but the whole series of events and causes which produce that result. If it is raining today, God has from all eternity foreordained just those conditions of temperature, air pressure, humidity, wind, etc., which would produce today's rain. God not only foreordained Lincoln's death on April 15, 1865, but He also foreordained all the factors and circumstances which combined to produce this result. For instance, God foreordained the discovery of how to make gunpowder, the invention

of firearms, the discovery of America by Columbus, the whole process of politics by which Lincoln became President, and the particular circumstances which led Lincoln to attend Ford's Theater on the night when he was shot.

What would we think of a farmer who would say: "If I am going to have a good wheat crop, then I am going to have a good wheat crop. Therefore I need not bother to plant any seed." Or what would we think of a business man who would say: "If I am going to be in New York next Monday I shall be there whether I go or not; therefore I need not take the train." In all our common affairs we realize that ends are attained by the use of appropriate means. How foolish it is, then, to think of God as foreordaining the final results only, without foreordaining the means by which those results are to be accomplished!

Foreordination is not contrary to natural law; it includes the whole fabric of natural causes and effects. Natural law does not exist of itself; it was created by God for His plans and purposes, and He controls and directs all its functioning. The person who objects to foreordination thinks of natural law as something outside of God's great plan. But really there is nothing outside of that plan. God has foreordained all that comes to pass, including adequate means to accomplish all the ends He has purposed.

Many people who have never taken the trouble to learn what the doctrine of predestination really is, have this childish idea that it means the foreordination of the final results apart from any causes or means which could accomplish those final results. The Bible does not teach any such absurd idea, nor has the Church ever held such a notion. God, the great Planner, has decreed both the ends and the means which are to produce them.

The old story of the lifeboat illustrates this principle that God has foreordained the means as well as the final result. A ship had been wrecked on rocks off the coast of England. A lifesaving crew was about to launch a lifeboat in an attempt to rescue those in peril on the doomed ship. But one member of the lifesaving crew objected: "There is no need for us to launch this lifeboat. If God has foreordained that they are to be saved, they will be saved; and if God has foreordained that they are to be drowned, they will be drowned. If He has foreordained that they are to be saved, the lifeboat is unnecessary; if He has foreordained that they are to be drowned, the lifeboat will be useless." But another member of the crew answered: "Perhaps God has foreordained that they are to be saved from drowning by means of this lifeboat. Therefore let us launch it without delay!"

This same truth is brought out by the story of a shipwreck which is recorded in the Bible

(Acts 27). The ship on which the apostle Paul was a passenger was wrecked in a furious storm. God had foreordained that every one of the 276 persons on board would get safely to land (verses 22-24, 37). But God's plan also included appropriate means by which this was to be accomplished. The sailors were to be prevented from leaving the ship prematurely (30-32). The people were to be strengthened by partaking of food after their long fast (33-36). The ship was to run aground at a point near the shore (39-41). Those who could swim were to make use of this ability (43); the rest were to avail themselves of planks or pieces of the ship (44). "And so it came to pass, that they all escaped safe to land." God's foreordination included all these means by which the intended result was accomplished.

IS OUR FREEDOM REAL?

A few years ago two students in Chicago, Leopold and Loeb, were on trial for the murder of a child named Bobbie Franks. The defendants retained the famous criminal lawyer, Clarence Darrow, to plead their cause. Darrow admitted that his clients had indeed killed Bobbie Franks. But he argued that they should not be held responsible for their deed. Darrow said that these two students came from a poor background, they had been under-privileged, they had grown up among bad social conditions. In short, they were victims of bad heredity and bad environment. Therefore, argued Darrow, the jury should not hold Leopold and Loeb responsible for the murder of Bobbie Franks. The jury, however, thought differently, and both defendants were convicted.

Certainly we are affected by the heredity and the environmental factors which, in the providence of God, are ours. We are exactly what God, in His wise plan, has decreed and provided that we shall be. And even our acts and decisions, the Bible plainly teaches, are all part of the working out of God's great eternal plan. Does this mean that our freedom is only an illusion, that we are mere pieces of machinery, mere robots, without real freedom to make decisions which are truly **our own** decisions?

The objector comes and says that if God has foreordained our decisions and actions, then we cannot really be free, nor can we be responsible for our acts. The objector feels that he must choose between God's foreordination and man's freedom. Being human himself, he decides in favor of man's freedom, and denies that God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.

The charge of "fatalism" is constantly being brought against the Bible truth of foreordination by people who insist on looking at the problem as an "either . . . or" alternative: either God's foreordination, or man's freedom. Fatalism is the notion that everything is decided by a blind, relent-

less, impersonal fate, quite regardless of all our decisions and actions. But the Bible truth of foreordination is certainly not fatalism. We do not believe that events are determined by a blind, impersonal fate, but by the wise plan of the personal God, our Heavenly Father. Christianity has no room for either "fate" or "luck"; rather, it teaches that there is an infinitely wise divine plan.

The "either . . . or" alternative is wrong. According to the Bible it is really a "both . . . and" situation. My decisions and actions are both foreordained by God, and they are truly my own free acts, for which I am responsible. My freedom is real, certainly, but there is something out beyond it. It is real, but it operates within a larger framework, namely, the eternal plan of God. Our decisions are truly our own, but we are not the ultimate source of them. I make up my mind, according to my own motives and for my own reasons to buy a new hat, eat my dinner or mow the lawn. But I did not really originate that decision; it was in the mind of God before it was formed in my mind. It was in the mind of God from eternity.

Thomas Edison invented the phonograph, yet he did not really originate the idea of the phonograph, for before the idea occurred to Edison, it was in the mind of God. God planned it from eternity. We humans do not really originate anything. What is original to us is always old to God.

But the objector says: "If my decisions and acts are to be really my own, they must be new to God as well as to me. I cannot be responsible, if God planned my decision before I myself made it." This sounds plausible, but it amounts to throwing away the Bible idea of God. According to the Bible, it is in God that we "live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Did you ever

think what that verse really means? God with His great plan is the larger framework in which your personal freedom operates. God created you to be that kind of a creature—a creature whose actions would be foreordained by God and yet they would be free, they would be truly your own personal actions. You say you can't understand this? Of course you can't. That is because God is God. If you could understand God and God's working, you would no longer be in your proper relation to God; if you could understand God you would be equal with God, you would be divine.

The objector insists that he must choose between God and man. Either God is the author of my actions, or I am the author of them. But according to the Bible, we must not make this choice. The Bible teaches that God's foreordination and man's freedom are **both** true. This involves an insoluble mystery. The Bible does not give the answer to it. We cannot solve it, nor do we need to solve it.

The only safe and right course is to believe in both God's foreordination and man's freedom. If we give up God's foreordination, we are left with a God who is not in control of the universe, that is, a finite God. If we give up man's freedom, we are left as mere robots or machines, without responsibility for our acts. The mystery of how our actions can be foreordained and yet free is one of God's secrets. He has not revealed the answer to us. Instead of trying to explain this mystery away, we should be filled with awe and wonder at the infinite greatness and wisdom of God.

Note: The foregoing article is reprinted from **THE GOAL POST**, 1952, and is used by permission. As published in **THE GOAL POST** the material was divided into three short articles, which appeared in the March, May and July issues of 1952. — Ed.

What is Calvinism?

By B. B. Warfield, D. D.

Calvinism is evangelicalism in its pure and only stable expression, and when we say evangelicalism we say sin and salvation. It means utter dependence on God for salvation. It implies therefore need of salvation and a profound sense of this need, along with an equally profound sense of helplessness in the presence of this need and utter dependence on God for its satisfaction. Its type is found in the publican, who smote his breast and cried, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" No question there of saving himself, or of helping God to save him, or of opening the way to God to save him. No question of anything but "I am a sinner, and all my hope is in God my Saviour!" This is Calvinism, not just something

like Calvinism or an approach to Calvinism, but Calvinism in its vital manifestation. Wherever this attitude of heart is found and is given expression in direct and unambiguous terms, there is Calvinism. Wherever this attitude of mind and heart is fallen away from, in however small a measure, there Calvinism has become impossible.

For Calvinism, in this soteriological aspect of it, is just the perception and expression and defence of the utter dependence of the soul on the free grace of God for salvation. All its so-called hard features — its doctrine of original sin; yes, speak it right out, its doctrine of total depravity and the entire inability of the

sinful will to good; its doctrine of election, or to put it in the words everywhere spoken against, its doctrine of predestination and preterition, of reprobation itself — mean just this and nothing more. Calvinism will not play fast and loose with the free grace of God. It is set upon giving to God, and to God alone, the glory and all the glory of salvation. There are others than Calvinists, no doubt, who would fain make the same great confession. But they make it with reserves; or they painfully justify the making of it by some tenuous theory which confuses nature and grace. They leave logical pitfalls on this side or that; and the difference between logical pitfalls and other pitfalls is that the wayfarer may fall into the others, but the plain man, just because his is a simple mind, must fall into those. Calvinism will leave no logical pitfalls, and will make no reserves. It will have nothing to do with theories whose function it is to explain away facts. It confesses, with a heart full of adoring gratitude, that to God and to God alone belongs salvation and the whole of salvation; that He it is, and He alone, who works salvation in its whole reach. Any falling away in the slightest measure from this great confession is to fall away from Calvinism. Any intrusion of any human merit, or act, or disposition, or power, as ground or cause or occasion, into the process of divine salvation, — whether in the way of power to resist

or of ability to improve grace, of the opening of the soul to the reception of grace, or of the employment of grace already received — is a breach with Calvinism.

Calvinism is the casting of the soul wholly on the free grace of God alone, to whom alone belongs salvation.

The Calvinist is the man who has seen God, and who, having seen God in His glory, is filled, on the one hand, with a sense of his own unworthiness to stand in God's sight, as a creature, and much more as a sinner, and, on the other hand, with adoring wonder that nevertheless this God is a God who receives sinners. He who believes in God without reserve, and is determined that God shall be God to him, in all his thinking, feeling, willing — in the entire compass of his life activities, intellectual, moral, spiritual — throughout all his individual, social, religious relations — is, by the force of that strictest of all logic which presides over the outworking of principles into thought and life, by the very necessity of the case, A Calvinist.

Note: The above article by the late Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield is reprinted here from a booklet entitled "**I don't like Calvinism!**" published by the Sovereign Grace Union, London, England. — Ed.

People and Places in the Psalms

TYRE. 45:12; 83:7; 87:4. A great ancient seaport and commercial city of Phoenicia. The Phoenicians were the outstanding navigators and traders of the Old Testament period. Tyre was a city famous for its great wealth and prosperity. In Psalm 45:12 "the daughter of Tyre" is represented as bringing a gift to the marriage of the King's Son. This is interpreted as meaning that the world of commerce shall pay tribute to Christ's Kingdom. In Psalm 83:7 Tyre is referred to as one of the nations confederate against Israel, against which the help of the Lord is implored. In Psalm 87:4 Tyre is mentioned as a renowned city, which men would count it an honor to have as their birthplace; much more, therefore, is it an honor to have been born in Zion, the City of God.

ZALMUNNA. 83:11. Zalmunna was one of the two Midianite kings put to death by Gideon. The history is recorded in Judges chapter 8. In Psalm 83:11 Zalmunna is cited as a specimen of the defeated and destroyed enemies of God and of God's Kingdom. The import of the mention of Zalmunna in the Psalm, therefore, is that the kingdom of evil, and all those permanently identified with it, shall be destroyed by the almighty, redemptive power of God.

ZEB. 83:11. Zeba was one of the Midianite kings killed by Gideon (Judges 8). See note on Zalmunna, above, for further comment.

ZEBULUN. 68:27. Zebulun was the tenth son of Jacob, and his sixth son by Leah. The tribe of Zebulun, descended from the individual Zebulun, was located in northern Palestine, northwest of the Carmel range and east of the Sea of Galilee, though separated from the latter by the tribe of Naphtali. Zebulun is mentioned along with the tribes of Naphtali and Benjamin in Psalm 68:27 as participating in the solemn worship of God at the temple in Jerusalem (verses 24, 32). The meaning would seem to be that even the more distant tribes are essential parts of the nation of Israel; as the apostle Paul says concerning the Christian Church, "the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . ." (1 Cor. 12:12,13). The corporate unity of the Church as the body of Christ is implied.

ZEEB. 83:11. Zeeb was a Midianite prince who was captured and executed by Gideon (Judges 7). For further comment, see the note on Zalmunna, above.

ZION. 2:6. Total occurrences in the Psalms, 38. Zion, sometimes spelled Sion, was first of all a geographical designation of a place, then the designation of a religious concept, and finally a symbolic expression for the transcendent, ideal fulfilment of religious hope and promise. In the first sense, Zion was originally one of the hills on which Jerusalem was built. David captured it from the Jebusites, and placed the ark of the covenant on this hill. Later the ark was removed to nearby Mount Moriah, where Solomon built the temple; after this, the name Zion came to be used to include not only the actual hill of Zion, but also the temple area. Still later, the name Zion is applied to the city of Jerusalem as a whole. In the second sense, the term Zion was used to designate the Israelite church and nation as it existed in covenant with God. It is thus used, for example, in Psalm 126:1 and 129:5. Finally, in the New Testament, Zion is spiritualized and used as a symbol for the transcendent, ideal fulfilment of religion, that is, for heaven: Hebrews 12:22; Rev. 14:1. As the Christian Church is the true continuation of the Old Testament Israel, to the Christian of today Zion means the Church.

ZOAN. 78:12, 43. Zoan was a city of ancient Egypt, located in the eastern part of the Nile delta. The references in Psalm 78 show that Zoan was

the place where Moses met with Pharaoh during the period of the ten plagues which preceded Israel's escape from Egypt. The Psalm speaks of the mighty miracles wrought by the power of God at Zoan. This serves to remind us, as we sing the Psalms, that God's plan of redemption involves deliverance of His people from an objective realm of evil. Today we are much in danger of forgetting this, or failing to realize it at all. Salvation is too often represented today purely in psychological terms, as equivalent to "integration of personality," as if the Christian idea of salvation were that of a purely subjective adjustment or integration of factors within an individual's personality. Actually, of course, salvation involves tremendous changes in a person's relations with objective reality. It includes getting into a right relation to God, and the breaking up of the person's relation to the realm of evil, which the Bible always regards as objectively real, not merely subjectively real. (By "objectively real" we mean really existing outside of our own personality). Salvation involves deliverance by the almighty, supernatural power of God from something outside of ourselves, not merely a readjustment of what is inside of our personality.

The End

Some Noteworthy Quotations

No one is made strong by God but he who feels himself weak of his own self.

— Augustine of Hippo

The grace of God does not find men fit for salvation, but makes them so.

— Augustine of Hippo

Deal gently and tenderly with your unconverted friends. Remember you were once as blind as they.

— Robert Murray McCheyne

From God's election cometh faith; from a lively faith do good works spring, in which the elect continuing and going forward not only make their own election sure, as St. Peter doth teach (2 Peter 1:11) but also give a testimony of it to others, before whom their good works do shine."

— John Knox

Take as many to heaven with you as ye are able to draw. The more ye draw with you, ye shall be the welcomer yourself.

— Samuel Rutherford

Sure I am it is better to be sick, providing Christ come to the bedside and draw by the curtains, and say "Courage, I am thy salvation," than

to enjoy health, being lusty and strong, and never to be visited of God.

— Samuel Rutherford

A child of God may pray and not be heard, because at that time he may be a child of anger. If any sin lie unrepented of, we are not in a case fit to pray.

— Richard Sibbes

There are many among us who seem to live in utter ignorance of their lost condition, who plead the innocence of their lives even when Death is laying his cold hand upon them. There are some poor souls who seem to die willing to be judged by the law. I have lived a decent life, they will say; I have been a harmless quiet-living man; and I can see no reason why the wrath of the great God should ever come upon me. Oh! brethren, if this is your case, it is very plain you have never had a divine awakening. The power of God alone could awaken you to flee.

— Robert Murray McCheyne

Christians are called **spiritual** persons because they are born of the Spirit, and because of the indwelling and holy influences of the Spirit of God in them.

—Jonathan Edwards

All the parts of man's nature have suffered each their own peculiar injury by the catastrophe of the Fall, but it is those parts that have more immediately to do with God and His revealed will that have suffered most. And no part has suffered such a shock and hurt as the will. It is now by nature and in every unregenerate man turned away from God, and in bondage to sin and evil. It is not that man would do good, would return to God if he could; it is not that he cannot, he **will not**. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." There was no hand holding them back, no cord binding them but the bands of their evil will. This is what is meant when learned divines treat of the bondage and inability of the will.

— Alexander Whyte

God will not be honored with exceptions, nor will He allow us to cut off from His law what is less pleasing to us. It is not said of a part of the law, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

— John Calvin

A man is spotted though he have only one stain; a cup is broken, if only the top be broken; one disease will make a man sick; and there are a hundred ways to wander in, but only one to life and immortality.

— Jeremy Taylor

The solidarity of the law is such, that it does not admit of being broken in one point, and yet in the whole.

— Henry Alford

The Kingdom of God among men is nothing else than a restoration to a happy life; or, in other words, it is true and everlasting happiness.

— John Calvin

The beginning of true nobility comes when a man ceases to be interested in the judgment of men, and becomes interested in the judgment of God.

— J. Gresham Machen

Open communion logically leads to open church membership, and a church membership open to all, without reference to the qualifications required in Scripture, or without examination on the part of the church as to the existence of these qualifications in those who unite with it, is virtually an identification of the church with the world, and, without protest from Scripturally constituted bodies, would finally result in its actual extinction.

— Augustus Hopkins Strong

Religious Terms Defined

PARADISE. Originally, a park or garden. The Septuagint (earliest Greek translation of the Old Testament) calls the Garden of Eden the Paradise of Eden (Gen. 2:8). In the New Testament, the word Paradise means heaven, as shown by 2 Cor. 12:4 compared with 12:2, and Rev. 2:7 compared with 22:2.

PARDON. The forgiveness or remission of sin. It is a mistake to use the term pardon as equivalent to justification, as is often done. Justification is a broader term and includes more than pardon. Pardon includes only the remission of sins; justification includes also the imputation of righteousness to the person.

PASSION OF CHRIST. A term designating the sufferings of Christ as our Saviour, especially His death on the cross and the sufferings which shortly preceded this.

PELAGIANISM. A heresy named after Pelagius, a British monk of the fourth century. Pelagianism denied the doctrines of original sin and total depravity, and held that man is saved, not by the sovereign grace of God, but by his own free will. This ancient heresy is akin to the modern heresy of Arminianism.

PENTATEUCH. The first five books of the

Bible, or the Books of Moses, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

PERFECTIONISM. The doctrine that it is possible for a Christian, in this life, to reach a state where he no longer commits sin. Perfectionists almost invariably define what they mean by "perfection" as something short of the absolute moral ideal which God requires man to live up to. Thus they lower the moral standard of the Bible, in order to hold that the Christian can attain it. In other words, perfectionism teaches that it is possible to reach an imperfect perfection.

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS. The Biblical doctrine that those who are truly regenerated by the Holy Spirit can neither totally nor finally fall away from the grace of God, but shall be preserved therein by the power of God and shall certainly inherit eternal life.

POSITIVISM. The system of philosophy which holds that the only real knowledge is knowledge of phenomena, that is, knowledge of facts obtained by our senses. This philosophy teaches that it is impossible to have real knowledge of God or of the human soul.

PRE-ADAMITES. A prehistoric race of human beings held by some to have existed before

the creation of Adam and Eve. There is no Biblical basis for such an idea, and the Biblical data which are alleged to support it have, when legitimately interpreted, no such implication.

PROBATION. A trial or test of someone or something. The situation in which God placed Adam and Eve, commonly called the Covenant of Life or Covenant of Works, was essentially a test or probation with regard to their obedience to God.

PROPTIATION. A satisfaction of the violated holiness of God by the sacrifice of a Substitute provided by and acceptable to God. Christ by His death on the cross is the propitiation for our sins.

PROVIDENCE. "God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions" (S.C. 11). Providence is God's constant support and control of the universe and all it contains so that God's eternal purpose for the whole and for every part is infallibly accomplished.

PURITANS. The name given to those English Protestants of the seventeenth century who sought a more complete and radical reformation of the Church of England than had yet been attained.

REFORMED FAITH. That interpretation of Christianity which gives full recognition to the absolute sovereignty of God and to man's absolute dependence upon God for every factor of his faith, salvation and life. Also called Calvinism.

REFORMED THEOLOGY. The theology which sets forth the Reformed Faith, or Calvinism.

REGENERATION. The act of God the Holy Spirit by which a human person, previously dead in trespasses and sins, is supernaturally made spiritually alive. Logically considered, faith in Christ is the effect, not the cause, of regeneration, though in point of time the two may be almost simultaneous.

SATAN. The head and ruler of the kingdom of evil, also called the devil. The Bible teaches the real existence and personality of Satan.

SELFISHNESS. One of the forms or manifestations of sin, by which a person seeks to please himself without regard to the needs or rights of others. It is sometimes stated that selfishness is the essence of sin, but this is an error. The essence of sin is not selfishness, but enmity to God. An act may be unselfish, and yet sinful, as for example when someone gives his life as a martyr for a false religion.

The Act of Saving Faith

A good deal of confusion, and not a little heart-burning, must result from the tendency of Bible teachers these days to make sharp distinctions within the realm of saving faith, involving relationships to Christ that change with the progress of the spiritual life. This is often put, as Dr. Graham Scroggie put it in his opening address at Keswick this year, in some such form as: "We can receive Him (Christ) as Saviour and reject Him as Master." The same speaker elaborated this theme at greater length and in even bolder terms as Keswick last year, when he set out to prove that "one may be justified and not yet experimentally sanctified," and that one is "a child of God by faith and a friend of God by obedience."

We think these and similar distinctions, so misleading to young Christians, can be shown to have no foundation in Scripture teaching and none at all in Biblical theology. They arise from an incorrect apprehension of the meaning and action of faith and from a confused conception of the offices of Christ in relation to the believing sinner. Too often the offices of Christ are referred to as if they functioned at different and closely-defined periods of our Lord's life, and as if, as Dr. Scroggie teaches, Christ may be accepted in one of His offices and rejected in the others.

When we speak of an "office" of Christ we

mean a certain relation that He bears to the trusting soul, and it is customary to recognize Christ in three distinct offices, Prophet, Priest and King, meeting the three realities of sin, its ignorance, its guilt, and its power. Though these offices are distinct, they are not, however, separable, and they do not refer to different periods of Christ's life. He was a Prophet revealing God and proclaiming His truth while He was offering Himself as a sacrifice for the world's sin; He was Priest while He was cleansing the temple and exercising divine authority; and He was King whether teaching on the mount or offering His life on Calvary.

This being so, faith deals with Christ in all three offices if it is saving and appropriating faith, and without the exercise of these offices of our Lord faith could not be saving faith. Without His revelation and illumination we should know nothing of God or of ourselves; without His sacrifice we should not experience reconciliation and peace; and without the exercise of His royal power we could not break with sin and turn to God in new obedience. And all this undoubtedly happens in the experience of conversion, or, to put it otherwise, in the exercise of saving faith.

We believe that much of this confusion has arisen through a conception of faith that restricts it to the intellectual sphere. When mental assent

to a certain statement of truth is accepted as sufficient evidence of faith, there is the possibility of being grossly led astray. It is possible that this inadequate conception of faith lies behind much of the "decisions" for Christ that are pressed for in after-meetings and are, all too often, regarded as the sum total of conversion.

While there is undoubtedly an intellectual element in faith, its action does not rest finally in the realm of the intellect. Its roots go down into the moral and spiritual realm. With the enlightenment of the mind in the knowledge of truth, there is the awakening of the conscience to desire pardon and peace, and the renewal of the will to enable it to embrace Christ. There are thus intellectual, emotional and volitional elements entering into every act of saving faith: the intellectual element involving knowledge and understanding; the emotional involving conviction that not only accepts the truth but claims a personal interest in it; and the volitional element involving the trust by which the soul acts in the direction indicated by its new-found knowledge and conviction.

Thus in the acts of saving faith there is a going forth of the entire man to Jesus Christ: it is an act of the whole complex being of man by which faith goes out to its object and embraces Him. Faith thus takes toll of the whole man and deals with the whole Christ. It is, in its very essence, a receptive act whereby Christ is appropriated in His fulness as Prophet, Priest and King, or, if it be preferred, as Teacher, Saviour, and Lord. At that point the entire work of salvation has begun and the soul enters into the new relationship of justification, adoption and sanctification.

For this reason, faith is most commonly repre-

sented in Scripture as qualitative rather than quantitative in its essence. It is not so much a matter of great faith, as of faith in a great Saviour. This finds confirmation in the request of His disciples, "Lord, increase our faith"; and His answer: "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed." If that be so, it is misleading to speak of degrees of faith or of variations of faith, at one time accepting Christ as Saviour, at another as Lord. Faith if it be saving makes contact with Christ in His fulness and receives out of that fulness the grace it needs. In other words, faith embraces a living Saviour, and not merely any theory about the Saviour, however orthodox it may be.

This will seem very elementary instruction to those who know their Bibles and have been indoctrinated in the theology of the Shorter Catechism, but it is truth that is not firmly grasped by those who lead our evangelistic campaigns and instruct our converts. And ignorance of it leads to foolish speculation as to the perseverance of professing converts. If conversion means merely our intellectual assent to certain statements of Scripture, it will not stand unless it develops and penetrates into the moral and spiritual consciousness. But where there is an act of saving faith whereby Christ in all His life and fulness is appropriated, there is a regeneration of the inner being, and a conversion of the entire life and character that will stand the test of the years. In such a case, it is not the perseverance of the believer that is in view, but the perseverance of the living Christ whom the believer's faith has accepted as Saviour to enlighten, to pardon, and to rule.

Note: For the foregoing timely and instructive article we are indebted to **The Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland.** — Ed.

The Letter and the Spirit

By the Rev. W. R. McEwen

How often are the words quoted or referred to, "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3.6), as if they meant, "It is the spirit of the law which matters, the minute details have little significance." No doubt there is some truth in this statement. One may be very strict about observing "the letter of the law" and yet break it in spirit. The Pharisees did that when they tithed mint and anise and cummin and passed over the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith. And it is still possible to be strictly legal and yet, dishonest, to observe the law outwardly yet break it in spirit. It is quite true that exclusive attention to particulars of the law may shrivel and deaden the soul, whereas real sympathy with the spirit of the law may give true liberty in the observing of it. Yet that is not what

Paul meant. To use this text to indicate something so obvious is to miss the real meaning of Paul's teaching.

Paul and the Law

Some would go even farther and interpret Paul as teaching that we should take the law with a grain of salt, as though he meant that the Old Testament was not true throughout and must be modified in the light of the New Testament, and especially the teaching of Jesus. They maintain that Paul taught that strict attention to the precepts of the Old Testament is deadly, but that we should rather follow its general religious teaching and be content with that, as if he said, "the letter of the law killeth but the spirit of the law giveth life."

It would be very strange if Paul meant anything like that. For Paul had a very high estimate of the Old Testament. He certainly did not minimise its authority. He declared that "the law is holy and just and good." He quoted the law as saying, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the law to do them." According to Paul the law is not something from which we can pick and choose what we like to obey and what we wish to disobey. Yet that is how many treat the law of God, and some would appeal to Paul to justify their disobedience.

Again, some would say that Paul is condemning the externalism of the ceremonial law and advocating the blessings of spiritual worship. It is quite true that Paul taught that the ceremonial ordinances of the Old Testament were done away by Christ through His fulfilling them in His mediatorial work. And Paul protested most strongly against the Judaisers who insisted on the observance of Jewish ritualistic practices as essential to salvation. He recognised the truth, which Christ taught the Women of Samaria, that the time had come when not in any special place but wherever people worshipped in spirit and in truth there men truly worshipped the Father, Who is a spirit. Certainly to reintroduce the Old Testament symbolism into the worship of the New Testament church is deadening. We are no longer under the burden of the weak and beggardly elements of Judaism, and should rejoice in the liberty of the spirit of New Testament worship.

Yet that is not what Paul meant here. He is not contrasting the letter of the law with the spirit of the law at all. He is contrasting the law of God with the Spirit of God. Such a contrast is worth studying, for it takes us into the very heart of the Gospel and of Paul's teaching.

The Bane of the Law

The law of which Paul speaks here is not specially the ceremonial law, but the whole law of God in all its majesty and authority. Indeed, he is specially referring to the highest moral aspects of that law. That law was promulgated amid the thunders of Sinai. But it was revealed to the heart of man before that. Even the heathen who have no written revelation, are not without law. They are, as Paul says, "a law unto themselves." This does not mean, as it is often quoted as meaning, that they may do what they like without being accountable to the authority of God. It rather means that even they cannot get away from the reign of law which is everywhere present.

And this law of God is a "letter." It is written. It was written on the tables of stone by the finger of God. It is written also in the consciences of the heathen. It is written in the Old Testament, but also in the New, as, for example,

in the Sermon on the Mount. Everywhere it stands over against man, with its high and holy requirements, reflecting the perfect will of God for man. Throughout the Old Testament God is ever represented as the lawgiver, making known His will which man is obligated to obey. God, the great moral governor, issues commands. "Thou shalt," "Thou shalt not." With absolute authority He lays down His commandments.

That same authority is shown in the New Testament. In the same tone as in the Old Testament Jesus says, "I say unto you." He did not come to destroy the law or lower its requirements. Indeed, He interpreted its inward application and insisted on its continued obligation. The law still stands in all its solemn grandeur, written as in letters of fire.

But "the letter killeth." Paul knew that from his own experience. The commandment which was unto life he found to be unto death. The law had declared that the man that doeth these things shall live by them, but had also pronounced the terrible alternative, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," "not the hearer of the law shall be just before God, but the doer of the law shall be justified." And Paul, after strenuous efforts to establish his own righteousness, came to realise that he was not a doer, and justly came under the condemnation of a righteous law.

And we are all, by nature and practice, under the same curse and condemnation. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God as reflected in His holy law. The hand-writing of ordinances is against us. The sentence has gone forth. The law insists that it shall be carried out. That is what Paul meant when he said, "the letter killeth." In this one phrase he sums up his great argument in the first three chapters of his letter to the Romans. "As many as are under the law are under the curse."

The Blessing of the Spirit

Certainly, then, viewed from the position of the law, our situation is hopeless. The law sets out God's holy requirements to which we have not attained, and then pronounces sentence upon our guilt. So we may well cry out with Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7: 24). But Paul does not stop there. He goes on, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord . . . for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 7: 25; 8: 2). The law's sentence of condemnation was borne for us by Christ Who was made sin for us and suffered the penalty in our stead. He was made under the law, and that fearful handwriting of ordinances which was against us—that dreadful letter of which Paul speaks—was nailed to the Cross. Because of that, when He arose and

ascended on high He sent His Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Blessed Trinity, Who gives life to dead souls. He produces new life by the new birth which is His new creation in the soul. Thus the law is written afresh on our hearts and we are given a fresh start and a new power on the path of holiness.

That is the covenant which God promised through Jeremiah and to which Paul refers. "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts."

That is the contrast which Paul emphasises. The law is external. It gives the command, but it has no power to see that it is obeyed. And when

it is disobeyed it must insist on punishment. So it brings eternal death because of its transgression.

But God's Spirit brings life. For He quickens the soul to newness of life, and enables it to lay hold by faith on the Lord Jesus Christ as He is offered in the Gospel. Thus the merit of His work is credited to the believer and he is also given the power to keep the law of God and walk in the way of life. Truly "the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

Note: For the above article, which brings out clearly the meaning and importance of an often misunderstood passage of scripture, we are indebted to **Evangelical Action** (Australia; February 1, 1955 issue). — Ed.

Studies in the Book of Genesis

LESSON 98

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

The next incident recorded in Genesis is that concerning Abraham and Abimelech. It is not known whether or not this Abimelech was the same as the one in chapter 20, nor is it certainly known whether "Abimelech" is a personal name or an official title. The word means literally "father of the king." It is regarded as probable, however, that the Abimelech of chapter 21 and the one in chapter 20 were the same person, "king of Gerar". Gerar was an ancient city on the southern border of Palestine not far from Gaza.

Abimelech, with Phicol the commander of his army, seeks an alliance of friendship with Abraham. It is so obvious that Abraham is being divinely blessed and favored that even pagan chiefs and rulers take notice of the fact.

Abimelech and the chief officer of his army therefore approach Abraham requesting the establishment of a mutual pact of friendship. We note that Abimelech understands the meaning of an oath and regards it as binding. He claims to have treated Abraham well, and asks the promise of kind treatment for himself and his posterity. Abraham agrees, saying, "I will swear" (21:24).

However, there was a matter which had to be attended to before such an agreement could properly be made. Abraham's servants have dug a well of water, which has been "violently taken away" by the servants of Abimelech. Apparently this had been done some time previously, but Abraham had never reported the matter to Abimelech, nor complained about it, until this time when Abimelech asks for a pact of friendship. Now,

however, the matter must be settled if the proposed pact is to rest upon a firm basis. Abraham therefore calls the matter to Abimelech's attention, which he perhaps should have done earlier.

Abimelech replies protesting his innocence of the whole affair. He claims that he knows nothing whatever about it, and seems almost resentful that Abraham had not told him about it before (21:26). There is no reason for doubting the truth of this claim on the part of Abimelech. Doubtless the violent seizure of the well was done by servants who would hesitate to report their action to Abimelech lest they be reprovved for it. This does not relieve Abimelech of all responsibility, but it does clear him of intentionally injuring Abraham.

This matter of the well having been cleared up, a covenant is made between Abraham and Abimelech (21:27). It is not entirely clear from the record whether the sheep and oxen mentioned in 21:27 were offered as a sacrifice or were simply a gift from Abraham to Abimelech. Leupold holds that the sheep and oxen (except the additional seven ewe lambs mentioned in verse 28) were to be killed as a way of establishing the covenant. Calvin held that the sheep and oxen were a simple gift to Abimelech, whereby Abraham honored this local king and sought to preserve peace and friendship. As the record does not state that the animals were killed, but does state that Abraham "gave them unto Abimelech," it would seem that Calvin's interpretation is to be preferred.

The question may be raised whether this was a civil or a religious bond. While Abimelech believes in God, there is no reason to hold that he was a monotheist, believing in the one true God only, as was the case with Abraham. Although the oath was sworn in the name of God, the con-

tent of the agreement concerned worldly or civil matters — the covenant is a mutual pledge to keep the peace and avoid “dealing falsely” (verse 23). We believe therefore that this was a civil pact, comparable to Abraham’s pact with the Amorite chiefs Mamre, Eshcol and Aner (14:13,24). Though the pact concerned civil matters, and did not imply any religious union, yet it was confirmed by a religious sanction (“swear unto me here by God,” 21:23).

Following this Abraham takes seven ewe lambs and places them apart by themselves. Stating to Abimelech that these seven lambs are an additional gift to him “that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well.” Thus Abraham takes every possible step to preserve peace between his own clan and that of Abimelech.

The question has been raised as to how Abraham could thus honor a king in the land of Canaan when God had promised Abraham that the whole land was to be inherited by his posterity. Calvin answers this by saying that the time for entering into possession of the land had not yet arrived, and Abraham is still a pilgrim or temporary sojourner in the land. Until God’s appointed time would come, Abraham and his descendants must be regarded as living in the land by concession on the part of the people already established there. “In short, until he should be placed, by the hand of God, in legitimate authority over the land, he

did not scruple to treat with the inhabitants of the place, that he might dwell among them by permission, or by the payment of a price” (Calvin).

Questions:

1. Where was Gerar located?
2. What is the literal meaning of Abimelech?
3. What problem exists concerning the interpretation of “Abimelech”?
4. With what request did Abimelech approach Abraham?
5. What reply did Abraham make?
6. What matter required settlement before Abimelech’s request could properly be carried out?
7. How did Abimelech explain the matter of which Abraham complained?
8. What gift did Abraham give to Abimelech?
9. Was the covenant between Abraham and Abimelech a civil or a religious bond?
10. Why did Abraham give Abimelech seven ewe lambs?
11. In view of the fact that God had promised the whole land to Abraham, why was it proper for Abraham to enter into an agreement implying recognition of the authority of Abimelech?

LESSON 99

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

We now come to Chapter 22, which gives the history of Abraham offering Isaac as a sacrifice. This constituted the supreme test of Abraham’s devotion and obedience to God. This chapter, which contains important lessons of truth, has caused needless difficulty to many people. The present writer recalls reading a children’s vacation Bible school lesson on this incident, issued several years ago by a large publisher of religious education materials. The author of the lesson stated that of course we could not possibly believe that God really commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. What really happened, she said, was that Abraham imagined that he had heard the voice of God commanding him to offer his son as a sacrifice. Believing that God had actually commanded him to do this, Abraham in a commendable spirit of devotion to the Lord proceeds to execute the command, and is only prevented at the last moment by the intervention of God.

Such a reconstruction of the story not only falsifies the data given in the Scripture record, but is also quite unnecessary. There is no reason to

doubt that God actually commanded Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. It was not, however, the purpose of God that this command should be actually carried out to the extent of killing Isaac. God intended from the beginning to prevent the death of Isaac, though this was not revealed to Abraham until the last moment. In order to grasp the real meaning of the incident we have to look at the whole picture, not just at one part.

Some Bible critics, who do not believe that Genesis is a genuine book of Moses, have held that this story in Gen. 22 reflects the attitude of the great prophets, centuries later, in opposing human sacrifices such as those offered to Moloch. There is no reason for such a supposition whatever. Scholars who reject the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement, calling it “blood theology” and regarding it as primitive and barbarous, are ready to reject or explain away the statements of Genesis 22, claiming that God could not really have commanded any such thing.

Over against these denials of the real truth of the record, we believe that God actually commanded Abraham to offer Isaac in sacrifice. The objections raised against God commanding Abraham to do this, would be equally valid as objections

against the substitutionary sufferings and death of Jesus Christ — that is, these objections would not be valid at all.

The Bible teaches that sin can only be canceled by the sacrifice of life. God could require the life of the person who has sinned, but in His sovereignty He is willing to accept the sacrifice of the life of a substitute, therefore it is possible for Jesus Christ to die for sinners. This truth of a substitutionary sacrifice is clearly implied in the narrative of Gen. 22, as we shall see.

The command to offer Isaac as a sacrifice was a difficult one for Abraham to obey, not only because of his love for his son, but even more because it seemed to contradict the promises which God had made. God has given Abraham these promises, including the promise that through Abraham's seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. He has been told that it is through Isaac that these promises shall be realized (17:19). Now he is commanded to kill Isaac. If he obeys this command, how can the divine promises be fulfilled? So far as human reason can discern, it would be impossible for the promises to come true if Isaac does not continue to live.

We gain some light on this matter from the New Testament. Hebrews 11:17-19 says: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead . . ." Here we are told that Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. This however indicates an amazing faith on Abraham's part. We must remember that no instances of the dead being raised are recorded in Scripture prior to this point. It was not as if Abraham could call to mind the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4) or the daughter of Jairus or Lazarus of Bethany, and then been able to believe that the same kind of miracle would take place in the case of Isaac. The test of Abraham's faith was much more severe than this. What he believed, he believed by sheer inference from two facts about God which he knew to be true, namely, (1) God's power, and (2) God's reliability. He knew that God is Almighty, and he knew that God is faithful to His own word. Putting this knowledge alongside of the command to kill Isaac, he believed that God could and would raise Isaac from the dead in order that the promises should be fulfilled through him.

Abraham is commanded to offer his son Isaac upon one of the mountains in the land of Moriah. The meaning of the name Moriah is unknown. Davis' Bible Dictionary states that the land of Moriah was probably the region surrounding the hill on which Solomon's temple was later built. It has been suggested by some Bible scholars that

the place where Abraham was commanded to offer his son links this event with the later offering of sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple (G. Vos, Biblical Theology, p. 108). It is highly probable that this connection is intended by the sacred record. Otherwise why should Abraham have been directed to go to a distant region, and to offer his son upon a particular mountain? The only plausible answer is that this particular mountain was to be of outstanding importance in the later history of redemption.

It is worthy of note that when this difficult command was given to Abraham he set about obeying it without delay. Abraham did not say, "This is a serious matter, which calls for much prayer. I will call my household together for a ten-day season of prayer, that we may know what the will of God is." Some modern-day believers use prayer as an escape from obedience. When confronted with a clear alternative between right and wrong, they will try to postpone making a decision by praying for "guidance." The present writer has known of Christians who prayed for guidance as to whether they should leave a corrupt, apostate denomination and join one that is true to the Bible; he has known others who prayed for guidance as to whether they should render the things of God to Caesar by applying for a permit for the church to exist under a wicked, totalitarian law which constituted a pagan emperor the head of the church. When the will of God is known to a person, what is called for is not prayer but action. Prayer is a duty, and one that is too often neglected or slighted; but there are times when prayer is a sin. Prayer is a sin when we make it an escape route to avoid making a painful, unpleasant or embarrassing decision. Prayer is a sin when it becomes a substitute for obedience.

Abraham did not delay his decision under the plea of praying for divine guidance. He obeyed promptly, without delay or evasion. "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him" (22:3).

Questions:

1. What objection has been raised by unbelieving scholars against the story contained in chapter 22?
2. How can this objection to the story be answered?
3. What do scholars who reject the substitutionary atonement hold to be the real meaning of the story in Gen. 22?
4. What does the Bible teach about how sin can be canceled?
5. Why was the command to sacrifice Isaac difficult for Abraham to obey?

6. What New Testament passage sheds light on this narrative?

7. According to the New Testament, what did Abraham believe to be the solution of the apparent contradiction between God's promises and God's command?

8. What two facts about God did Abraham

know to be true, which had a bearing on what would be the outcome of Isaac's death?

9. Where was the land of Moriah located?

10. Why was the region and the particular mountain important?

11. When is prayer sinful?

LESSON 100

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

The place where Isaac was to be offered was evidently some distance from the place where Abraham had been living. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off (22:4). The two servants are commanded to wait, while Abraham proceeds further with Isaac. He tells the servants "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (22:5). This statement of Abraham is definitely in harmony with the explanation given in Hebrews 11, namely, that Abraham believed Isaac would be miraculously raised from the dead.

As they proceed toward the mountain, Isaac asks a very embarrassing question: "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (22:7). Abraham replies, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." This answer certainly proceeded from Abraham's faith in God's power and reliability. Abraham leaves everything in the hands of God. In the light of what followed, Abraham's statement seems prophetic. We may conclude that by divine guidance, the patriarch spoke a deeper and greater truth than he himself understood at this point.

Isaac has not yet been informed of what is to be done. But when they have arrived at the appointed place, this can no longer be withheld from Isaac. Although Isaac is described as a "lad" he was not a mere child. The Jewish historian Josephus suggests that Isaac was about 25 years old at this time. It is obvious that Isaac could have escaped from Abraham if he had desired to do so. The fact that he made no attempt to escape indicates that he willingly offered himself to be bound and laid upon the altar by Abraham. This reminds us of the truth that our Lord Jesus Christ willingly offered Himself to bear the sins of the world. Unbelievers and modernists have objected to the orthodox doctrine of the substitutionary atonement, saying that it would be unjust for God the Father to compel His Son to suffer and die for the sins of the world. This is of course a mere travesty of the orthodox doctrine of the atonement. It is not a case of God the Father compelling His unwilling Son to bear the sins of the world. Rather Christ willingly laid down His life

for the sins of men. This is proved by John 10:17, 18, where Jesus says: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father." In these words we see two truths: (1) Jesus was not compelled against His will to suffer and die; (2) there was absolute harmony and unity of purpose between God the Father and God the Son. Similarly, Isaac was not compelled against his will to submit to being offered as a sacrifice; and it is also clear that there was complete harmony and unity of purpose between Abraham and Isaac. It would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, for Abraham to bind Isaac against the latter's will.

The fact that Isaac willingly submitted to being bound for sacrifice is often overlooked when this chapter is read, while the whole emphasis is placed upon Abraham's heroic faith. The incident shows a magnificent faith and devotion on Isaac's part also.

When Abraham is actually on the point of killing his son with the knife he had brought along for the purpose, he is checked by the voice of the angel of the Lord calling to him from heaven. "God knew that the hand that had the courage to pick up the knife would not have hesitated to perform the sacrifice" (Leupold). The test of Abraham's faith need go no further. It has been demonstrated that God comes first in Abraham's life. While God did not want the actual sacrifice of Isaac to take place, still He did want Abraham to make the sacrifice in his heart. We should realize that God demands supreme devotion of every one of His children, not only of Abraham. Even though He does not put every one to such a supreme test, still He demands the same absolute spiritual devotion of every believer. God claims absolute priority in man's life. To the extent that we fail to give God that place in our lives, we are idolaters.

Abraham had proved that he feared God. Many people say that they fear God, or believe in God, or serve God, yet all the while they are living for self or the world. In our own day people will flagrantly violate the commandments of God, yet self-righteously claim that they have done no wrong. We recently read an argument which

claimed that it is right for a certain commercial motion picture theatre to operate on the Lord's Day, inasmuch as the proprietor, projector operators and many of the patrons are Christian people! It is to be feared that this is a common attitude, not an isolated case. Today a mere nominal profession of devotion to God is often regarded as if it were the real thing. Abraham not only claimed that he feared God; he proved that he feared God.

In the New Testament (James 2:21,22) we read: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" Here we have an inspired statement that Abraham's offering of Isaac was a proof of the reality of his faith.

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son" (22:13). "Abraham is asked by God to offer life, that which in point of life is dearest to him, his only son. At the same time it is declared by the interposition of the Angel and the pointing out of the ram in the thicket, that the substitution of one life for another life would be acceptable to God" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 107).

The principle of substitutionary sacrifice is taught by the offering up of the ram caught in the thicket. This ram is offered in the stead of Isaac. This principle of substitution is the very core of the Biblical doctrine of redemption. A person who does not believe in this is rejecting, not some little point of doctrine out on the circumference of the circle, but the very center of the circle itself. Such a person is rejecting the main thing that makes Christianity what it is. The writer once knew a man who said he accepted all the teachings of evangelical Christianity except for one minor detail. Upon being asked what that one point was he replied that it was the substitutionary atonement. He thought it degrading for man to depend on the death of Christ for salvation; it would be more in keeping with human self-respect for a man to stand on his own feet before God. This, of course, was just another way of saying that he did not consider himself a sinner, felt no need of a Saviour and therefore was not a Christian. The fact that he was a member of a well-known "evangelical" church denomination did not alter the fact that he was essentially an unbeliever.

It is worth noting that the apostle Paul in

Romans 8:32 in speaking of the sacrifice of Christ for our sins uses language which is strongly reminiscent of God's message to Abraham in Gen. 22:12: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all . . ."; "thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

Both Abraham and Isaac must have been deeply moved by the outcome of their trip to the land of Moriah. The Genesis record deals with the event objectively, saying nothing about the emotional reactions of Abraham and Isaac. That Abraham was very deeply impressed is indicated by his naming the place Jehovah-jireh, meaning "Jehovah will provide." Moses in writing Genesis adds that even in his day the proverbial statement, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen (provided)", was in use, indicating the deep impression made on people's minds and memories.

Questions:

1. What light does the Epistle to the Hebrews throw on the history of Abraham offering Isaac?
2. How did Abraham answer his son's question about a lamb?
3. How old may Isaac have been at this time?
4. What is shown by the fact that Isaac made no attempt to escape?
5. What truth concerning Christ is suggested by Isaac's conduct upon this occasion?
6. What does John 10:17,18 teach about Christ, and in what ways is this parallel to the situation in Genesis 22?
7. What place does God claim in every human life?
8. What had Abraham proved concerning his own life?
9. What is the difference between mere nominal profession and real fear of God?
10. What does the Epistle of James say about Abraham's offering of Isaac on the altar?
11. What principle of redemption was involved in the sacrifice of the ram found in the thicket?
12. Why can a person who rejects the substitutionary atonement not be a Christian?
13. What name did Abraham give to the place where he had bound his son and laid him on the altar?
14. What is the meaning of this name?
15. What proverb came into use through this event?

LESSON 101

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

Immediately after Abraham had met the supreme test of being willing to offer his son as a sacrifice to God, a further revelation was granted to him. The angel of the Lord calls to him out of

heaven the second time (22:15). The great promises are repeated, this time with an oath on the part of God. "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord . . ." (22:16). The New Testament comments (Hebrews 6:13,14): "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee," adding the explanation: "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife" (Heb. 6:16). An oath is stronger than a mere statement; it is used in matters of the greatest importance, and has a character of finality, or of settling a matter permanently. Wanting to give Abraham the strongest possible kind of assurance at this point in his life, God not only repeats the promises but actually confirms them by an oath. Essentially an oath is an appeal to God to witness the truth of what one is saying, or one's sincere purpose to carry out what he is promising. Men swear by God because He is the greatest of all beings; there is no greater by whom they could swear. For the same reason, when God swears, He can only swear by Himself; there is none greater than Himself to whom He can appeal.

The promises given in chapter 22 are essentially identical with those previously given (chaps. 12, 15, 17), yet there are some differences of detail in the wording. "Blessing I will bless thee" is a Hebrew idiom, which may be translated "I will very greatly bless thee;" and so also in the case of the promise, "multiplying I will multiply thee." Compare the words of Gen. 2:17, "thou shalt surely die," which in the Hebrew is literally "dying thou shalt die."

"And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (22:17). The word "gate" or "gates" is used in Scripture to mean the power of something; thus in Matthew 16:18 the expression "the gates of hell" means the greatest possible power of evil. Abraham is assured that his seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. As Leupold points out, this does not at all mean that Israel is to gain possession of the world by military conquest, but only states what the outcome will be when Israel is attacked by other nations; moreover this promise to Abraham's seed is conditioned by Israel's obedience to God. We know that as long as Israel remained faithful to God the nation was delivered from attacks by enemy nations; but when they became unfaithful to God, God punished them by delivering them up into the hands of powerful enemies, as happened several times in the period of the Judges; and as when the northern kingdom was destroyed by Assyria in 721 B. C., and Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B. C.

Of the promises granted to Abraham the greatest and most important is "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (22:

18). Literally the Hebrew says "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves." This promise is of course a prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ and of the success of His redemptive work. We should note the universal element that is prominent here. It is not merely the physical descendants of the patriarch Abraham that are to be blessed through His Seed, but all the nations of the earth. God called Abraham and made a covenant with him so that from his seed Christ could be born, and the real purpose of this was not merely to bring blessing to Israel, but to bring blessing to the world. If the operations of God's saving grace were confined to the narrow channel of Israel for some two thousand years, this was not because God's ultimate purpose was to bless Israel, but rather His ultimate purpose was that the river should overflow the channel and bring blessing to "all the nations of the earth." The Jews of our Lord's day and of the apostle Paul's day had forgotten this truth; they insisted upon regarding the narrow channel of the Mosaic system as permanently valid, as if it existed for its own sake and not for a purpose greater than itself. So they stoned Stephen and hated Paul.

We may pause at this point to note that the promise of a Redeemer is becoming more definite and explicit as history moves on. First it was a promise that the seed of the woman would finally crush the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15); then it is implied that the Redeemer shall be descended from Shem (Gen. 9:26); now it is revealed that the Redeemer shall be descended from Abraham and shall bring blessing to the world.

Following the reception of this divine revelation, Abraham and Isaac return to the point where the two young men and the ass had been left (22:19, compare verse 5). The reunited party returns to Beersheba ("the well of the oath") in the south of Palestine.

The last few verses (20-24) of chapter 22 contain genealogical information about Abraham's kindred in Mesopotamia. Nahor was Abraham's brother, as we know from 11:27. Nothing is said in chapter 11 about Nahor emigrating from Ur of the Chaldees, but we learn from 24:10 that he moved to upper Mesopotamia at some time in his life. The airline distance between Abraham's abode in southern Palestine and the place where his kindred were living in upper Mesopotamia was perhaps 400 miles, but by any practicable route of travel it would be much greater than that. Certainly the distance was too great, at that period of history, for any frequent contact. As a matter of fact there had been no contact between Abraham and Nahor, so far as we know, since Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees many years previously. Now for the first time Abraham receives news about his relatives, "It was told Abraham, saying . . ." (22:20) — that is, someone brought him news. Who this someone was, we are not told. It may

have been a traveler in some caravan of merchants. But news is brought to Abraham, and it is accurate news too for it includes the names of children. Nahor and his wife Milcah have eight children, one of whom is Bethuel the father of Rebekah, who later became the wife of Isaac. This information about Nahor and his descendants was probably inserted by Moses at this point because of its importance in connection with the marriage of Isaac (chapter 24).

Questions:

1. What experience did Abraham have immediately after offering the ram in place of his son Isaac?
2. What is remarkable about the way God's promises to Abraham are repeated in chapter 22?
3. What does the Epistle to the Hebrews say about the purpose and effectiveness of an oath?
4. Why do men swear by the name of God?

5. Why did God swear by Himself?
6. What is the meaning of "Blessing I will bless thee"?
7. What is meant by the promise that Abraham's seed shall possess the gate of his enemies?
8. What condition was implied in this promise about possessing the gate of the enemies?
9. What was the most important of the promises given to Abraham?
10. Why did God call Abraham and make a covenant with him?
11. What was the error of the Jews of Paul's day as to the purpose of the nation of Israel?
12. What news was brought to Abraham after this?
13. Who was Nahor and where did he live?
14. What person descended from Nahor was important for the family of Abraham?

LESSON 102

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

Chapter 23 records the death and burial of Sarah, the wife of Abraham. Sarah died at the age of 127 years, at Kirjath-arba, a place which was earlier and later called Hebron, located some 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It has been noted that Sarah is the only woman of the Bible whose age at the time of her death is recorded.

At the close of chapter 22 Abraham was living at Beersheba, the traditional southern limit of Canaan. Now he has moved north and east as far as Hebron. Moses adds that Hebron is "in the land of Canaan," doubtless to remind his readers that it was in the Promised Land that Sarah died. It is possible that Abraham was away from home on some business at the time of Sarah's death, as indicated by the statement of verse 2 that he "came to mourn for Sarah." If he had been there when she died, he would not have needed to "come" to mourn for her.

It was customary in the Holy Land to bury the dead almost immediately. Abraham, however, is a sojourner dwelling in tents, who does not hold title to a single acre of real estate. Accordingly he negotiates with the sons of Heth, that is, the Hittites, who were in control of the area, with a view to purchasing a piece of land for a burying place. Describing himself as "a stranger and a sojourner with you," Abraham desires possession of a burying place; that is, he desires unquestionable ownership of the land in question permanently.

In confessing himself a stranger and sojourner in the Land of Promise, Abraham expressed a profound spiritual truth, as is clearly brought out by the Epistle to the Hebrews (11:13-16). We are told in Hebrews that Abraham sought "a better country, that is a heavenly." Therefore Abraham did not regard Canaan as his true home, nor as the ultimate, absolute fulfilment of the promise of an inheritance. Many Bible readers are too free to discount the Old Testament, as if these ancient men of God such as Abraham were thinking chiefly of earthly and material fulfilment of God's promises. The Bible indicates that while expecting the earthly fulfilment, the patriarchs well understood that that was not the real fulfilment, that is, it was not to be the absolute, ultimate fulfilment. Their hope stretched far out into the future, even beyond the farthest horizon of history — into the eternal future. And if the patriarchs regarded the real fulfilment of their hope and God's promise as beyond history, Christians of today surely should have the same insight. It is a bad sign of the deterioration of religion when Christians look for the ideal fulfilment of religion within history.

The local Hittites first offer Abraham the use of their sepulchres without payment (23:6). Abraham however declines this offer. The negotiation carried on between Abraham and the Hittites is typical Oriental, but there is no reason to think that the Hittites were insincere in their offer to Abraham. Rather, the record indicates that they regarded Abraham very highly indeed and made the offer in good faith.

Abraham however wishes to acquire a burying place which can be held with unquestionable and

permanent ownership. He therefore mentions the cave of Machpelah in a field belonging to a Hittite named Ephron (23:8,9), requesting that the Hittite chiefs or leaders with whom he is speaking approach the owner of the field on Abraham's behalf. It so happened that Ephron was present — a fact which may have been unknown to Abraham — therefore no such indirect approach is necessary; Ephron speaks for himself at once. He states that he will give the field and the cave to Abraham as a gift.

This offer of Ephron must be interpreted in its setting of typically Oriental courtesy. In that setting, the offer would be understood by all present as a gesture of politeness, not an offer that was intended actually to be accepted. Europeans and Americans may regard such a gesture as hypocritical or insincere; to the Oriental mind it is just good manners. Abraham evidently understood perfectly that it would be improper to accept such an offer. He therefore, with due formality, offers to pay Ephron the value of the field.

It soon becomes evident that Ephron expects to be paid for the field, for in verse 15 he names its value as 400 shekels of silver. Had it really been his intention to transfer the field to Abraham as a gift, he would not have specified its precise value. Still Ephron manages to name his price and at the same time to keep up the forms of Oriental courtesy: "My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead" (23:15).

Obviously Ephron expected this to be followed by the customary prolonged haggling over the price. Leupold points out that the nominal value of 400 shekels of silver would be about \$260, but as the silver probably had about twenty times as much purchasing power then as now, Ephron was actually asking the equivalent of over \$5000 for an acre or two of land containing a cave. It is common in Oriental countries for the merchant or seller to name an outrageously high price at first, expecting finally to get about half of what he first asked. The final sale price would be reached through a long drawn out process of bids and offers. Such bargaining is keenly enjoyed by Orientals, and affords something of the satisfaction of a game of chess.

Abraham, however, is mourning the loss of Sarah and he is in no mood to enter into a bargaining session with the Hittites. Accordingly he weighs out the full 400 shekels of silver without protest. No doubt Ephron and his Hittite friends were amazed at this development. They knew Abraham well enough to know that he was not simple or ignorant of the common business methods

of the day. They could not therefore attribute Abraham's readiness to pay the full amount to ignorance of local customs. There would be no other possible inference to be drawn except that Abraham stands on a higher ethical level than the Hittites. Abraham thus gave a testimony to the Hittites that he was not a man ruled by love of money.

The money has been paid, and the entire transaction is publicly certified before witnesses (23:17,18). Note that not only the field and the cave are mentioned, but also the trees in the field. It was important that the trees be mentioned expressly; otherwise the sale of the field would not necessarily include the sale of the trees.

Following this transaction, Abraham buried Sarah in the cave of Machpelah.

Questions:

1. How old was Sarah when she died?
2. Where was Sarah when she died?
3. What indication is there that Abraham was not present when Sarah died?
4. What was the custom as to the time of burial?
5. From whom does Abraham seek to purchase a burying place?
6. How did Abraham describe himself to the local inhabitants?
7. What truth does the Epistle to the Hebrews point out in connection with Abraham's description of himself?
8. What offer did the Hittites first make to Abraham?
9. How should Ephron's offer to give the field to Abraham be understood?
10. What fact indicates that Ephron really expected payment?
11. How much would 400 shekels of silver be in money today?
12. How much may it have represented in real purchasing power today?
13. Why did Abraham immediately pay the price asked without bargaining for a lower price?
14. How was the sale of the property certified?
15. Why were the trees mentioned as included in the sale?

LESSON 103

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.**2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.**

Some critics of the Old Testament have claimed that the record of Genesis must be false, for there cannot have been Hittites living in southern Palestine at this period of history. However there is no reason to question the truth of the Biblical record. Moreover, confirmation has been found in one of the Tell-el-Amarna letters (discovered in Egypt) which speaks of Hittites dwelling in the south of the land of Canaan and participating in an expedition against Jerusalem (about 1400 B.C.). This is considerably later than the time of Abraham, yet if Hittites were living there in 1400 B.C. they could have lived there 500 years earlier also.

The cave of Machpelah is one of the comparatively few sacred spots on Palestine concerning the identification of which there is little doubt. The cave has been under the control of Mohammedans for centuries and today a Moslem mosque stands over it. In modern times very few Christians have ever been permitted to enter the cave. In 1862 the Prince of Wales was allowed in, and in 1869 the Crown Prince of Prussia was given the same privilege. In 1882 two British princes, one of whom later became King George V, were allowed to enter and make a brief examination. None of these visitors were able to examine the interior carefully. During the first World War, when the British forces under General Allenby were campaigning through Palestine against the Turks, a British army officer entered the mosque in search of a Turkish official. Not finding the man he was seeking, this British officer left again, without realizing what an opportunity he had missed. The officer described his experience later. He passed through a door in the rock interior of the mosque, slid down a steep passageway and found that he was in a large cave, some twenty feet square, in the middle of which was a large block of stone six by three by three feet in size. Later when permission was sought to enter the cave again and examine the interior, the request was refused. Davis' Bible Dictionary states that there was once an ancient Christian church where the mosque stands today, and that inside the present mosque there is a round opening in the floor about one foot in diameter. Looking through this hole the observer sees a shaft 12 feet square and fifteen feet deep, at the far end of which is a door is said to provide entrance to a still deeper cavern. There are two more entrances to the cave marked in the pavement of the mosque, but they are sealed by the pavement.

W. M. Thomson's book *The Land and the Book* (pages 579-582) gives a detailed account of what was known about the cave of Machpelah in the

middle of the nineteenth century. Benjamin of Tudela, a Jewish traveller who lived about 800 years ago left an interesting account of his visit to the cave. Benjamin states that the real sepulchre of the patriarchs was not shown to ordinary travellers, but that in the case of rich Jews, an iron door which had been there since ancient times was opened. Through this iron door the visitor descended through two empty caves to a third cavern which contained six sepulchres, namely those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah and Leah. According to Benjamin's account, on each sepulchre was an inscription such as "This is the sepulchre of our father Abraham, upon whom be peace," and so on.

Are the mortal remains of the patriarchs and their wives still in the cave of Machpelah awaiting the resurrection day? We do not know, but it is certainly possible, if not probable, that they are. Until scientific archaeologists are permitted to examine the site thoroughly, and also another possible site a mile to the west, the question cannot be positively answered.

The New Testament (Acts 7:16) speaks of Jacob being buried in a tomb which Abraham purchased from the sons of Hamor in Shechem. Genesis 50:15, however, speaks of Jacob being buried in the cave of Machpelah which Abraham bought of Ephron the Hittite. This constitutes an apparent contradiction in the Bible, for which some explanation must be sought. It will be noted that Genesis 50:15 is speaking of the burial of Jacob only, whereas Stephen in his speech in Acts 7:15,16, is speaking of Jacob and others also: "So Jacob went down into Egypt and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem." The explanation given in *The New Bible Commentary* (Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan), p. 908, is as follows: "Jacob was buried in the cave of Machpelah at Hebron (Gen. 49:29ff.); Joseph was buried at Shechem (Josh. 24:32) . . . Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah from the Hittites (Gen. 23:16); Jacob bought the land at Shechem which he gave to Joseph (and where Joseph was buried) from the sons of Hamor (Josh. 24:32). Not only separate quotations . . . but separate incidents are conflated in Luke's summary of Stephen's speech." That is, Stephen in recounting the history of his people condensed or telescoped it so that two purchases and burials are spoken of in a single statement as if they were only one. This does not really contradict the Genesis record; it merely cites it in a very condensed or summary form.

Questions:

1. On what ground have some critics claimed

that the record of Abraham's purchase of the field from Hittites must be false?

2. How is the truth of the Biblical record confirmed by archaeology?

3. Who has control of the cave of Machpelah today?

4. How many Europeans have been permitted to enter the cave in modern times?

5. What experience did a British army officer

have at the cave of Machpelah during World War I?

6. When did Benjamin of Tudela live, and what did he relate about the cave of Machpelah in his day?

7. What difficulty exists concerning Stephen's reference to a burial place purchased by Abraham?

8. What solution can be offered for this difficulty?

LESSON 104

III History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

Chapter 24 presents the story of Isaac's marriage to Rebekah, which is universally regarded as one of the most beautiful stories in the Bible. Leupold calls this chapter the record of "an act of faith which transforms the ordinary experiences of life." There are many lessons of truth in this chapter. Among other things it shows how faith in the Lord led Abraham to act according to principle, not according to convenience, how God's providence controls even the details of what comes to pass, and how prayer began to be answered even before the prayer was completed. Other lessons taught are the inviolability of an oath, the duty of promptness in carrying out the Lord's will, and how the spontaneous willingness of a young woman to do some hard work above and beyond the call of duty led to her gaining an honored place in history and becoming one of the ancestors of the Messiah.

Isaac is a rather minor character in the history of the patriarchs, being important chiefly as the link between Abraham and Jacob. He is pictured as a meditative man, less active than Abraham and Jacob. He represents the passive rather than the active side of religion. His experiences are largely repetitions of experiences of Abraham his father. Isaac's relatively passive role in the history of the patriarchs renders him specially suitable as a type of the passively suffering Christ — something also suggested by the command to Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah.

At the time of his marriage to Rebekah, Isaac is already forty years old (25:20). While this would perhaps be regarded as rather late in life for marriage, we must remember that Isaac lived to the age of 180 years (35:28), therefore at the age of forty he was still in the first quarter of his life. The situation is parallel to a man who lives to the age of 70 marrying at the age of 16. At the time of Isaac's marriage, Abraham was 140 years old (21:5 compared with 25:20), and still had 35 years to live (25:7). We note also that Isaac's age

at his death exceeded Abraham's by five years, possibly due to Isaac's quieter mode of living.

"And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things" (24:1). Although Abraham actually lived 35 more years, he of course did not know that this would be the case; at the age of 140 he naturally did not expect to live a great deal longer. God has blessed him in all things. There is one important matter that Abraham wishes to make sure of attending to before he dies, namely, the marriage of Isaac his son. Isaac must marry — that is necessary for the continuation of the covenant people — but a marriage with a woman of the Canaanites must be avoided at all costs.

From the secular or worldly point of view, a marriage between Abraham's family and the Canaanites would have been highly advantageous. Not only would it have been far more convenient to arrange than the obtaining of a bride from another country, but it would have given the clan of Abraham and Isaac increased prestige and social standing, as well as economic advantages and opportunities. All this, however, means nothing to Abraham in comparison with the spiritual issues that were involved. When the marriage of his son is to be arranged, Abraham thinks first of God — God's honor, God's plan of redemption, God's requirement of absolute devotion — not of money, popularity or convenience. How often Christian people of the present day put worldly considerations first in a matter of this kind!

Accordingly, Abraham calls for "his eldest servant of his house." This expression does not necessarily mean the oldest servant in point of years, nor even the oldest in seniority of service. It may also mean the highest in rank. It is possible, but not at all likely, that this "eldest servant" is identical with the Eliezer of Damascus mentioned in 15:2. It is unlikely that they are the same individual, not only because in chapter 24 the "eldest servant" is not named, but also because about 60 years have passed since the events of chapter 15. Eliezer had evidently been in Abraham's employ some considerable time before the time mentioned in chapter 15; it is hardly like-

ly, therefore, that he would still be in the same position in chapter 24. Probably he had died or retired from active service and another man had taken his place as the business manager of Abraham's establishment.

The "eldest servant" is called for and is required to swear an oath "by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth" (24:3). The particular manner of taking this oath was by the servant placing his hand under Abraham's thigh. The servant is required to swear that he will not take a wife for Isaac from the daughters of the Canaanites, but will go to Mesopotamia and take a wife for Isaac from Abraham's kindred.

We may inquire into the reason for this requirement on Abraham's part. The Canaanites of course were mostly Hamites, so we might suppose that Abraham's concern was to preserve the Semitic racial purity of his descendants. This may indeed have been in his mind as a minor concern but we do not believe it was his main reason for objecting to a marriage with the Canaanites. The Biblical concept of "the seed of Abraham" was never dependent strictly on racial descent. There were notable exceptions to Semitic racial purity, even among godly Israelites of later times. For example, Joseph married an Egyptian wife (41:45) who no doubt became a believer in Jehovah, and who became the ancestor of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh; Rahab of Jericho was a Canaanite who became an Israelite and an ancestor of King David and of Jesus Christ (Josh. 6:25; Matt. 1:5).

It appears, therefore, that Abraham's chief concern was for religious rather than merely racial purity. What is required is that Isaac's wife shall come from a background and family which is religiously as pure and true as possible. We know from Joshua 24:2, 15 that the ancestors of Abraham worshipped false gods in Ur of the Chaldees. As Ur was a great center of moon worship it is possible that they had been moon worshippers. We know also that Abraham's kindred in Mesopotamia were not entirely free from idolatry, as is proved by Rachel's theft of her father Laban's gods (31:30, 34; compare 35:2-4). It was not therefore to be expected that the descendants of Nahor in Mesopotamia would be entirely on a par with Abraham, Sarah and Isaac in point of religious

purity or complete separation from idolatry. However they would have some knowledge of Jehovah, the living and true God, and would be far above the degraded heathenism of the Canaanites.

Questions:

1. What are some of the lessons taught in chapter 24?
2. How does Isaac compare with Abraham and Jacob as to his prominence and activities in the patriarchal history?
3. How old was Isaac at the time of his marriage? What portion of his life was already past?
4. How old was Abraham at the time of Isaac's marriage?
5. How much longer did Abraham live?
6. What important matter did Abraham wish to get settled before his own death?
7. What advantages would have accrued to Abraham's family from a marriage with the Canaanites?
8. What kind of considerations did Abraham regard as supremely important in this situation?
9. What may be the meaning of the expression "the eldest servant"?
10. Why is it unlikely that this servant was the Eliezer of Damascus mentioned in chapter 15?
11. How did Abraham administer an oath to his servant?
12. What was the servant required to swear?
13. Why is it unlikely that Abraham objected to marriage with the Canaanites chiefly on racial grounds?
14. If racial purity was not Abraham's chief concern in arranging for Isaac's marriage, what was his chief concern?
15. What was the religious background of Abraham and Nahor?
16. To what extent would the descendants of Nahor differ religiously, at this time, from the Canaanites?

LESSON 105

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

Abraham's servant raises a possible objection to the requirement that he get Isaac a wife from Nahor's descendants. Perhaps the woman will not be willing to make the trip to Canaan. Is the

servant then to take Isaac back to Mesopotamia? Abraham immediately warns against this in the strongest terms (24:6). To take Isaac to Mesopotamia would be a backward step and would run counter to the revealed purpose of God. Such a thing is therefore under no circumstances to be done. Abraham rather assures his servant that the God who has called him and given him promises will work things out: "He shall send

his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence" (24:7). However, if the woman refuses her consent, then the servant will have discharged his sworn obligation and will not be responsible for the refusal; only under no circumstances is Isaac to return to Mesopotamia. The servant is now clear as to just what he is swearing to, and swears the oath as required by Abraham (24:9).

Next comes the servant's action in fulfilling his obligation under the oath. Through all the rest of the chapter we get an impression that the servant is anxious to discharge his obligation without delay. It is not actually stated that verse 10 followed immediately after the oath sworn in verse 9, but that impression is given, for nothing else is mentioned between the two. Later in the story we find the servant anxious to return to Canaan without undue delay (note verses 33, 54 and 56); even the customary Oriental method of approaching such business through long drawn-out ceremonious maneuvering must give way to the urgency of transacting the Lord's business without delay.

Abraham's servant sets out with a caravan of ten camels. That other servants accompanied him is shown by his use of the plural pronoun "us" in verse 23. The camels would be loaded not only with supplies for the journey, but also with the rich gifts which appear later in the story. The trip to the city of Nahor is made without trouble. The destination is reached toward evening and the servant makes the camels kneel near a well of water. At this point he seeks the Lord's blessing in prayer.

The servant's prayer (24:12-14) is marked by reverence, faith and direct, pointed petition without vain repetitions. The servant has reached the region whence he is to take a wife for Isaac, but he can proceed no further without special guidance from God. In his prayer he proposes that when the young girls of the city come to draw water, he shall ask one of them for a drink, and the one who answers "Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also" shall be the one appointed to be the bride of Isaac. We should of course not suppose that this man is dictating to God what is to be done; he is praying in submission to the sovereign counsel of God; indeed we should say that it was God who led him to pray this prayer.

The test or sign specified by the servant in his prayer was not an easy one that could come true by mere coincidence. Ten thirsty camels could drink a great deal of water. It would mean many trips down the stairs into the well and up again with a jug of water before the camels would be satisfied. As Leupold points out, willingness to draw water for the camels would imply also such qualities as cheerfulness, courtesy, unselfishness, and a strong, healthy body. It was therefore not

an easy or trivial favor that was to be volunteered. Except by the working out of the special providence of God it would not happen.

Abraham's servant has not actually finished his silent prayer, when Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the son of Nahor approaches the place with a water jug on her shoulder. Moses states that she was very beautiful, "a virgin, neither had any man known her" (24:16). Abraham's servant "ran to meet her" with the planned request: "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher." Rebekah lowered her pitcher upon her hand and gave him a drink. He is waiting to see if his prayer will be answered as he expected. Then Rebekah adds: "I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking" (24:19). Then while Rebekah makes many trips down to the water and up again, the servant stands silently "wondering at her". The answer to his prayer has been so marvellously full and clear that he stands in astonishment. One more thing remains to be ascertained: Is this young woman of Abraham's kindred or not?

Abraham's servant takes gifts from his baggage for Rebekah — a gold ring weighing half a shekel, and a pair of gold bracelets weighing ten shekels. The word "earring" in the King James Version is a mistranslation; it actually means a nose ring. A shekel of gold was approximately a half of an ounce. The nose ring, then, would weigh about a quarter of an ounce; the pair of bracelets would weigh five ounces. At the present price of gold in the United States these gifts would be worth about \$183.75 as gold, not counting any artistic value.

The servant then asks, "Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?" On hearing the reply that she is the granddaughter of Nahor and that there is room for lodging in her father's house, the servant of Abraham bows his head again in worship, thanking and praising the Lord for His mercy and faithfulness. It is almost too good to be true — "the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren." This man has a high idea of God. He believes in God's active providential control of human events.

Meantime Rebekah, doubtless extremely surprised and highly pleased with the gold nose ring and bracelets, has run home to tell her family what has happened.

Questions:

1. What possible objection does Abraham's servant mention before swearing the oath?
2. What course does the servant suggest as a possibility in case the woman will not come to Canaan?
3. How does Abraham answer this objection?

4. Why must Isaac not return to Mesopotamia?
5. What verses show the servant's eagerness to discharge his obligation as soon as possible?
6. How do we know that other men besides Abraham's "eldest servant" went along?
7. Was it right for Abraham's servant to pray the kind of prayer he did? Would it be right for us today to ask God such a sign?
8. What reason can be suggested why the

servant specified willingness to water the camels as the sign to be provided?

9. What other qualities of personality or character would willingness to draw water for the camels show?

10. What gifts did the servant give Rebekah at the well?

11. What is the correct meaning of the word translated "earring"?

12. How much did the gifts weigh, and what would be the present value of the gold in them?

LESSON 106

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

At this point Rebekah's brother Laban enters the history (24:29). At once we catch a glimpse of Laban's acquisitive nature, which appears quite prominently later in his dealings with Jacob. Abraham's servant is still standing at the well out at the edge of the town. Laban, having heard Rebekah's story and seen the costly jewelry which Rebekah has received, is duly impressed. Having run to the well he addresses Abraham's servant thus: "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels." Laban feels that a man who can give valuable gold jewelry away is worth cultivating and entertaining hospitality. So Abraham's servant is invited to enter Laban's house as a guest. Bethuel, Rebekah's father, is still living, as we learn from verse 50. However, Laban, Rebekah's brother takes as active a part in the negotiations as the father does — perhaps a more active part. This may have been because Bethuel was old, or the reason may be that according to custom Laban, as full brother of Rebekah, had an equal right with the father to decide what was to be done.

The servant has entered Bethuel's household; the camels have been attended to; water for washing the guests' feet has been provided according to the common custom of ancient Oriental hospitality. A meal has been prepared and the guests are invited to partake of food. But at this point the importance and urgency of the business in hand take priority over age-old Oriental custom. The servant refuses to eat until he has stated what his business is. We can well imagine the intense interest and curiosity with which Bethuel's household would hear the story told by Abraham's servant.

First he identifies himself as "Abraham's servant." Then he proceeds to relate the blessings which the Lord has bestowed upon Abraham — he is a great and wealthy man, with flocks and

herds, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, camels and asses. Abraham and Sarah had a son in their old age, and to this son Abraham has bequeathed all his possessions. Then follows the story, with which we are already familiar, of Abraham's concern about Isaac's marriage, the oath he had required his eldest servant to swear, the trip from Canaan to Mesopotamia, the prayer at the well, Rebekah's response to the request for a drink of water, her voluntary drawing water for the camels, the question whose daughter she was, the gift of nose ring and bracelets, the prayer of gratitude to God for His providential guidance. This recital takes up verses 34-48. Having finished his story, the servant asks: "And now, if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand or to the left" (24:49).

Bethuel and his family now have the facts on which to base a decision. The servant has not actually made any request. He lets his story, with its implied request, speak for itself. The facts as related are a challenge to their religious faith. And Laban and Bethuel recognize this, for they reply: "The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good" (24:50). This statement of Bethuel and Laban should not be interpreted as meaning "We cannot make any decision, either favorable or unfavorable." For in the very next verse they add "Behold, Rebekah is before thee; take her, and go . . .". Therefore the statement "we cannot speak unto thee bad or good" must have some other meaning. Evidently "bad" and "good" are mentioned here as two extremes covering all possibilities between the two. The meaning then is: "God has already spoken all that can be spoken on this matter; we cannot add anything to what God has already spoken by His providence." Bethuel and family, therefore, have granted consent for Rebekah to become Isaac's wife. The servant understands this perfectly, and responds by worshipping the Lord, bowing himself to the earth (24:52).

Next, costly gifts of silver, gold and clothing are given to Rebekah. These constitute the customary wedding gift given by the bridegroom

to the bride at the time of betrothal. The giving and acceptance of such gifts would be regarded as evidences of good faith on the part of the two parties. Thus the agreement would be regarded as sealed or pledged. Leupold rightly points out that there is no hint here of the heathenish custom of purchasing a bride from her father or her family, a practice unknown among the Israelites.

Gifts, literally "costly articles," are likewise bestowed on Rebekah's brother and her mother. The father is not mentioned but was perhaps regarded as included with the mother in the gifts given.

The marriage agreement having been duly arranged, a meal follows. The next morning Abraham's servant proposes to leave for Canaan immediately (24:54). Rebekah's family, however, propose a delay of ten days to allow them to become used to the idea of Rebekah leaving. After all, they could not expect to see their daughter and sister again in this world; the separation would be permanent. We can only sympathize with the feelings of Rebekah's family. The servant, however, evidently realizes that delay will make it even harder to part with Rebekah. Did he perhaps fear that they would change their mind about granting permission for her to marry Isaac? At any rate the servant disregards the common Oriental custom of taking plenty of time for things of this kind, and requests that he be allowed to leave at once. His plea is based on the fact that God's purpose is involved: "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master" (24:54). At this point the family propose that the decision be left to Rebekah herself. She is called and asked, "Wilt thou go with this man?" and she answers, "I will go." The answer evidently implied readiness to go immediately, without the ten days' delay. So the matter is regarded as settled.

No doubt there were busy preparations, which however are not mentioned in the narrative. Re-

bekah's nurse is sent with her, and also her damsels, that is, a number of girls of about her own age who would not only be her maids but would also help to keep her from becoming too homesick in a strange country. A solemn blessing is pronounced upon Rebekah: "Thou art our sister; be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them" (24:60). This blessing has been literally fulfilled, which may explain why it is recorded in the Bible.

Questions:

1. What trait of Laban's character is seen almost as soon as he enters the story?
2. What hospitality was accorded to Abraham's servant in the household of Bethuel?
3. What does the servant insist on doing before partaking of food?
4. What impression did the servant's story produce upon Rebekah's family?
5. What is the probable meaning of the statement "We cannot speak unto thee bad or good"?
6. Why did the servant give additional gifts to Rebekah?
7. To whom besides Rebekah did the servant give presents?
8. Why did Abraham's servant wish to return to Canaan immediately?
9. Why did Rebekah's family wish for a few days' delay?
10. How was this difference settled?
11. Who accompanied Rebekah from Mesopotamia to Canaan?
12. What blessing was pronounced upon Rebekah just before her departure?

LESSON 107

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

The caravan trip to Canaan is accomplished without incident. Isaac is on his way back from the place called Beer-lahai-roi. The word "beer" mean "well." The place referred to was named Beer-lahai-roi because of Hagar's experience there. (16:7-14). The meaning of the name was explained in a previous lesson, on chapter 16. This well was evidently regarded as a sacred spot on account of the divine revelation granted to Hagar there. Moses adds the explanatory note that Isaac "dwelt in the south country," that is, in the portion of

Canaan called the Negeb. After his return from Beer-lahai-roi Isaac goes out into the fields to meditate in the evening time. Some have thought that Isaac was still mourning for his mother Sarah. However Sarah had been dead three years, as is shown by comparison of 21:5, 23:1 and 25:20. We may infer, therefore, that Isaac's purpose in going to the fields was religious meditation and prayer rather than a mere nursing of grief. Leupold comments that at this point we see Isaac's true piety. Who can say how much Isaac's prayers had to do with the success of Abraham's servant in his trip to Mesopotamia and back? It is while in the fields for meditation that Isaac sees a caravan of camels on the horizon. As the caravan approaches nearer, Rebekah sees Isaac, and inquires of the

servant as to who this man is. On being informed that it is her future husband, Rebekah dismounts from her camel and veils herself (24:65). The dismounting from the camel was a common token of courtesy. The veil was worn as a sign of modesty and respect. Leupold remarks that while Rebekah was courageous, she was not bold.

The caravan having reached its destination, Abraham's servant reports to Isaac on the details of the trip. How intensely fascinating this would be to Isaac! If he has been praying for God's blessing on the errand to Mesopotamia, now he knows how remarkably his prayers were answered.

"And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (24:67). Isaac showed tactful courtesy in conducting Rebekah immediately to a tent, and he showed her honor by giving her the tent which had been that of his mother Sarah. Isaac's marriage to Rebekah followed. We may say that this was a marriage made in heaven, and entered into on earth in the fear of God. It is no wonder, therefore, that the union was a happy one, and that it was cemented by love. Even though Isaac and Rebekah had been strangers before marriage, love followed their marriage. Moses adds that Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. It is probable that Sarah's death had caused him intense grief.

Chapter 25 takes up Abraham's second marriage and his death. Abraham lived to the age of 175 years. At the time of his death his grandsons Jacob and Esau were 15 years old. That was 35 years after the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah.

Abraham is 140 years old at the time of Isaac's marriage. At this point Abraham marries again. This may seem strange to us in view of the fact that the birth of Isaac when Abraham was 100 years old was a great wonder. We might suppose it would be out of the question for him to beget more children after reaching the age of 140 years. This seeming difficulty can be solved by supposing that Abraham, by the power of God, was rejuvenated so that he could be the father of Isaac, and this rejuvenation was not merely temporary but lasted for many years, as if Abraham had actually been made young again by supernatural power.

Abraham's second wife is Keturah. There is a Jewish story that Keturah was identical with Hagar, whom Abraham is said to have married after Sarah's death. There is no basis for this idea, however. As to who Keturah was — her race and background — we know nothing. She

presumably was or became a believer in Jehovah. It was through Abraham's marriage to Keturah that the promise that he should be "father of a multitude of nations" was to be fulfilled.

The descendants of Abraham and Keturah are listed in 25:2-4. The persons named became the fathers of Arabian tribes. Abraham gave each a settlement of property during his own lifetime and sent each away toward the east, that is, toward Transjordan and Arabia. Abraham was a wise man and he realized that the covenant promises depended on Isaac. If these descendants of Keturah were left to claim a share of the family property after Abraham's own death, trouble might follow. He therefore adopted the wise plan of giving each a portion during his own lifetime. The portions were no doubt generous ones, which would enable the various sons to get a good start in building up an estate for themselves.

But the establishment of Abraham as a whole — which would be by far the greater share of the property, as well as the position of headship of the clan — was reserved for Isaac, the divinely appointed heir of the covenant promises of redemption.

Questions:

1. From what place had Isaac just returned when he first saw Rebekah?
2. For what purpose did Isaac go out into the fields toward evening?
3. How long after Sarah's death was the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah?
4. What was implied by Rebekah's actions of dismounting and veiling herself?
5. What living quarters were assigned to Rebekah on her arrival in Canaan?
6. How old was Abraham at the time of Isaac's marriage?
7. How can we explain the seeming difficulty about Abraham begetting children many years after the birth of Isaac?
8. How many descendants of Abraham and Keturah are listed in 25:2-4?
9. What provision did Abraham make for the sons of Keturah?
10. In what direction did Abraham send them away during his lifetime?
11. What provision did Abraham make for his son Isaac?

LESSON 108

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.**2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.**

Chapter 25 verses 7 to 10 record the death and burial of Abraham. First we are informed that he lived to the age of 175 years. The expression "gave up the ghost" means "drew his last breath." The statement that Abraham died "full of years" does not mean that he was weary of life, but rather that all his desires and wants had been satisfied.

"And was gathered unto his people" (25:8). Under the circumstances this is a remarkable statement. We would perhaps naturally tend to take it as meaning "he was buried where his ancestors were buried." But this cannot be the meaning, for Abraham was buried in the cave of Machpelah near Hebron in Canaan whereas his ancestors were buried in or near Ur of the Chaldees. There must therefore be some other meaning. We believe the true interpretation is that this statement indicates faith in a life after death. While Scripture has not spoken, up to this point, of personal immortality, it is evident that the patriarchs believed in the survival of human personality, no doubt basing this faith on an inference from what they knew of the character of God. In this connection, compare the statements of Hebrews 11:13-16. The concepts of personal immortality and bodily resurrection are revealed gradually in the Bible, and are fully revealed in the New Testament. Yet there are hints, such as Gen. 25:8, that godly people believed in immortality from the beginning of the human race.

Abraham's mortal remains were buried in the cave of Machpelah, where the body of Sarah had already been laid to rest. On the cave of Machpelah, see the discussion in Lesson 103.

Note that the funeral arrangements were made by Abraham's son Isaac and Ishmael. This is in contrast to the earlier enmity between the two (21:9). At what time a reconciliation was effected between Isaac and Ishmael we do not know. Possibly with the maturity of adult life the old bitterness was forgotten; possibly the death of Abraham drew the two half-brothers together.

Following the death of Abraham, Isaac continues to live in the Negeb or extreme south of Canaan, maintaining his dwelling at Beer-lahai-roi (25:11). The most important fact about Isaac, however, is the fact that God's blessing continued to rest upon him. This would be obvious to observers of his way of life and of his material prosperity. There were of course also spiritual blessings, but they are not specifically mentioned at this point.

3. Abraham's descendants through Ishmael. 25:12-18

Though the main subject of Genesis and of the Bible is the descendants of Abraham through Isaac — the line of people through whom the covenant promises descended and would be fulfilled — nevertheless at this point in the record a section is inserted by Moses on the descendants of Abraham through Ishmael. "Now these are the generations of Ishmael . . ." (25:12). This form of expression, as we have already had occasion to observe, is a sort of caption or heading, introducing a new subject or a new division of a subject. It may be paraphrased: "The following is an account of the history of Ishmael." This heading containing the word "generations" (*toledoth*) occurs ten times in the Book of Genesis, each time clearly marking the beginning of a new section of the book. As the descendants of Ishmael are not those through whom the plan of redemption is to be worked out, they are treated only briefly and then dropped. Isaac's descendants, on the other hand, are not dropped, for it was from them that the Christ would be born.

Twelve sons of Ishmael are listed in verses 13 to 15. It is then stated in verse 16 that these men were "twelve princes according to their nations." The words "towns" and "castles" should rather be translated by something like "settlements" and "encampments" (Leupold). As these men were evidently tent-dwellers of the desert the term "castles" is misleading. We shall not take time to consider the sons of Ishmael in any detail, but we may recall the promise of God to Abraham recorded in 17:20 concerning Ishmael: "Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation." Also we should recall the promise of God to Hagar concerning Ishmael, recorded in 21:18: "I will make him a great nation."

The descendants of Ishmael seem to have lived to the southeast of the regions held by the sons of Keturah. The names of the sons of Ishmael are also in some cases names of places where they or their descendants lived. This is only natural, for it was very common to name a place after the people who lived there, or after the ancestor of the clan or tribe which settled in the area.

In general it may be said that the descendants of Abraham through Ishmael (as also his descendants through the sons of Keturah, and the descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot) are today represented by the people of Arabia. Of course there has been much intermarriage between tribes or clans during the past four thousand years, so that we should not expect to find these

various families of Abraham's day represented by particular Arabian tribes of the present day, although the modern Arabs do make genealogical distinctions, especially distinguishing those descended from Ishmael from those descended from Joktan (Gen. 10:26-30).

Ishmael died at the age of 137 years; thus his life was much shorter than the lives of Abraham (175 years), Isaac (180) and Jacob (147).

It is also said of Ishmael that he "was gathered unto his people" (25:17). We take this statement of Moses as implying belief in personal immortality, but not as implying anything as to whether Ishmael was saved or not. It is of course possible that Ishmael, through the influence of his godly father Abraham, may have been personally a believer in the Lord all his life. For a further discussion of this question, the reader is referred to the Blue Banner Question Box in the October-December 1955 issue of this magazine (pages 185-6).

The general region of the habitation of the descendants of Ishmael is stated to be "from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria" (25:18). Havilah is thought to be the sandy desert east of Egypt; Shur was somewhere along the border between Egypt and Canaan. Assyria is of course well known, located in the upper Tigris-Euphrates valley. The description given, then, would include the Syrian-Arabian desert, east of Syria and Palestine, between Egypt and Assyria.

LESSON 109

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29

Again we meet the expression "These are the generations of . . ." (25:19) indicating the beginning of a new subject or section of the book. This time it is the generations of Isaac. In 37:2 we meet the statement "These are the generations of Jacob." This may seem rather strange for there is much more about Jacob than about Isaac in the section called "The generations of Isaac." The explanation is evidently that the early parts of Jacob's life were dominated by the influence of Isaac, therefore they are included as part of the history of Isaac.

The first new fact stated in the history of Isaac is his prayer to the Lord on behalf of his wife Rebekah, who had borne no children. The Lord answered this prayer of Isaac (25:21) and so Rebekah is soon to become a mother. She is to be the mother of twins, and before they are born there comes a revelation from God to Rebekah (25:22,23). It is said to Rebekah that twin

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the expression "gave up the ghost"?
2. What is implied in the statement that Abraham died "full of years"?
3. How should the statement that Abraham "was gathered unto his people" be understood?
4. Where was Abraham's body buried?
5. Who made the arrangements for Abraham's burial?
6. Where did Isaac live after the death of Abraham?
7. What is the meaning of the formula "These are the generations of . . ."?
8. How many times does this formula occur in Genesis?
9. Why are Isaac's descendants so much more important than Ishmael's?
10. How many sons of Ishmael are listed?
11. What promises of God to Abraham and Hagar were fulfilled by Ishmael's sons?
12. Who are the descendants of Ishmael today?
13. How old was Ishmael at the time of his death? How does this compare with the length of life of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?
14. What can be said about the question of whether Ishmael was saved?
15. What general area was occupied by the descendants of Ishmael in ancient times?

sons will be born and that two nations shall be descended from them. It is further revealed that "the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (25:23). That the one nation should be stronger than the other would occasion no surprise; but the prediction that the elder should serve the younger would cause wonder, because it runs contrary to nature and custom. Here in this history of Rebekah we see a profound truth disclosed. In God's dealings with mankind, grace is more important than nature, and takes priority over it. God's purpose of redemption is a sovereign purpose and cannot be limited to natural, reasonable and customary channels. God in His sovereignty chooses and decides as He pleases and no being in the universe has a right to challenge His decisions. Contrary to nature and human custom God has chosen the younger in preference to the elder.

This revelation to Rebekah is developed later in the Bible. In Malachi 1:2, 3 we read: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau . . .". Then in the New Testament the apostle Paul comments on it

in Romans 9:10-13, "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac: (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

The apostle Paul points out that this discrimination on the part of God was **sovereign**, not based on any merit of Jacob over against Esau, as proved by the fact that the discrimination was made before the children were born, or had done anything good or evil. We may pause a moment here to observe that Paul's argument holds good against the modern sophistry that God's election is based on foreseen faith and repentance. Clearly the apostle's concern is to show that God's choice was a sovereign one, not based on anything in the life of Jacob and Esau themselves. If Paul had believed, as some people do today, that God chose Jacob because He foresaw that Jacob would later of his own free will repent and believe in the Lord, then the choice would have been based on works after all — **foreseen** works, but still works. But Paul definitely says that it was "not of works, but of him that calleth," as proved by the fact that the decision was made before the sons were born. The modern sophistry of election being based on foreseen repentance and faith had not yet been invented in Paul's time, but in any case it is clear that such a scheme cannot possibly be fitted into the apostle's statements in Romans 9:10-13. The notion of election being based on foreseen repentance and faith does not really come from exegesis of the Scriptures, but from a persistent desire to maintain man's free will and moral ability over against God's sovereignty. This modern notion has been quite fairly described as the notion that "God elects those who elect themselves."

God chose the younger in preference to the elder, then, not because of a moral difference be-

tween the two sons (actual or foreseen) but because it was God's good pleasure so to decide. This is not to say that God had no reasons; it is only to say that God's reasons were not grounded in the superior merit or moral character of the one brother over against the other. The oft-quoted saying of Augustine is relevant here: "The grace of God does not find men fit for salvation, but makes them so." In other words, the truth is not that God chose Jacob because Jacob was going to become a good man; but rather, Jacob finally became a good man because God had chosen him. For our part, we will take the theology of Augustine in preference to the popular man-pleasing Arminianism of the present day.

Questions:

1. At what point in the book do "the generations of Isaac" begin?
2. How can we explain the fact that a large part of the section designated as "the generations of Isaac" actually deals with Jacob?
3. What special prayer of Isaac is mentioned in 25:21?
4. What revelation of the Lord was granted to Rebekah?
5. What Biblical truth is exemplified by this revelation to Rebekah?
6. How does the prophet Malachi refer to this revelation to Rebekah?
7. In what book and chapter of the writings of the apostle Paul is the revelation to Rebekah cited and commented upon?
8. What inference does Paul draw from the fact that the revelation came to Rebekah before her two sons were born?
9. How can we answer the claim that God's election is based on foreseen repentance and faith?
10. What statement of Augustine is relevant to the revelation given to Rebekah?

LESSON 110

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Rebekah's twin sons are born. Esau, the elder, is ruddy and hairy even from birth. Jacob's well-known grasping nature seems to be illustrated even from birth by his grasping of his brother's heel. In itself this would seem to be unimportant, but Moses includes it in the record, obviously regarding it as symbolic of the character which Jacob developed as he grew up. Isaac is sixty years of age at the time of the birth of the

twins. This is therefore twenty years after his marriage to Rebekah.

As the boys grow to maturity, they develop along quite different lines. Esau becomes a skillful hunter, "a man of the field" — an outdoor man, rugged and accustomed to a rough and difficult life. Jacob, on the other hand, is described as a "plain" man that is, a man of quiet or peaceful habits and manner of life, no doubt much like his father Isaac in this respect. He is also described as a tent-dweller. It would seem that in the early part of his life Jacob was a lover of ease and comfort; later as a shepherd working for his

uncle Laban he learned to struggle against hardships (31:40).

"And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob" (25:28). This partiality on the part of the parents was bad, and it was made worse by the obvious ways in which the parents manifested their attachments. It has often been observed that people tend to be attracted, not to those most like themselves, but to those whose traits are opposite to their own. This was true, certainly, in this family. The quiet, contemplative Isaac is attracted to the active, rugged Esau; the active, energetic Rebekah, on the other hand, is attracted to the quiet disposition of Jacob. The great mistake of the parents, of course, lay in making their preferences so obvious that the sons could not avoid noting them.

Some have referred to Jacob as a soft or "sissy" type of personality at this early stage of his life, a boy who stayed around the women's tents and learned how to cook, whereas Esau is pictured as a strongly masculine type, as evidenced by his outdoor life as a hunter. However this may be, we need not hold Jacob's learning how to cook against him, for Esau also learned how to cook; if Jacob cooked pottage of lentiles, Esau cooked venison.

Next comes the story of Esau selling his birthright to Jacob. Esau returns from a hunting trip, perhaps not having been successful, feeling very faint and hungry. Jacob is just putting the finishing touches on a cauldron of red pottage of lentiles. The steaming vegetable soup would have an appetizing smell, which Esau probably recognized with eager anticipation even before he entered the tent. Esau quite understandably asks for a bowl of the pottage.

Jacob, however, will not feed his brother simply out of brotherly kindness. He makes a demand first: "Sell me this day thy birthright." According to the much later law of Moses (Deut. 21:17) the birthright involved a double portion of the inheritance; that is, the son with the birthright received twice as much of the property as any other heir. Whether this same rule was the custom in patriarchal times we do not know. Presumably, at any rate, there would be distinct material advantages involved in the possession of the birthright.

It seems probable that Jacob's demand for transfer of the birthright was not the first time this subject has been talked about by the two brothers. Very possibly it has been the subject of continued discussion and disagreement — perhaps even of quarrel or dispute. Leupold suggests that perhaps Esau had on some previous occasion made some slighting remark about the value of the birthright, or even intimated that he would be willing to part with it some time. Concerning

this, of course, we cannot say anything positively, for the record is silent on it.

As for Jacob, we may wonder what his motive was. Was he thinking mostly of material advantages, or was he concerned about the spiritual opportunities and advantages? No doubt both brothers knew of the great covenant promises made to Abraham and Isaac. Very probably, too, Rebekah had told Jacob about the revelation that had been granted to her before the twins were born. She would tell Jacob, we may suppose, that as the younger he was destined to a greater destiny than his older brother. This recalling of the revelation of the divine choice would easily lead, in the minds of mother and son, to the idea that it was incumbent on them to take steps to bring the divine purpose to pass. And this in turn could very easily lead to the idea that something in itself unethical could properly be done to help accomplish the divine purpose; in other words, that the end justifies the means.

Esau, still faint and hungry, replies: "Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" (25:32). This statement of Esau has been interpreted in two ways. First, it has been held to mean: "I am on the point of dying of starvation; what use will the birthright be to me if I actually starve to death?" This is an improbable interpretation, however. It is very unlikely that Esau was that near to death from starvation. If he had been that near death he would not have been able to walk into the tent from the field. The other suggested interpretation is that Esau meant: "I am a man with a dangerous occupation; in my occupation as a hunter I am faced with the danger of death every day. How can a man with a hazardous life like mine make long-range plans for the future? I have no certainty of living to enjoy the benefits of this birthright." This interpretation we believe to be the correct one. It indicates Esau's lack of appreciation of spiritual values. Esau here appears as a worldly-minded materialist.

Jacob, bent on taking steps to make the divine promise come true, requires Esau to swear a solemn oath transferring the birthright to his brother, which Esau actually does. Then Jacob feeds Esau with bread and pottage of lentiles; Esau having eaten his meal and feeling better, rises up and goes his way. "Thus Esau despised his birthright" (25:34).

The New Testament (Hebrews 12:16) comments on this incident and in doing so pronounces Esau to be "a profane person" because he sold his birthright for a common meal. "Profaneness" is not the same thing as "profanity"; the latter means taking God's name in vain, and related violations of the third commandment; "profaneness" means regarding what is sacred as if it were common. Esau was profane because he did not regard the

birthright as a sacred possession. In the same way, the modern-day secularist is profane, for he has no regard for what is spiritual and sacred, but thinks only of pleasures, money, worldly profit or success, and the like.

It has been said that Esau ate the most expensive dinner ever eaten by man, which is true if we allow an exception for the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil eaten by Adam and Eve. For Esau paid a high price for his dinner of bread and pottage of lentiles. It cost him his place in the history of redemption and the Kingdom of God. This is true even though the choice of Jacob had been revealed by God to Rebekah many years before, even prior to the birth of the twins. Esau cannot blame his destiny on God, for it was truly the product of his own decision, made without constraint, actuated by his own sinful motives.

Questions:

1. What characteristics of Esau and Jacob were evident from the time of their birth?
2. How long after the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah were the twins born?

3. What differences appeared in the two boys as they grew to maturity?

4. How can we explain the fact that Isaac loved Esau whereas Rebekah loved Jacob?

5. Does Jacob's learning how to cook prove that he was a person lacking in manliness?

6. According to the law of Moses, what benefits did the birthright include?

7. What may have been the motive of Jacob in seeking the transfer of the birthright?

8. How should we understand Esau's statement "I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me"?

9. What does the Epistle to the Hebrews say about Esau?

10. What is the difference between profanity and profaneness?

11. What does Esau's decision show about his character?

12. What did Esau's meal of bread and pottage cost him?

(To be continued)

Reviews of Religious Books

The favorable reviewing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Within the limits of the editorial policy of Blue Banner Faith and Life each reviewer is solely responsible for the opinions expressed in his reviews. Please purchase books from your book dealer or direct from the publishers; do not send orders to the manager of this magazine.

450 TRUE STORIES FROM CHURCH HISTORY, by J. Vernon Jacobs. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1955, pp. 147. \$2.50.

This is an age of 'Digests' and condensed volumes. That is partly due to the fact that people have little time for reading in the busy bustle of daily life and partly, no doubt, to the fact that many readers are mentally lazy and have no appetite for the longer detailed studies. This little volume under review will appeal to those who like to know the facts of history without having to make a detailed study of its course. It will also recall to memory interesting details of great characters in the history of the Christian Church. The book is not so much history as a collection of popular anecdotes and illustrations from Church History and biography. They have been well chosen, and as the publishers suggest, the use of these stories will make drowsy students come to attention in college class rooms, give sparkle to otherwise dry sermons and make the Sabbath School

lessons so interesting that pupils will want to come back for more. At the close of each story there is an indication of the source from which the material has been taken. In many instances the excerpts have come from valuable books and documents that are no longer in print and from monumental works that are now little read. The book has a very good double index, one dealing with subjects illustrated and the other with the persons about whom the stories are told.

— Adam Loughridge.

THE DIVINE ECONOMY: A STUDY IN STEWARDSHIP, by A. C. Conrad. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1954, pp. 169. \$2.50.

A new study of Christian Stewardship should appeal to Covenanters who are known for their acceptance and application of the Scriptural principle of the Tithe. The author, A. C. Conrad, Professor at Bethel College and Seminary, St. Paul,

Minnesota, was first drawn to a study of the subject, when in his early days as pastor of a congregation, he became aware that there was very little material dealing with the theological aspect of stewardship. Most of the books and pamphlets on the subject dealt with the tithe as a scriptural and practical way of financing the work of the Church and meeting Church budgets. He felt that while the practice was good and commendable, there was not a sufficiently clear understanding of its meaning in relation to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. He accepted the challenge to investigate the whole question of Stewardship and as he progressed in his studies, he was convinced that the principle was a basic one in the doctrine and that it ought to apply in every department of life. The book, which is the result of this study, does not deal specifically with the practical aspects of stewardship, because the author feels that this has been adequately covered by others. He attempts to give a theological interpretation of Christian Stewardship.

In a clear and practical introduction, the author defines his terms and outlines the whole matter of Stewardship. It is the 'law of the house', the principle of the administration of the property of others. Paul uses the word 'OIKONOMIA' to describe his responsibility as a preacher of the Gospel, (1 Corinthians 9:17), to illustrate his work in the fulfilment of the divine plan for the Church (Ephesians 3:2) and to demonstrate the means by which God, as Master of a great household, administers His wise rule over it. Subsequent chapters deal with the stewardship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We quote from the author's summary of his treatment of the subject. "From the stewardship of God the Father, the believer derives his concept of purpose and his trusteeship and responsibility. From the stewardship of God the Son, the believer derives his insight into God's grace which restores him into fellowship with God and which awakens in him the desire to be a partner with Christ in fulfilling His purpose. From the stewardship of God the Holy Spirit, the believer derives an understanding of a living faith which bears fruit in obedient and dedicated service. The believer's faith in God the Father establishes stewardship as God's work. The believer's faith in God the Son establishes the basis of stewardship upon which redeemed men can do God's work. And the believer's faith in God the Holy Spirit consecrates him to be a steward in fulfilling God's work." The motive for this work is love, the method is evangelism, the means are the material resources of creation. Time is the opportunity for advancing God's purpose, and the goal is the coming of the Kingdom.

The book is well written, the author makes use of a wide bibliography, and the reader is challenged on every page to consecrate himself fully to His Lord and Master.

— Adam Loughridge.

AN EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS, by Arthur W. Pink. Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, Pa. 1954, 3 vols., pp. 504, 414, 405. Per set, \$17.95.

The Epistle to the Hebrews has claimed the attention of great Commentators for centuries and the volume of work on this epistle that is Scripturally orthodox is above average. In our study of this most precious portion of the Word, we can draw on the rich resources of John Calvin, John Owen, Albert Barnes, Adolph Saphir, John Brown, T. C. Edwards and others. We might well ask then, Is there a place for a further Exposition? Can anything that is fresh and helpful and inspiring be added to the wealth of comment already in our hands? That is our first reaction as we open the three volume Commentary by the late A. W. Pink. And to be fair to the Author and to the truth he puts in our hands, we must agree that he has made a worthy contribution to scholarship and to evangelical literature by a work that must have taken years and effort and patience to produce. It is the early work of a prolific writer and teacher who matured greatly in thought and spirit in his later years. The expositions originally appeared in his monthly magazine, *Studies in the Scriptures*.

Through the work, it is obvious that the author is a man of deep spirituality of mind with a great love for the Word of God and a desire to honour Him, who is the Author of the Word, by an honest interpretation and a sincere application of truth. This approach to the task compensates for any possible lack of technical ability in undertaking such a work.

Our first comment and criticism concerns the rather unbalanced arrangement of the exposition. Volume I deals with the first 8½ chapters of Hebrews, Volume II, with 2½ and Volume III with the last two chapters of the Epistle. It must be admitted, however, that there are an extra 100 pages in Volume I, that does not remove the feeling that one has, that the work could have been much condensed without losing in quality and effectiveness. The style is somewhat ponderous. Lengthy quotations, even though they illustrate the point and bring before us such famous names as Calvin, Owen, Brown, Saphir etc, are apt to become a little tedious. The author is guilty of numerous digressions into the realms of theological controversy, which though accurate and informative are not strictly within the expositor's sphere. There are also contradictions. In one place he affirms that the elect are very few, in another that the redeemed are many.

Readers are forced to admire Mr. Pink's forthright conclusions. He has no hesitation in saying that the Epistle is the work of Paul even though there has been a difference of opinion on this subject. He quotes as proof of Pauline authorship Peter's reference in the second Epistle, chap-

ter 3, verse 15 "—the longsuffering of God is our salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him has written unto you."

The author proceeds to deal with the whole epistle clause by clause. A brief quotation from volume I, giving a summary of his exposition of the well known words of Chapter 7 verse 25 may serve to illustrate his style, linking the text to its context. " 'Wherefore' — because of the oath of His consecration (V. 20), because of the immutability of the Father's purpose (He will not repent) V. 21, because of the better covenant of which He is 'Surety', (V. 22), and because He continueth ever an unchanging Priest (v. 24), — 'He is able to save them unto the utter most! This, we take it, is the connection between verse 25 and its context." In addition to his detailed exposition, the author excels in skilful practical application. For instance, after commenting on the 28th verse of the ninth chapter, he has these words of application on the phrase "Unto them that look for Him": — that is, all the redeemed, the many whose sins He bore. Five things are included in this work "look for". First, the steadfast faith of his appearing, resting with implicit confidence on Him promise in John 14:2,3. Second, a real love unto it; 2. Tim. 4:8. Third, an ardent longing after it, so that they cry, "Even so come, Lord Jesus", Rev. 22:20. Fourth, a patient waiting for it, in the midst of many discouragements: James 5:7,8. Fifth, a personal preparation for it: Matt 25:10 Luke 12:35-37.

No fewer than 250 pages are devoted to the exposition of the familiar eleventh chapter. In such an exhaustive treatment, very little is overlooked and the exposition is really a series of sermons or articles on the lives of these great saints of God. He sets before us true Calvinism as he declares man's total inability, God's sovereign grace, the fact that there is no merit in the act of faith when a sinner comes to a saving knowledge of Christ. Occasionally there is a trace of ultra or hyper Calvinism as when he says that the majority of present day Calvinists deny a common grace to all men, and insist in distinguishing grace to the elect only.

Sometimes too we find that his exposition is somewhat fanciful. He rightly speaks of the work of common grace as a primary operation of the Spirit that elevates the natural faculties of man, but does not regenerate them. He proceeds to call it an inferior call of God through the Gospel that produces a crowd of unregenerate professors whom he likens to the leaves on a tree that are very helpful in protecting the fruit, very ornamental to the tree, but not fit for the table.

It is impossible to take note of all the excellencies or defects of such a large work in such a brief review, and many things have no doubt

escaped the reviewer's notice. But for the Bible lover and student who has the money to spend, (the price is very high), and the time to dig deeply into the contents of the book, there is abundant material to reward his efforts and to refresh his soul.

— Adam Loughridge.

HOW TO ACHIEVE PERSONALITY THROUGH PRAYER, By Simon Blocker. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1954, 121 pp. \$2.00

At first glance this title might suggest a liberal psychological approach to prayer, but such is not the case. Rather this book is an exposition of Colossians 1:9-12 in the hope that both individuals and churches may advance on their knees. Blocker states that Paul's "prayer for the Colossian Christians made known to them on what specific aims they were to concentrate in prayer and effort."

This prayer of Paul suggests to the author seven major prayer goals which in turn are the subject of most of the chapters of his book. They are as follows: a satisfying Christian Creed, exemplary Christian Conduct, a true Christian Character, adequate Christian Capacity, dynamic Christian Competence, attractive Christian Charm, and enduring Christian Concentration.

The danger of becoming complacent and monotonous in our prayer life is a constant threat to our growth and service for Christ. It's not so much a question of not praying as it is a lack of progress and dependence in prayer. "Petitions lack scrutiny, definiteness, luster, and significance. Requests are too vague . . . A Christian may eke out some kind of Christian life by Grace at meals, a 'Now I lay me' at bedtime or an ejaculatory prayer if a fast driver almost runs him over. Compared to the possibilities, this is small business with scant returns, however sincere the prayers. Consciousness of the goals of prayer will help to overcome this lack of prayer power and development."

Perhaps the purpose of this volume may best be expressed in the author's own words, "When a soldier of Jesus Christ turns his back on a life of prayer, he becomes a deserter on the spot. This book is written to serve as a warrant of his arrest."

— Bruce C. Stewart

MISSIONS AT THE CROSSROADS, by T. Stanley Soltau, Van Kampen Press, Wheaton, Illinois. 1954, pp. 183. \$2.50.

This book is not one which can be read and enjoyed by everyone. For those who are at ease in Zion; for those who have perfect peace of mind and tranquility of spirit; for those who are com-

pletely satisfied with the status quo, **Missions at the Crossroads**, would only tend to be a source of irritation. But on the other hand, for those who are willing to have their own little world disrupted in order that Christ's Kingdom might be advanced here on the earth, this book will be very stimulating and challenging.

For twenty-five years, Dr. Soltau was a pastor, evangelist and educator in the American Presbyterian Mission in Korea. Because of this almost all of the examples which he uses to explain his points are experiences which he had in the Far East. Nevertheless, Dr. Soltau also speaks with apparent understanding of problems which arise in other countries such as Moslem countries. He does not say that since these methods worked they are right. Rather he shows that the methods of mission work which he presents have worked with wonderful results and they are right because they are Biblical.

Dr. Soltau writes: "Missions at the Crossroads! Yes, they are at the crossroads and the question as to what the future holds for Christian missions is one which concerns every intelligent believer today. From almost every country come disquieting reports." So far as it is humanly possible to see, the day of the foreign missionary is rapidly coming to a close. Therefore, Dr. Soltau gives as the sub-title to his book: "The Indigenous Church—A Salutation for the Unfinished Task."

The purpose of Christian Missions is stated clearly in the very first chapter: "The aim of Christian missions is the proclaiming of the gospel to the unconverted everywhere, according to the command of Christ, with the view to the establishing of an indigenous church." In this book, Dr. Soltau takes up the various problems which arise mainly from the last part of this great purpose of missions, namely, "the establishing of an indigenous church." These problems are discussed from the Missionary's point of view, from the Home Board's point of view, and from the Home Church's point of view.

In reading this book, one gets the feeling that Dr. Soltau believes that Christ's kingdom will triumph here on the earth through the work of the Holy Spirit although he does not say this in so many words. He is not one who would snatch as many souls as possible from the burning fire; nor is he one who would reform the world to a Western way of life; rather his plea is for a foreign mission program such as that which was carried on under the leadership of the Apostle Paul.

The book itself has good print, wide margins, and each chapter contains bold sub-titles so that it is easily and rapidly read. Following each chapter questions for discussion are given so that it might be suitable for use in Missionary Societies, etc. For this type book, it is very well written in that it can be understood without study. Dr. Sol-

tau states his case in simple, straightforward language. One does get the feeling as he reads the second half of the book, however, that there is too little progression of thought. The second half of the book might have been incorporated into the first fourteen chapters with an even more forceful argument.

This book surely deserves serious and open-minded consideration by every Christian of the Reformed Faith. Most especially should it be considered by all of our foreign missionaries and by all who have any authority in the management of our foreign fields.

— Thomas J. Wilson

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION, by James Buchanan. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich., 1955, pp. x, 514. \$4.95.

This scholarly volume contains the Cunningham Lectures delivered at New College, Edinburgh, Scotland, where the author was Divinity Professor a century ago. We are fortunate to be able to study this reprint volume, first published in 1867, and thus to sit at the feet of a great scholar. James Buchanan was one of a number of great lights in a period of florescence in the history of Reformed theology. He shows his color as a doctrinal historian and also as an able exegete. The work is divided into two main parts: the History of the Doctrine of Justification in the Church, and its Exposition from Scripture. The reprinting of such a masterful piece of work is fully justified, for it is doubtful that anything has ever been written on the doctrine of justification that can match it for thorough treatment, elegant style and precise expression.

The author is a master of the art of making truth lucid by contrasting it with error. He places under the searchlight of the Word all the various shades of error which have corrupted the pure doctrine of Justification by grace and turned multitudes away from the Gospel of the grace of God to a different gospel.

It is to be lamented that the truth of Justification, the keystone of Protestantism, has again drifted into obscurity and is practically unheard of today in large sections of Protestantism. It is highly significant that while the terms "Gospel", "Cross", "grace", etc. are constantly on the lips of Protestant clergymen, other important terms such as "justification", "imputed righteousness", "obedience of Christ", are seldom mentioned. The former terms, however have no definite meaning apart from the latter. Preaching about "the Gospel" does not necessarily mean preaching the Gospel itself. The Gospel of the grace of God cannot be truly preached unless the doctrine of Justification be preached. Apart from the truth of Justification, evangelism can only result in confusing people's minds with erroneous or inadequate views of God's

way of salvation. The recovery in our day of the doctrine of Justification by faith on the ground of Christ's obedience and imputed righteousness would be a remedy for much of the vagueness which clouds the truth of the Gospel at the present time.

The doctrine of Justification has no appeal to those who welcome every strange wind of doctrine as something original and existential. But the truth set forth in unambiguous language by Dr. Buchanan almost a century ago is timeless. It will be loved and preached and believed long after the contemporary theology has been forgotten.

— Joseph A. Hill

HANDBOOK OF BIBLE HISTORY: BOOK I — OLD TESTAMENT FROM CREATION TO THE KINGDOM OF DAVID, by George Stob. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1955, pp. 137, paper cover. \$1.00.

This book by a minister of the Christian Reformed Church "is intended to serve as a study book in Bible History for the children as well as the adult members of the congregation" (Preface). The material is divided into twenty-six chapters of five or six pages each. Each chapter closes with three sets of questions: (1) a set of factual questions for children up to fifth grade age; (2) a set of factual and thought questions for children of grades six to eight; (3) a set of questions intended to form a basis for discussion, dealing with "the theology and ethics and the particular revelational teaching of the Scripture reading."

The book is very well written and should prove a useful help in religious work. The reviewer is disappointed, however, that nothing is said about the possibility that the six days of creation may not be literal days, and that the book states that "About 365 years had gone by since the Flood" when God called Abram. In these days when archaeological investigation has pushed the civilization of the lower Euphrates valley back as far as 4,000 B. C. and perhaps even earlier, (Merrill F. Unger, *Archeology and the Old Testament*, p. 44) the view that there were only some 365 years between the Flood and Abraham involves serious difficulty, and it would seem that a book intended for youth and adults as well as for children should at least point out that a problem exists.

— J. G. Vos

PUZZLE FUN WITH BIBLE CLUES, by W. P. Keasbey. W. A. Wilde Co., 131 Clarendon Street, Boston 16, Mass. 1955, pp. 116, paper cover. No price stated.

This little book contains 52 Bible puzzles

something like crossword puzzles, yet not the same. Those of our readers who are familiar with the puzzle book entitled **Bible Anacrostics** by Miss Rose A. Huston will know what the present book is like, for the idea of the puzzles is the same. A Bible text is given with one word omitted. There are spaces to indicate the number of letters in the word. Under each space is a number. The child is to fill in the missing word by looking up the text in the Bible (references are given), then transfer the letters thus supplied to numbered blank squares in the puzzle form on the opposite page. The puzzles are easy to work and should provide children with considerable pleasant occupation on Sabbath afternoons, while at the same time teaching them texts from the Word of God.

— J. G. Vos

GOD'S PLAN AND MAN'S DESTINY, by Viola M. Cameron. The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., P. O. Box 185, Nutley 10, N. J. 1955, pp. 160, paper cover. \$1.80.

The first edition of this book was reviewed in the January-March 1953 issue of this magazine (pages 46-48). We are glad to note that a second edition has appeared, this time being published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company. The first edition was very well received in Calvinistic circles. The book was translated and published in Chinese by the Reformation Translation Fellowship.

On the cover the book is described as "A digest of the Bible from Paradise lost to Paradise regained." The contents of the book measure up to this description very well. The book is a study of the Bible as an organism of revelation and redemption. Thoroughly true to the full inspiration and authority of the Bible as the Word of God, the author has avoided the piecemeal, atomistic, non-organic type of treatment which vitiates so much Fundamentalist Bible study material. In Miss Cameron's book the Bible is not treated as a vast collection of texts from which some precious gems may be selected, but as an organism all parts of which are fitted together and inter-related in one harmonious whole.

The new edition contains a new Preface written by Dr. Cornelius Van Til, Professor of Apologetics in Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, who also provided a Preface for the first edition. Dr. Van Til characterizes the book as "a simple and comprehensive statement of the Christian Faith, which recognizes God's revelation in nature, in history and in the Word," adding that "It will serve admirably for a basis of group discussion, and the general reader will feel richly rewarded for his perusal of it." We fully endorse this commendation of the book.

— J. G. Vos

TITHING, by Arthur W. Pink. Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, Pa. No date, pp. 32, pocket size, paper cover. 10 cents.

In this booklet the late Mr. Pink sets forth Biblical teaching about the tithe, together with some material on objections that have been raised against tithing, and also something on the blessings of tithing and some practical suggestions.

The author avoids the absurd claims which have rendered some tithing literature worthless, such as the claim that the sin of Cain was failure to tithe. He frankly admits that Scripture records no positive command to tithe until the time of Moses. He infers, however, from the practice of Abraham and Jacob tithing, that there must have been a divine command which gave rise to the practice, just as it is commonly held that a divine command, not recorded in Scripture, must have lain back of the beginning of the institution of sacrifice.

We are not in agreement with the author's statement (p. 9) that one-tenth of our **gross** income belongs to the Lord. This we believe to be a misinterpretation of Scripture and also unworkable in practice. In some businesses where the profit on a single article or transaction is small, one-tenth of the gross income might be more than the **entire** net income or profit. Under modern conditions of mass production the profit to the manufacturer on an article which brings a dollar of gross income may be only five or six cents, or even less. If the gross income were to be tithed, the tither would soon be bankrupt. We believe that the only realistic way to tithe is to tithe one's net income, just as the Government imposes taxes upon a man's net income, not upon his gross income.

On page 15 the author states that the name "Melchizedek" means "peace," which is incorrect, for it means "King of righteousness." The author by an argument based on the typology of Abraham and Melchizedek seeks to show that the Christian is under obligation to pay tithes to Christ, the antitype of Melchizedek.

The reviewer is not convinced by the author's citation of Christ's reference to the practice of tithing: "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (p. 12). Christ here states that the requirements of the Mosaic law concerning tithing are binding. But it must be remembered that this was still in the Old Testament period of religion; not only tithing, but also circumcision, the passover and animal sacrifices were still obligatory. To assume without proof that a thing enjoined by Christ then is therefore binding now is to bypass the crucial question of whether the thing in question was part of the moral law or part of the ceremonial law. We are not asserting that the author is mistaken, but only that it is not proper to assume the very thing

which requires proof, namely that tithing in the Law of Moses was a moral and not a ceremonial requirement.

Lest any reader draw unwarranted inferences from the preceding paragraph, the reviewer must hasten to add that he believes in tithing and has practiced it for many years. We believe in it on the general ground that the New Testament believer should reach at least as high a standard of consecration to the Lord as was expected of the Old Testament saints.

The rest of Mr. Pink's booklet contains excellent, pointed and very practical material. Tithing is shown to be an antidote against covetousness, and the solution of the Church's financial problems, as well as the key to great advance in foreign missions. We are glad to recommend the booklet.

— J. G. Vos

THE EVANGELICAL LIBRARY BULLETIN, published by The Evangelical Library, 78a Chiltern Street, London, W. 1, England.

The Evangelical Library is an institution in England which is doing a very commendable work. As stated at the heading of its Bulletin, its task is "Preservation, Information, Circulation." Evangelical and Reformed literature is permanently preserved and also lent out to readers. The President of the General Committee is Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who is known either personally or through his published writings to a good many readers of *Blue Banner Faith and Life*.

The Bulletin appears twice yearly, and each issue contains a brief and readable but scholarly article on some important subject. The reviewer at this time of writing has before him two issues of the Bulletin, No. 14 (Autumn, 1954) and No. 15 (Spring, 1955). One of these contains an article on "The Reformation and the Gospel" by the Rev. Philip E. Hughes, M.A., B.D., accompanied by portraits of the English martyrs Latimer and Ridley. The other issue contains an article entitled "Thomas Jones of Creaton," by the Rev. J. S. Reynolds, B. Litt., M.A., this being a sketch of the life of a Welsh minister who was born in 1752. The article describes the "apostolic life and labours" of Thomas Jones. The story of the good accomplished in one lifetime by this saint of the Lord is truly stirring.

Each issue of the Bulletin also lists new books recently received by the Library, with titles and names of authors. Several large and well-known American publishers are listed as having contributed books to the Library. The Library contains some 20,000 books at present. This is certainly a most commendable enterprise.

— J. G. Vos

Books Received

The announcement of the books listed below should not be construed as a recommendation. A review of those found in this list which we regard as having value for our readers will be given in a later issue.

Publications of Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich.

THE SELF-DISCLOSURE OF JESUS, by Geerhardus Vos. 1954, pp. 311. \$4.00.

ANCHOR OF HOPE, by Preston J. Stegenga. 1954, pp. 271. \$3.50.

PHILOSOPHY OF REVELATION, by Herman Bavinck. 1953, pp. x, 348. \$3.50.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE, by A. C. Conrad. 1954, pp. 368. \$4.00.

LOVE THE LORD THY GOD, by Herman Hoeksema. 1955, pp. 290. \$3.00.

THE GOSPEL OF THE SPIRIT, by Samuel E. Pierce. 1955, pp. 104. \$1.50.

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS AND TO PHILEMON, by J. J. Mueller. 1955, pp. 200. \$3.50.

BY GRACE ALONE, by Herman Kuiper. 1955, pp. 165. \$2.50.

THE PARABOLIC TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE, by G. H. Lang. 1955, pp. 400. \$3.50.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR FOR GOD'S SAKE, by Herman Hoeksema. 1955, pp. 195. \$2.50.

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD, by W. H. Griffith Thomas. 1955, pp. xv, 303. \$3.00.

HOLY FIELDS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY LAND, by J. Howard Kitchen. 1955, pp. 160. \$2.50.

Publications of Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich.

DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS OF JOHN CALVIN, ed. by Charles E. Edwards. 1954, pp. 120, pocket size. \$1.00.

THE CHURCH IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE, by William M. Ramsey. 1954, pp. 510. \$4.20.

CHRISTIANITY IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE, by George T. Purves. 1955, pp. xx, 343. \$3.00.

I AND II THESSALONIANS, by William Hendriksen. 1955, pp. 214. \$4.50.

LEADERS OF ISRAEL: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HEBREW PEOPLE, by George L. Robinson. 1955, pp. x, 246. \$2.75.

THE SECRET OF THE LORD, by William M. Clow. 1955, pp. 353. \$2.95.

SEVEN WORDS OF LOVE, by G. Hall Todd. 1955, pp. 71. \$1.50.

THESE ALSO SUFFER, by William Gouloze. 1955, pp. 86. \$1.75.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE FOR BEGINNERS, by Henry Baker, 1954, pp. 32, pocket size, paper cover. 20 cents.

Publications of Sovereign Grace Book Club, 446 South First Street, Louisville, Kentucky.

SONGS OF SOVEREIGNTY: THREE SERMONS EXTOLLING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CHRIST, by John Owen. 1955, pp. 119. No price stated.

EXPOSITION OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, Vol. I (Chaps. 1-3; Vol II (Chaps. 4-7), by Robert Haldane. 1955, pp. 159, 310. Each volume, \$2.00.

PRAYER, by John Bunyan; THE RETURN OF PRAYERS, by Thomas Goodwin, 1955, pp. 60, paper cover. \$1.00.

KEEPING THE HEART, by John Flavel. 1955, pp. 96, paper cover. 75 cents.

Publications of the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., P. O. Box 185, Nutley 10, N. J.

CHRISTIANITY AND EXISTENTIALISM, by J. M. Spier. 1953, pp. 140. \$3.00.

THE DEFENSE OF THE FAITH, by C. Van Til. 1955, pp. viii, 436. \$4.95.

CHRISTIANITY AND IDEALISM, by C. Van Til. 1955, pp. 139, paper cover. \$1.80.

Publications of W. A. Wilde Co., 131 Claredon St., Boston 16, Mass.

MISSION ON MAIN STREET, by Helga Bender Henry. 1955, pp. 200. \$2.75.

THE LIVING BIBLE CHAPTER BY CHAPTER, by Amos R. Wells. 1955, pp. 343. \$2.00.

THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A YEAR, by Amos R. Wells. 1955, pp. 127. \$1.50.

PROTESTANT BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION, by Bernard Ramm. 1950, pp. 197. \$2.50.

Publications of Other Firms

SCHEEBEN'S DOCTRINE OF DIVINE ADOPTION, by Edwin H. Palmer. J. H. Kok, N.V., Kampen, Netherlands. 1953, pp. xi, 202, paper cover. Florins 5.90.

THE FREE OFFER OF THE GOSPEL, by John Murray and Ned B. Stonehouse. Lewis J. Grotenhuis, Belvidere Road, Phillipsburg, N.J. 1955, pp. 27, pocket size, paper cover. 25 cents.

THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM, by Edwin H. Palmer. The Men's Society of the Christian Reformed Church, 422 E. Exchange St., Spring Lake, Mich. 1955, pp. 88, paper cover. \$1.00.

TAUGHT OF THE LORD: HELPS FOR JUN-

IOR LEADERS, by Anna P. McKelvy. 1954, pp. 60. 8½ x 11 inches, plastic binding, paper cover. Order from Chester R. Fox, 209 Ninth St., Pittsburgh 22, Pa.

PREDESTINATION: ITS MEANING, ITS BLESSINGS, ITS EVIDENCES, ITS IMPLICATIONS, by George B. Fletcher. Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, Pa. No date, pp. 24, pocket size, paper cover. 15 cents; 2 for 25 cents.

Blue Banner Question Box

Readers are invited to submit Biblical, doctrinal and practical questions for answer in this department. Names will not be published with questions, but anonymous communications will be disregarded.

Question:

A minister who professes to be a Calvinist told me recently that God has not decreed that any one should remain in sin; that the decree concerning the reprobates was not a **positive decree**. What is your view on this subject?

Answer:

First of all let us note what historic orthodox Calvinism holds concerning the decree of God, as stated in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter III, Section 1: "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

A. A. Hodge in his **Outlines of Theology** (Chap. X) states: "God's decree determines only the certain futuration of events, it directly effects or causes no event. But the decree itself provides in every case that the event shall be effected by causes acting in a manner perfectly consistent with the nature of the event in question. Thus in the case of every free act of a moral agent the decree itself provides at the same time — (a) That the agent shall be a free agent. (b) That his antecedents and all the antecedents of the act in question shall be what they are. (c) That all the present **conditions** of the act shall be what they are. (d) That the act shall be perfectly spontaneous and free on the part of the agent. (e) That it shall be certainly future."

Hodge continues: "God's purposes relating to all events of every kind constitute one single, all-comprehensive intention comprehending all events, the free as free, the necessary as necessary, together with all their causes, conditions and relations, as one indivisible system of things, every link of which is essential to the integrity of the whole."

In the above statements Hodge is seeking to guard in their integrity the twin truths: (a) That God has decreed all that ever comes to pass; (b) That man is a free agent whose acts are truly his own. Admittedly the relation between these two truths (both of which are clearly taught in Scripture) is a mystery or paradox which human reason cannot solve. We do not believe it is any solution of the problem to say that God's decree concerning the sinful acts of men is "not a positive decree." Either God has foreordained all that comes to pass, or He has not. If He has foreordained all that comes to pass, then His decree renders it absolutely certain that what He intended shall come to pass. If we say He has not foreordained all that comes to pass, then we have abandoned Calvinism.

The Scriptures definitely teach that the sinful acts of wicked men are foreordained by God. For example, Joseph's brothers in selling him to be sent to Egypt committed a sinful act. Yet Joseph himself states that this act was intended by God (Gen. 45:7,8; 50:20). Judas, the Sanhedrin, Herod and Pilate sinned in putting Jesus to death, yet Scripture plainly declares that this sin was foreordained by God (Acts 2:23; 4:27,28; 13:29). Moreover the Bible teaches that the sin of unbelief, or rejecting Christ (or as the question under discussion states it, "that any one should remain in sin") is foreordained by God: 1 Peter 2:8, "And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." Again in Revelation 17:17 a fearful course of sinful conduct is stated to be a fulfilment of the divine purpose: "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." Again, Psalm 17:13,14 speaks of the sinful acts of wicked men as fulfilling the purpose of God: ". . . the wicked, which is thy sword . . . men which are thy hand, O Lord . . . men of the

world . . . ". Note also the statements of Isaiah 10:5 and 15.

To sum the matter up: (1) God has decreed ALL that comes to pass. (2) His decree makes it absolutely certain that it shall come to pass. (3) This includes the sinful acts of men, including their rejection of Christ and remaining in unbelief. (4) This decree in no way interferes with man being a free moral agent and responsible for his acts. (5) The relation between God's foreordination and man's freedom and responsibility is a mystery for which neither Scripture nor reason provide a solution.

— J. G. Vos

Question:

What are we to think of the use of the lot in awarding attendance prizes at meetings? Is this gambling? Is it proper for Christians to register for these prizes?

Answer:

Christian people are being more and more faced with situations such as that reflected in the above question. The great majority seem ready to follow the popular trend of the times without asking any questions for conscience' sake. We are glad that some Christians realize that a question of conscience is involved and are concerned to act in accordance with sound principles.

The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America in 1951 in answer to a paper submitted by the session of a congregation, adopted the following statement:

"God's law forbids all forms of gambling in these words: 'Thou shalt not steal.' Gambling is included among the 'unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbor what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves' and the 'wasteful gaming' forbidden in this commandment. (Larger Catechism 142).

"In the answers to the Larger Catechism questions (No. 105, 142, 148) as to what is forbidden in the 1st, 8th, and 10th commandments are principles which would forbid all forms of gambling from large scale betting to playing marbles for keeps and including bingo, 'bank nights' at the movies, all sorts of raffles, lotteries, drawings, playing with 'chance' slot machines, 'bookies,' 'Pools' and such like.

"Gambling is dishonoring to God in that what is called chance is not chance but an appeal to God in an irreverent manner. When the lot was properly cast during the Old Testament dispensation, it was done with a reverent appeal to God to decide and show His will. If it is ever right to use the lot today it should be done in the same spirit. The Bible tells us that 'the lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord' (Prov. 16:33).

"When merchants offer chance tickets it does not change the principle of gambling. The evil does not consist alone in money or goods that are gotten for nothing but in an irreverent appeal to what is called chance.

"Christ's true followers have been warned, and should be warned again by their pastors and sessions, that they who tempt the Lord and take such risks, or make such ventures as are inconsistent with faith in Him, are guilty of actual violations of His moral law, and thus endanger their soul's salvation."

We believe that the above answer, taken from the *Minutes of Synod*, 1951, page 139, adequately covers the question asked by our correspondent. We would add that the tremendous increase of all sorts of raffles, lotteries, drawings of chance tickets, etc., seems to us a symptom of a disease which is seriously affecting the American people. We heard an elder speak of this new American disease as Jackpotitis. Apart from the irreverent appeal to "chance" which is involved, it seems to us a sign of moral decay that so many of the American people are ready to grasp at the "chance" to get something for nothing. On one occasion the writer was unable to find a place to park his car in a town of some five thousand population. The town was unusually crowded with people, and on inquiry it was learned that thirty silver dollars and some other awards were to be given away by the merchants that afternoon to the holders of lucky number tickets. The idea today seems to be to get what you can by almost any method, regardless of whether you have really earned it or not.

— J. G. Vos

Question:

What is your opinion, on the basis of Scripture, about playing games such as the now popular game of "Scrabble," in which there seems to be an element of chance?

Answer:

The writer is not familiar with the game of Scrabble. We may be able to publish a more adequate answer in our next issue. In general, it may be said that there is an element of chance in almost every game. For example, there is certainly an element of what is called chance in basketball, yet this is only incidental, and the game is essentially one of skill. It is the writer's belief that games which are essentially games of chance should never be played for any gain, prize or award. Whether such games as Authors, Lotto, Monopoly, and the like, when played merely for recreation are improper, is a question which we believe is in need of further discussion.

— J. G. Vos

Question:

In a Reformed publication the statement was made (1) that the Bible contains much repetition; (2) that the Bible often begins a subject with a general statement, and then gives details. What is your opinion of these matters?

Answer:

We are in agreement with the statements cited. As for the first, it is obvious that the Bible does indeed contain much repetition. For example, the Ten Commandments are found in Exodus and again in almost identical form in Deuteronomy. Biblical genealogies are often repeated. The record of the Feeding of the Five Thousand is found in all four of the Gospels. Many other examples could easily be cited. Even though a matter is seldom repeated in exactly the same form, still there is a large element of repetition. Psalm 14 differs only very slightly from Psalm 53.

With regard to the second statement, we are in agreement with it also. It is a common practice, especially in the Old Testament, to start the account of a subject with a sort of summary or topic sentence which covers the subject as a whole briefly, then to go over the subject in detail from beginning to end. Many instances of this phenomenon could easily be cited. For instance, II Samuel 24 starts out with the general statement: "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." This is the general statement or topic sentence. It is followed by a detailed account of what happened, occupying verses 2-25. Again, consider Judges 6, which starts out: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years". This is followed by a detailed account of what the Midianites did to Israel, in verses 2-6. In I Samuel 31:1 we read: "Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa." This is the topic sentence which states that there was a battle

between Israel and the Philistines, in which Israel was defeated. Then the rest of the chapter gives the details of the battle, which included the death of Saul and his sons.

— J. G. Vos

Question:

Are we ever justified in praying directly to the Holy Spirit? Some recent helps for family worship and religious teaching have included suggested prayers addressed to the Holy Spirit. What should be our attitude toward this?

Answer:

We shall quote something from John Gill, *Body of Divinity*, p. 942:

"God in his Three Persons is the proper object of prayer; Father, Son, and Spirit; who are the one true God; and it is lawful to address either of them in prayer, though not one to the exclusion of the others . . . (Page 943) The third Person, the Spirit of God, is also sometimes singly prayed to, and as distinct from the Father and Son, 2 Thess. 3:5." The verse cited by Gill reads: "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." We are not at all sure that this verse substantiates the statement made by Gill; he evidently understood "the Lord" as meaning "the Holy Spirit" in distinction from the Father and the Son. We believe it is sounder exegesis to take "the Lord" as meaning the Lord Jesus Christ.

At any rate, it is quite clear that the normal manner of prayer is to pray to God (either the Father or all Three Persons without distinction), in the name of the Son, by the help of the Holy Spirit. While prayer addressed directly to the Holy Spirit may be held on theological grounds to be proper, it seems strange that not a single clear instance of such prayer can be found in the Bible. If any of our readers can furnish further light on this subject, please send the information to the editor of this magazine.

— J. G. Vos

Christ in You

By the Rev. Philip W. Martin

Colossians 1:26, 27

"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

A great mystery happened on the road to Damascus. The man who had been a persecutor of the Christian church became one of its greatest adherents and missionaries. From that time onward he spent the energies of his life proclaiming

the great mystery which is summed up in the words, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Even a hurried reading of the New Testament shows Who Paul means when he speaks of Christ. He proclaims Him as the Eternal Son of God Who gave up His home in glory and came into this world, was born of the Virgin Mary and was made under the law that He might save His people from their sins. He was made under the law that He might keep the law perfectly for His own. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. At the end of His sinless life He went to

Calvary's Cross and there, by His death, performed the supreme sacrifice that He might redeem us from the guilt and power of sin. Paul explains that there, God in the Person of Christ Jesus bore the wrath of God for us poor sinners. He further points out that Christ rose from the dead on the third day for their justification. He also proclaims that Christ's ascension proves that none can lay anything to the charge of God's elect.

It is this Christ Who in a mysterious way dwells in the heart of every child of God. He is not mixed with the old human nature but He enters and unites us to God. Christ is the Eternal Son of God and has all the attributes of the infinite God. We are of another descent and become sons of God by adoption.

We cannot understand this great mystery but there are several things revealed in Scripture which we should understand. First, Jesus betroths us unto Himself that we might become pure and holy. He does not demand that we first go and purify ourselves and obtain great riches that we might be His bride. In His love for us He unites us to Himself and casts his mantle of perfect righteousness upon us and endows us with His riches. He washes all our sins away in His own blood and makes us clean.

Next we should see the time at which He unites us to Himself. In the great Council of Peace held by the Trinity before the foundation of the world God chose each of His people in Christ Jesus. Then they were all united to Him. In the fulness of time Christ came that He might weave the robe of righteousness for us. At that time we were each united to Him and we each

were in Him in His death and resurrection. At God's appointed time the Good News of Salvation was preached to each of God's children. At their regeneration God begins in them His supernatural work of redemption. In His own Divine wisdom the Holy Spirit causes us to exercise conscious faith by drawing us to Christ and enables us to receive Jesus Christ into our hearts. By this act of faith we become conscious of our union with Christ and His Word becomes our only rule of faith and life. At the time of our death our spirits are ushered into the presence of our Saviour and the union is consummated for then we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

Our union with our Saviour is a reality peculiar to itself which we cannot understand. It is a mystery akin to life itself. This union is vital, like the branches in the vine. All our Christian life flows from Christ with Whom we are united. This union also escapes all our senses yet in our inner being God gives us to know that we are His. It is God Who has caused us to believe in Jesus Christ thus giving us full assurance of salvation.

Paul tells us that this great union with Christ is our hope of glory. Hope is a confident trust in God. Believing His Word, Christ and His finished work is the ground of our hope of eternal heaven. Because we are united with Christ in this mysterious and vital way we know that when we depart this life we shall be ushered into the presence of God our Saviour and be with Him in heaven throughout all eternity.

Is this hope yours? If not, in His Word, He says "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out."
— The Covenanter Pastor

Announcement

You can share in the wide witness of Blue Banner Faith and Life to Bible truth by contributing to the expense of publishing the magazine. Less than half of the amount required is obtained from subscriptions and sales of back issues. For the balance we are dependent on contributions. Numbered receipts are sent promptly for all contributions. Financial reports are submitted to the Board of Publication of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America quarterly.

Sets of back issues for the years 1952, 1953 and 1955 are available at \$1.00 for each year, postpaid. The supply of back issues of all other years is exhausted. Pressboard binders which will conveniently preserve two years' issues are available at 75 cents each, postpaid. Subscriptions for 1956 are \$1.50 for single subscriptions and \$1.00 for each subscription in clubs of 5 or more to be mailed to one address. All subscriptions must begin with a Jan-

uary-March issue and run to the end of a calendar year. We regret that we cannot do the extra clerical work involved in having subscriptions start and stop at different times through the year. When subscriptions are received during the year, the back issues beginning with the January-March issue of that year will be sent.

The Agent for Britain and Ireland is the Rev. Adam Loughridge, B.A., Glenmanus Manse, Portrush, County Antrim, Northern Ireland. Annual subscription rate for Britain and Ireland is 7s. 6d.

The Agent for Australia and New Zealand is the Rev. Alexander Barkley, B. A., 20 Fenwick Street, Geelong, Victoria, Australia. Annual subscription rate for Australia and New Zealand is 10 shillings.

J. G. Vos, Editor and Manager, 3408 7th Avenue, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, U. S. A.



BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

1 Samuel 15:22, 23

A Quarterly Publication Devoted to Expounding, Defending and Applying the System of Doctrine set forth in the Word of God and Summarized in the Standards of the Reformed Presbyterian (Covenanter) Church.

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We'll Guard the Day of Rest

In His great Name who gave it
At earth's unfolding morn,
His primal gift of mercy
To millions yet unborn;
In faith that He who made us
Can judge our need the best —
For health, for peace, for blessing,
We'll guard the Day of Rest!

In hallow'd, glad remembrance,
His Church through ages long
Has linked her Sabbath-keeping
With resurrection song.
For worship and for witness,
And for communion blest,
And thoughts to heav'n uplifted,
We'll guard the day of rest.

For earth-ties, sacred, tender,
For love and home's sweet sake,
'Midst toil, and stress, and hurry,
There comes God's blessed break.
By all we hold most precious
We hail His wise behest;
And for ourselves and others,
We'll guard the Day of Rest!

(Author unknown; from "Happy Greetings"
(1953), Lord's Day Observance Society, London)

Help Me to Live

Help me to live that other lives may see
Some slight reflection of my Lord in me.
I would not blaze before the world, a star
Streaming its radiance on the earth afar:
I would not lift my head so very high
That men could say I sought to touch the sky
In my ambitious efforts to be known;
I would but seek Thy smile, and Thine alone,
And at Thy feet in sweet submission prove
The richness and the comfort of Thy love;
For love alone can turn our life to light
And make us luminous in God's own sight.

(Author unknown)

He Giveth His Beloved Sleep

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward into souls afar
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if there any is
For gift and grace surpassing this:
"He giveth His beloved sleep" —?

What would we give to our beloved?
The hero's heart to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp to sweep,
The patriot's voice to teach and rouse;
The monarch's crown to light the brows?—
"He giveth His beloved sleep."

What would we give to our beloved?
A little faith all undisproved,
A little dust to over weep,
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake?—
"He giveth His beloved sleep."

"Sleep soft, beloved," we sometimes say,
Who have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep:
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
He giveth His beloved sleep.

— Elizabeth Barrett Browning

At the Close of Day

The camel at the close of day
Kneels down upon the sandy plain
To have his burden lifted off —
And rest again.

My soul, thou too shouldst to thy knees,
When daylight draweth to a close,
And let thy Master lift thy load —
And grant repose.

Else how couldst thou tomorrow meet,
With all tomorrow's work to do,
If thou thy burden all the night
Dost carry through?

The camel kneels at break of day
To have his guide replace his load,
Then rises up anew to take
The desert road.

So thou shouldst kneel at morning's dawn
That God may give thee daily care,
Assured that He no load too great
Will make thee bear.

(Author unknown)

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Roadblocks Limiting Church Effectiveness

A Series of Four Articles

By J. G. Vos

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I. Roadblock of Ignorance, Plain and Sophisticated

Christianity Involves a Definite Body of Truth

In the New Testament four great words stand related to each other. These words are: Truth, Doctrine, Knowledge, Understanding. We live in an age which tends to depreciate the use of the mind in connection with religion. The importance of truth, belief, knowledge and understanding, is constantly being minimized. The great fallacy of the present day is the notion that men can gather figs of thistles—that ignorance and unsound doctrine can produce salvation and a good life.

Knowledge of Truth is Essential

The Bible lends no countenance to this foolish notion. On the contrary, the Bible emphasizes the importance of knowledge. It commands us to use our minds: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . with all thy mind." We are commanded, not merely to believe the truth, but also to know, understand and love the truth. We cannot really believe it without first of all knowing what it is. And we cannot know what it is unless we learn what it is. The Christian religion involves a body of information that has to be known before it can be accepted and lived.

The Fallacy of "Ideals" and "Values"

God redeems the world not by abstract ideas or principles, but by historical events which take place at particular times and places. The ancient Greeks thought of religion as a matter of abstract principles, such as justice, goodness, beauty, order, and so forth. Many people today cherish the same mistaken idea. A man is quoted as saying: "My religion is just goodness, truth and beauty. That

is a good enough religion for any man!" But goodness, truth and beauty are just abstract ideas. To say that our religion is goodness, truth and beauty will not make us good, true and beautiful. On the contrary, we will still be the same miserable, inconsistent, selfish people that we always were.

Yet many people — even professing Christians — think of religion as just a matter of certain principles or ideals with a permanent value. These they call "spiritual values." If they study the Bible, they take the history of Abraham, for example, not as something uniquely important in God's historical plan of redemption, but just as one example of the operation of a timeless law. Abraham is taken as one example of the principles of "faith" and "unselfishness." All Bible events are similarly treated, thus becoming mere instances of the operation of timeless laws. The real meaning and importance of any particular event is cancelled. They become mere illustrations or samples of ideals or values. We could just as well pick our examples from ancient Greece or China.

When someone says, "The Golden Rule is enough religion for me," he is really saying that religion is a matter of ideals, not a matter of historical facts or events. He is really saying that he does not need a Saviour, but only an ideal.

"Creeds" that are not Really Creeds

From time to time various organizations issue so-called "creeds," and when you read one of these "creeds," you find that it is not a creed at all, but only a list of ideals. It is not a statement of facts that people are to believe, but merely a statement

of abstract ideals that they consider valuable or worthwhile. "I believe in honesty, I believe in unselfishness, I believe in service . . ."—so runs the "creed." But such a "creed" is not a creed at all in the Christian sense. A creed is not a mere statement of ideals. It must contain facts to be a real creed. The great Christian creeds contain facts, such as God's work of creation, the incarnation of Christ, His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and second coming.

God Redeems by Facts of History

God's plan of redemption is not by ideals or values, but by facts of history. God has stepped into the history of this world and done certain particular things at certain particular times and places. He commanded Noah to build the ark; He called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees; He delivered the children of Israel from Egypt by the hand of Moses. And especially, God sent His Son to be born in Bethlehem, to live in Judea and Galilee, to be crucified outside the city wall of Jerusalem, to rise from the dead the third day, to meet with His disciples during 40 days, and to ascend to heaven from a particular spot of latitude and longitude on this planet. The redemption of the world is accomplished by these definite, specific, particular events, all of them so very "local," so very "dated." What happened outside Jerusalem on a particular day, at particular hours, some 1900 years ago, has done more for the redemption of the world than all the ideals and values that men ever dreamed of.

Christianity a Story, Doctrine, Experience

God has given us the Bible, the record of His actions in human history, and the divine interpretation of the meaning of those actions. The Bible is a very large book. It is full of information; it is packed with historical facts and divinely revealed interpretation of those facts — with facts and doctrines not merely ideals and values. The facts constitute the story of God's work of redemption. The doctrines constitute God's **interpretation** of this story. On the basis of the facts as interpreted by the doctrines, Christian **experience** is founded. Christianity is a story, a doctrine and an experience. The experience is dependent on the doctrine, and the doctrine is dependent on the story, that is, on the historical facts, the Biblical revelation.

Where the story and the doctrines are unknown, Christianity cannot exist. Where the story and the doctrines are despised and minimized, Christianity cannot exist except in a dwarfed and unhealthy form. To be a Christian one must believe the doctrines of Christianity. This means we must know the facts and the divinely-revealed meaning of the facts. There is more to being a Christian than just knowing certain facts and their meaning, but that is the basis of being a Christian,

that is the foundation. There is more to a house than the foundation; but, after all, what is a house without a foundation?

There Exisits Gross Ignorance of Christian Truth Today

The great trouble today is that so many people vainly imagine that they can have the house without any foundation; they vainly imagine that they can have Christian experience without knowing the facts of Christianity and without believing its doctrines. The utter tragedy today is that we have in the churches — to say nothing of the world outside — a generation of people who are **grossly ignorant** of the facts and doctrines of Christianity. This is not ignorance about minor details only; it is a gross ignorance about the main things. The result is that real Christian experience is becoming more and more rare.

Examples of Present-Day Ignorance

We face today in the church and in the community around the church a prevalent and powerful anti-intellectual bias, coupled with gross ignorance of even the most elementary truths of the Christian faith. There are adults who have been communicant church members for years who cannot find a place in the Bible. Others cannot tell which lived first, Abraham or John the Baptist. Such people have not the slightest idea of even the general plan and structure of the Bible. They have only the vaguest ideas of what Christianity is all about.

Once in China a recently converted Chinese Christian asked me whether the Saul who persecuted David was the same individual as the Saul who was converted on the road to Damascus. His ignorance was understandable and excusable in view of the fact that he was a new convert to Christianity. But I venture the opinion that there are communicant church members in America who could not answer this question correctly if their life depended on it.

Two Forms of Religious Ignorance

Religious ignorance exists today in two forms, which we may designate the plain and the sophisticated. Plain ignorance is the common garden variety, the kind exemplified by the Chinese convert mentioned above. This kind of ignorance is deplorable, but it can be remedied without great difficulty. We should expect it in new converts on foreign mission fields. But in the church members of years' standing such ignorance is a disgrace and a shame.

The other kind of ignorance we may designate as sophisticated ignorance. This kind is much more of a problem in American churches at the

present day. This is a self-conscious, deliberate type of ignorance. It is vastly more serious than the plain or wild type. Sophisticated ignorance is like a cultivated inbred hybrid — it is deliberately intensified ignorance. The sophisticated ignorant person **prefers** to be ignorant. He not only lacks knowledge, he positively **despises** knowledge. He fancies knowledge to be worthless in the sphere of religion. He regards a professed ignorance as much better and worthier and more spiritual than what he depreciatingly calls "theology," or, with added disdain, "theological hair-splitting."

This phrase is a bogey-man of the sophisticated religious ignoramus. By "theological hair-splitting" he means any definite, exact truth or knowledge in the sphere of religion. This state of mind may rightly be described as people glorying in their shame. We face today a deep-seated contempt for knowledge in the sphere of religion. This present-day contempt for knowledge is wrong and is contrary to the Bible. Contempt for knowledge in religion reached its peak during the period between the First and Second World Wars. Today there is some sign of a turn of the tide, but the contempt for knowledge, the contempt for Christian doctrine, still continues strong.

Are Doctrinal Sermons "Too Deep"?

A pastor said to me that people in some of the congregations where he had preached complained that his sermons were "too deep." I told him not to worry about that — that the people who said that about his sermons would say the same thing about any truly Biblical preaching. It was not that this pastor was preaching on subtle theological problems or profound and baffling mysteries; not at all; it was simply that his preaching had a definite content of information. It contained facts and doctrines, not merely ideals and values; therefore those accustomed to thinking of Christianity in vague, general terms as a mere set of "spiritual values" objected to his preaching as "too deep." Any preaching which required them to **think** would be rejected as "too deep."

This contempt for knowledge, this objection to any solid doctrinal information as "too deep," arises from a misunderstanding as to the essential nature of Christianity. Christianity is first of all a story of things that happened — it is a body of specific information; and if we have contempt for information, then we have contempt for real Biblical Christianity, and that means, ultimately, contempt for the God of Christianity.

The Tragedy of Religious Illiteracy

There are church members who have not learned a single new item of truth in the last ten years. They are intellectually at a standstill, intellectually frozen stiff. Their Christian knowledge is static — a very small quantity of what are

called "essential truths." Go into their home and you may find no Christian literature to read, except perhaps a Bible collecting dust on a shelf, or covered with a heap of worldly magazines or cheap comic books. Talk with them and you will soon find that you are dealing with people whose knowledge of God's Word is on a par with that of children in the Junior Society. You have to be careful all the time for fear you might use a word they will not know the meaning of.

The tragedy of such lives is not merely their appalling ignorance of Christian truth, but the fact that they themselves are utterly unaware of this ignorance, and see no need whatever for acquiring any knowledge. They raised their hand or signed their name in some meeting years ago. They "joined the church," answering a few easy questions at the time. They attend Sabbath School and Church sporadically, perhaps once or twice a month. As the years pass, they learn nothing. When they come to die, they will go out into eternity not knowing one iota more about God and His truth than they did the day they "joined the church" years ago.

Such a state of affairs is tragic indeed. Yet this situation exists; it is not imaginary, as every pastor knows only too well. It is one of the reasons for the deadly weakness of the Church at the present day. "Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider."

Minimum Knowledge Not Enough

The Christian aim is not for a minimum of knowledge, but the maximum. We should seek, not to go to heaven with as little knowledge as possible, but to gain as much knowledge as possible about God and His Word. We should know more at the end of every Sabbath than we did before. If we have not learned something new from God's Word, we have made no real progress in knowledge. We ministers and church leaders should be like the scribe described by Jesus, who brings out of the treasure house of God's Word "things new and old."

"O how love I thy law! It is meditation all the day!" "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

Intolerance of Truth Today

There exists today an indifference to truth, an intolerance of truth, even an antipathy to truth, in large sections of the Protestant Church. And all churches have been affected by this tendency to some extent. None can claim absolute immunity to this disease. There is a prevalent, subconscious assumption in people's minds — an assumption that truth is not of the essence of Christianity, and therefore need not be learned. There is a real intolerance of doctrine, coupled with a demand that sermons be made wholly "inspirational"

or "evangelistic," or that they deal exclusively with what is called "applied Christianity."

People who cannot give a clear statement of what Christianity is, would like their pastors to preach on "Christianity and Psychology" or "Christianity and the Labor Problem" or similar subjects. What this boils down to is, that they want the fruit but they have no patience with the tree that produces the fruit. This notion of "inspiration" and "evangelism" without a foundation of sound Biblical doctrine underneath is a disintegrating force, and if it gains the victory in any church, that church will cease to be a truly Christian Church and will remain a mere empty shell, a mere monument to the glories of the past.

Something is Seriously Wrong

Lack of conviction of the importance of truth, or doctrine, is also revealed by the free and easy way in which people leave one denomination to join another. The churches joined may vary from slight unsoundness to radical modernism. Hardly ever is the factor of orthodoxy considered; the real factors contributing to the decision are rather convenience, popularity, and the personality of the pastor of the church joined.

In many families the entire younger generation on reaching the age of 21 years or soon after, will forsake the pure and faithful church in which they were brought up, and join some other more popular, less demanding church, leaving only their aged parents to continue alone and forlorn in the old church. And this happens even in the families of deacons, elders and ministers. Something is seriously wrong.

People Inhibited from Learning Facts

All of this is part of the picture of present-day intellectual decadence in religion. By and large, people are unable to give an ordered and intelligent account of their faith, and they consider it unnecessary to do so. This anti-intellectual bias results in a serious **inhibition** on the part of the very people who need religious knowledge and indoctrination the most. By their foolish and childish prejudice they are inhibited from ever acquiring the knowledge they lack. Like a child who is so sure that whole-wheat bread tastes bad that he will not even eat one slice to find out what it really tastes like, the person who is prejudiced against doctrine will not even listen to one sample of it with an open mind that he might find out whether it is really as unpalatable and indigestible as he assumes. This person is the victim of his own prejudice. He is inhibited from acquiring the very thing he requires for a healthy religious life and growth.

The Roadblock Must be Removed

It is a commonplace among ministers and

church leaders today that indoctrination is needed. Resolutions of synods and general assemblies call for indoctrination. But what people fail to realize is that there is a tremendous roadblock in the way of indoctrination. You cannot indoctrinate people who have buried in their mind an assumption that doctrine does not matter. The minister who would indoctrinate his people must first cope with the roadblock. There is a great stone on the door of the minds of many of his people. That stone must be rolled away first of all. Otherwise when the minister starts to instruct the people in Christian truth, their minds will click shut. An impenetrable curtain drops into place. After that all they hear is words. The words do not register.

No doubt many ministers have had the experience I have had, of having some person ask an intelligent question on some point of Christian truth, and the question asked concerns something which was preached on in a recent sermon. It may be that the question was thoroughly discussed and answered in the light of Scripture, and the person inquiring was there and heard the sermon. But somehow it just didn't register. He is unconscious of ever having heard the matter discussed before. For he had an inhibition against Christian doctrine which prevented the sermon from registering in his mind. First the inhibition against knowledge must be removed; then the lack of knowledge can be dealt with.

The roots of sophisticated ignorance

The plain or common type of ignorance has no special roots. A person recently converted from paganism is ignorant of Christian truth because of his pagan background and his previous lack of opportunity to learn the truth. Many people in America, too, are ignorant of Christian truth, not because of a perverse disinclination to learn anything, but because of their very limited opportunities. It may be that the only church or religious teaching that reaches them brings a non-doctrinal type of message; consequently they do not and cannot really learn anything.

Ignorance Didn't Just Happen

But the cultivated or sophisticated type of ignorance is something quite different. This kind does not rise from mere lack of opportunity to learn. It has deeper, more sinister roots. This sophisticated type of ignorance did not just happen. It has been promoted, it has been "put over" on the Christian world. By deliberate, premeditated action, the contempt for doctrine has been instilled in people's minds by religious "experts" and leaders.

Basically, the anti-intellectual bias of the present day, and the contempt for doctrine which exists in the Protestant Church, has resulted from the life and work of three men. These men all

lived more than 100 years ago. They are Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, and Albrecht Ritschl. All Germans, they all discounted the intellect in religion, and emphasized the emotions or the will in place of the intellect. It is a strange paradox that these three men themselves were intellectual giants, yet they discounted the importance of the intellect in religion and emphasized something else instead.

Millions of people who have never heard the names of Kant, Schleiermacher and Ritschl, are yet very much under the influence of these three men. Many people in the churches are unconsciously influenced by this dominant trend of the times.

Truth Supplanted by "Experience"

Immanuel Kant, of course, laid the groundwork for divorcing religious truth from "metaphysics," that is, from the ultimate reality beyond what can be known by the senses. Schleiermacher and Ritschl followed Kant and put his philosophy to work in the realm of religion. Schleiermacher lived 1768 to 1834. He has been called "the father of modern theology." The son of a Prussian army chaplain of the Reformed confession, he earnestly studied the writings of Kant. Schleiermacher's chief theological work was "The Christian Faith According to the Basic Principles of the Evangelical Church," first published in 1821, but later revised and re-published. In this famous book Schleiermacher held that the real essence of Christianity is not to be found in the creeds of the church, but in **religious feeling** — the feeling of dependence on God, communicated by Christ through the church. This puts religious feeling in place of Biblical truth. Schleiermacher held that the content of preaching is to be obtained from the religious consciousness of the preacher. Though called "the father of modern theology," Schleiermacher really destroyed theology and put in its place a study of the religious consciousness of man. The object of knowledge is no longer God as revealed in Scripture, but man as a religious being. Schleiermacher stressed **method** rather than content; he rejected truth and knowledge in favor of **feeling**; he substituted **subjective religious experience** for objective divine revelation in the Bible. It is not too much to say that Schleiermacher was the real founder of modernism.

Truth Supplanted by "Spiritual Values"

Albrecht Ritschl lived 1822 to 1889. He was the son of an Evangelical pastor in Berlin, Germany. Ritschl aimed to free religion from what he considered the tyranny of philosophy. He limited theological knowledge to what he considered the bounds of man's need. Ritschl was not interested in God, but only in what God can do for man. It would not be unfair to say that Ritschl was concerned with the usefulness of God rather

than the glory of God. He was interested in religion, not in theology; in experience, not in truth. He was concerned with "value" rather than with doctrine.

Ritschl rejected all "forensic" ideas of Christianity, that is, the idea of Christ's atonement as a satisfaction for the broken law of God, and justification as imputing to the believer the perfect righteousness of Christ. Instead of these truths, he stressed chiefly the idea of the family or fatherhood of God. Ritschl stands for the false antithesis between theology and "metaphysics," that is, between Christian doctrine and absolute truth. According to Ritschl, the important question is not who or what Christ is, but what is His "value" to us. If Schleiermacher may be called the founder of modernism, Ritschl is the real father of that perversion of Christianity which regards it as primarily a set of "spiritual values."

Sophisticated ignorance in the church is not to be explained simply by neglect. It is the logical and inevitable result of a definite philosophical and theological point of view which has been deliberately promoted by the "experts."

The Effect of Revival Movements

Another root of sophisticated ignorance is found in the revival movements in American Christianity in the 18th and 19th centuries. The various revival movements, from the Great Awakening down to the present day, have been a mixture of good and evil, a mixture of the real work of the Holy Spirit with much that was merely human and even contrary to God's will.

Jonathan Edwards gave a very careful appraisal of the revival movement of his day. He regarded it as a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. Yet he came to see that there was another side to the matter. The Great Awakening had an aftermath. In 1741 the revival was at the peak. Just a few years later, as early as 1744-1748, in Edwards' own congregation at Northhampton, Massachusetts, the church was utterly dead, according to Edward's own admission. He states that during the four years 1744-1748 there was not a single conversion in the parish.

Charles G. Finney is often spoken of as a very great leader of American Christianity. The unsoundness of Finney on some of the doctrines of the Bible is seldom mentioned. But that multitudes responded to Finney's preaching and that many were converted to Christ cannot be denied. However, again there was an aftermath. This is very interestingly described in the late Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield's second volume on "Perfectionism," pages 25-27. Warfield quotes from an account of Finney's work which was published in 1835: "The writer entertains no doubt, that many true conversions have occurred under the system

to which he is referring. But as with the ground over which the lightning has gone, scorching and withering every green thing, years may pass away before the arid waste of the church will be grown over by the living herbage." Warfield adds: "Finney came back in 1855 to Rome (N. Y.), the scene of one of his greatest triumphs in 1826. Now, however, his preaching elicited no response. He has himself told us of it . . ."

The Mirage of "Inspiration"

The great revivals were partly of God, certainly, but there was an admixture of evil, too. They were not an unmixed blessing. For from the history of American revivalism there has come down to our own day the false antithesis between **revival and sound doctrine.**

We see this reflected today in those who would stress only evangelism as the remedy for the church's troubles, and who cannot see that for a real and effective evangelism there must be a much greater emphasis on truth, on knowledge, on doctrine.

We see it, too, in the idolatrous worship of what is wrongly called "inspiration," which really means, all too often, merely a powerful stimulation of the religious emotions, without an accompanying knowledge and conviction of truth. Revivalism that stresses the emotions and the will at the expense of the intellect leads to sophisticated ignorance in the churches in the end. It has been proved so time and again.

How Can we Cope with the Roadblock of Ignorance?

It is easier to diagnose this disease than to prescribe an effective remedy. Yet there must be a remedy, though it may be a slow and painful one.

First of all, pastors and religious teachers must have a strong and clear conviction of the absolute importance and relevance of Christian doctrine. Doctrine is not a luxury; it is an absolute necessity. It is to Christianity what bones are to the human body. It is not relatively important; it is absolutely important. It is of the essence of Christianity. Without it there can be no real Christianity. Unless the leadership is absolutely clear and convinced on this proposition there can be no real progress.

Preach What People Really Need

In the second place, ministers should absolutely refuse to compromise with or cater to the demand for a non-doctrinal type of message. It is a temptation to compromise with this demand. Ministers may be powerfully tempted to cater to the lust for a non-doctrinal message. They should count the cost and say No!

We are the Lord's servants; our commission is

from Him, not from our congregations. We are to be true to Scripture at any cost. This means more than avoiding denials of Biblical truth. It means setting ourselves a long-range program of constructively preaching the contents of the Bible in their true meaning and relationships.

Sinful Lust for "Inspiration"

The lust for "inspiration" without information is sinful. It is one of the great sins of the Church of our day. A large part of the religious press caters to it, as do the pulpits of many popular denominations. But it is sinful. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind."

We should absolutely refuse to bend on this issue. If we lose our job we are no worse off than the true prophets of old. We should have the courage to stand up, **plainly and pointedly**, for the real nature of the Christian message, in spite of the fact that the skimmed milk diluted with limewater which appears in some popular undenominational religious publications may appeal strongly to some of our people.

Try Hard to Make Doctrine Interesting

In the third place, doctrine should be made as interesting as possible. The notion that the truth is dull and dry is unfounded. It will of course always be dull to the unconverted. To the Greek it will be foolishness and to the Jew a stumblingblock. But it need not bore the spiritually awakened. It takes work to make doctrinal sermons interesting, but it can be done.

We cannot please everyone in a congregation — even our Lord did not accomplish that when He was on earth in the flesh — but we can preach so as to please God, and accomplish His real purpose in our preaching. That, after all, is what we are in the ministry for.

Preaching doctrine does not mean preaching only **formally** doctrinal sermons. The minister who has Christian doctrine in his mind and heart can bring it out in biographical, historical, expository and other types of sermons. None of these, if truly Biblical, can be divorced from the doctrinal content of the Bible.

Also, doctrine should be served up in very moderate doses at first. People's capacity to digest it has become so weakened during the past generation or two that heavy doses will be likely to cause acute indigestion. "Easy does it." Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little — but it must be the genuine article, not the popular counterfeit that consists only of "ideals" and "values."

The Fruits of Doctrinal Preaching

Ministers who preach the doctrinal system of the Bible will have the satisfaction, from time to

time, of seeing another member of their congregation gaining doctrinal consciousness, and suddenly coming to a clear realization of what Christianity is really about. That makes one more member who will never again scoff at doctrinal preaching as "too deep" or "theological hair-splitting." That makes one more member who will be a real asset to the Church and not a mere dead weight or liability religiously. And it constitutes one more proof to the minister that his labor is not in vain in the Lord.

I believe, too, that we should do all we can to awaken in the membership of the Church an appetite for good Christian literature. Lend good books, recommend good books, quote from good books. Not all books are equally suited to all Christians. Books have to be matched to people's progress and capacity. But real Christian literature can play a great part in making people awake and alert to the truth of God's Word.

Sketches of the Covenants

By J. C. McFeeters

Chapter XVIII

The Westminster Assembly — A. D. 1643.

The Covenanted Church is much indebted to the Westminster Assembly, for its magnificent contributions to the Reformed religion. Presbyterian Churches of every name have reaped rich harvests from the seed sown by this Assembly.

Nothing has done more, if the Covenants be excepted, to give the Covenanted Church decision, stability, permanence, spiritedness, and undecaying strength, than the superlative formulas of truth produced by this illustrious Assembly. Our inheritance received from their hands should awaken our admiration for the men and our interest in their work.

Origin.

This Assembly came into existence in peculiar times and for a remarkable purpose. England was goaded to desperation by the despotism of King Charles. As king of that nation and head of the Episcopal Church, he attempted to stifle liberty and conquer conscience. He clashed with his parliament in London. A great awakening had suddenly spread over all England. New ideas of life electrified the people, and they arose in the majesty of their inalienable rights to realize their ideals. The action and reaction became terrible. The king and the parliament called out their armies each against the other. England was plunged into a horrible civil war. The parliament, perceiving that Episcopacy was the bulwark of the king's tyranny and hostile to the interests of the people, attempted to abolish that system of Church government. But this destructive act necessitated a constructive work. Accordingly parliament, by an ordinance, created an Assembly for "settling the Government and Liturgy of the Church of England."

Character of the Members.

The ordinance provided for an Assembly of "learned, Godly, and judicious divines." Milton, while not in sympathy with their work, called

this "The Select Assembly." Baxter, another disapproving contemporary, said, "that in his judgment the world, since the days of the apostles, had never a Synod of more excellent divines than this and the Synod of Dort." Abundant evidence certifies that in Westminster Hall, in those days was seen a rare combination of native talent, classic learning, sanctified conscience, spiritual illumination, and devotion to the truth as revealed in the Word of God.

Enrollment.

The complete number of members was 174, of which 142 were ministers, and 32, elders. Of this number, four ministers and two elders were commissioners from Scotland. The Scottish delegation of divines were men mighty in the Scriptures and powerful in debate. Their influence in making Scripture truths lucid, and thereby directing the Assembly to right conclusions, was deeply felt and cordially acknowledged. They declined to sit as regular members of the Assembly, content with the humbler position of consultative members. They would not by incorporation become responsible, personally or representatively, for the deliverances of an Assembly selected and erected by parliament. These Scotch ministers form a brilliant constellation; let their names be written in capitals:

ALEXANDER HENDERSON
ROBERT BAILLIE
SAMUEL RUTHERFORD
GEORGE GILLESPIE

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." The Scottish elders were John Maitland and Archibald Johnston. Maitland in after years renounced the Covenant and became a powerful foe of the Covenants.

Organization.

The Assembly met according to the call, July 1, 1643, in the Church of Westminster. Dr. William

Twisse, President, preached the opening sermon from Christ's precious promise, "I will not leave you comfortless." These words were as apples of gold in pictures of silver, in those days of woeful distraction. One week later they met again, when the oath was administered to every member present, in the following words:

"I, -----, do seriously and solemnly protest, in the presence of Almighty God, that in this Assembly, whereof I am a member, I will not maintain anything in matters of doctrine, but what I think in my conscience to be truth; or in point of discipline, but what I shall conceive to conduce most to the glory of God, and the good and peace of His Church."

This oath was read every Monday morning to refresh memory and revive conscience. These men were working for the Kingdom of Christ, in the presence of the great white Throne; its brightness was flashing constantly upon their eyes.

The Work.

The work, to which the Assembly gave its attention, as specified by parliament, was "(1) A Confession of Faith, (2) A Catechism, (3) A Platform of Government, (4) A Directory for all Parts of Public Worship."

The Confession of Faith: The first attempt was to revise the old creed of the Church of England. This was abandoned at the Fifteenth Article. A New Confession was then prepared having Thirty-Three Articles, all of which are pillars of truth, every one ponderous, polished, and precious, revealing the quarry out of which they were hewn, and the skill of the workmen by whom they were chiseled. Henderson has been credited with the honor of preparing the first draft.

The Catechisms: The Shorter Catechism was prepared as a summary of Biblical instruction, appealing even by its literary construction and elegance to the heart and memory for lodgment. This golden chain is an ornament of grace that should be worn by every son and daughter of the Covenant. Rutherford seems to have been the original writer. The Larger Catechism is an expansion of the Shorter.

The Form of Church Government: The Divine right of Presbyterianism occasioned much discussion. The adoption of this principle was a deadly blow struck at the theory of Episcopacy — official ranks, tier above tier, in pyramidal form with the people beneath the pyramid. Equal authority of ministers in the administration of the Gospel of Christ, and equal authority of ministers and elders in administering government in the House of God — these were the great truths announced by the Assembly with clearness and solemnity, as the voice of God speaking in the holy Scriptures.

The Directory for Public Worship: This Di-

rectory superseded the Liturgy. The Liturgy had been condemned for "giving encouragement to an idle and unedifying ministry, who had chosen rather to confine themselves to forms, made to their hands, than to exert themselves in the gift of prayer, which our Saviour furnishes all those He calls to that office." A warm discussion arose concerning the mode of receiving the Lord's Supper. "The communicants orderly and gravely sitting round the table," was the expression adopted. Successive tables received sanction from this expression.

Psalmody.

Sir Francis Rouse, a member of the English Parliament, had recently produced his Metrical Version of the Psalms. It was fresh and fragrant and greatly admired. The Assembly after a careful revision adopted it. Five years later, having passed through the purifying furnace of revision at the hands of the General Assembly of Scotland, it was authorized as "The only paraphrase of the Psalms of David to be sung in the Kirk of Scotland." The New Version superseded the Old and took its place in Divine worship on May 1, 1650, the day appointed for its introduction by the Assembly.

The Westminster Assembly convened July 1, 1643, and adjourned February 22, 1649, covering 5 years, 6 months, and 22 days, having held 1,163 sessions. They met at nine o'clock in the morning and sat till three in the afternoon. Each member received four shillings a day, and were fined one shilling for absence. They kept a solemn fast monthly, at which occasionally a single prayer lasted two hours. These men knew how to pray. They became absorbed in prayer and talked with God while He strengthened them to stand in His presence and receive His answer.

Such was the famous Assembly of Westminster divines. The magnitude of their work can never be measured. Their building is imperishable. Familiarity with these manuals of doctrine will deepen, broaden, strengthen, and exalt the human mind. Herein the truth of Christ appears in the symmetry, significance, magnitude, and omnipotence of a complete system. One truth may take us to heaven, but the system of truth treasured up in the heart, will bring heaven to us. Let us study the system.

Points for the Class

1. What event called the Westminster Assembly into being?
2. What was the character of the members?
3. How many were enrolled?
4. Who were the Scottish commissioners?
5. What was the oath of membership?

6. What was the work assigned to the Assembly?

7. How long did the Assembly sit?

8. What benefit derived from the study of these manuals?

(To be continued)

The Reformed Faith and Arminianism

By the Rev. Joseph A. Hill

Three hundred fifty years ago a Dutch minister named Jacobus Harmensen taught theology in the University of Leyden. According to the fashion of the times his name was Latinized and he became known as James Arminius. Prior to his career as a professor of theology Arminius had been a preacher in Amsterdam for about fourteen years and during this time had held views contrary to the principles of the Reformed faith, the official faith of his church.

When he received his appointment to the chair of divinity, however, Arminius made a public avowal of his loyalty to the Reformed faith and pledged that he would teach nothing which was in any way subversive of the doctrinal standards to which the university and the churches of the Netherlands were subscribed. But Arminius ignored his pledge and went about surreptitiously propagating false teachings meant to undermine and destroy the Calvinistic faith. By means of personal talks with the students and the secret circulation of manuscripts he soon had a large party behind him. As the movement gained in momentum a sharp conflict arose all over the Netherlands between those who had been infected with Arminian teachings and those who stood by the Calvinistic faith of the church.

The teachings of Arminius were a revival of the old heresies of Pelagius, in modified form. Pelagius was a British monk who lived in the fifth century after Christ. He denied the biblical doctrine of the fall and original sin. He also denied the necessity of divine grace for salvation, holding that salvation depends upon human merit and ability. The errors of Pelagius were combated by Augustine, whose theological writings were the first definite exposition of the doctrines which form the system of theology formulated by Calvin eleven centuries later.

Following the heretical teaching long since refuted, Arminius stressed human free will as the controlling factor in the salvation of each person. This was in sharp conflict with the Calvinistic teaching of salvation by grace alone. The controversy centering around this vital question lasted for fifteen years. Arminius died in the midst of this period of conflict, but his followers carried on after his death, hoping eventually to have the Confession of Faith of the Dutch churches — the Belgic Confession — revised in such a way as to

eliminate its Calvinistic teaching. They drew up a petition called a "Remonstrance", which set forth the Arminian position in the form of five articles.

When all attempts to reconcile the two parties had failed, a general Synod was called to deal with the issues at stake. This was an **international** Synod, meeting at Dordt in 1618 with delegates from Germany, the Palatinate, Switzerland and England as well as from the Netherlands. This Synod made a careful study of the whole matter, meeting almost every day for more than five months and holding 136 sessions in all. This body of scholarly divines examined the five articles advanced by the "Remonstrants" and compared them with the teaching of Scripture. Failing to reconcile the five articles with the Word of God they unanimously rejected them. In reply they drew up "The Canons of the Synod of Dordt" — which are part of the doctrinal standards of several Reformed churches of the present day. These "Canons" are a clear statement of the teaching of Scripture on the five points in question, as contrasted with the errors of the Arminian party. The five Heads of Doctrine contained in the Canons have been known ever since as "the five points of Calvinism".

These five doctrines are easy to remember if we use the word "**tulip**" as a mnemonic device, each letter — t-u-l-i-p — being the first letter of one of the doctrines, thus:

Total inability
Unconditional election
Limited atonement
Irresistible grace
Perseverance of the saints

However, we must not think that the so-called "five points of Calvinism" are a brief summary of Calvinism. These five doctrines are only the main points at which Calvinism is in conflict with Arminianism. If we were to show the difference between Calvinism and Lutheranism other "points" would have to be drawn up; if we were comparing Calvinism with the currently popular dialectical theology, Neo-orthodoxy, still other points of difference would have to be devised. The idea that Calvinism is summed up in the "five points" has led to the prevalent notion that Calvinism is chiefly concerned with the question of predestination whereas in reality Calvinism em-

bodies the whole system of truth contained in the Bible. Hence we must stress the fact that "the five points of Calvinism" are concerned only with Calvinism's doctrine of salvation. The five points together form the Calvinistic doctrine of salvation as over against the Arminian doctrine of salvation. The basic point at issue here is whether salvation is a work of God alone or whether man can at some point take the initiative in the matter of his salvation. Otherwise expressed, Calvinism **does** while Arminianism **does not** hold that God by his counsel controls whatsoever comes to pass.

In considering this basic question we are not dealing with a dead issue taken from a musty old theological volume; we are not concerned only with certain heretics who have been dead for more than three centuries. For the errors they propagated did not die with them. Indeed, these errors are held more widely today than ever before and together with modern liberalism almost completely dominate the religious thought of the present day. Common "evangelical" Christianity is predominantly Arminian in character; for this reason non-Calvinistic Protestants are frequently called **Evangelicals**.

The evangelistic movement which is sweeping the country is effectively spreading the false teachings of Arminius. Billy Graham, the chief spokesman for Evangelical Protestantism, is an Arminian evangelist. In all his preaching and writing Billy Graham insists that in the last analysis it is man's decision that determines whether he will be saved. God has provided salvation for all men, but each person must decide whether or not he will accept it.

At this point someone will say: "But isn't that what **all** Christians believe and isn't that what the Bible teaches? I always just supposed that God has made salvation through Christ available for everybody who will believe on him." Here we come to the heart of the matter. For it is at this point that the difference between the Reformed view of man's will and the Arminian notion of free will comes into the picture. According to Calvinism and the Bible men as sinners **will** not believe on Christ. They are dead in trespasses and sin and are unable to believe or accept salvation. Jesus himself made this point clear when he said to the Jews, "Ye **will** not come to me that ye might have life" (John 5:40). That Jesus believed in the **total inability** of men to take the initiative in the matter of their salvation is also evident from his own words in John 6:44 — "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Jesus says that God must decide all the issues with respect to men's salvation. Billy Graham says that **men** can decide to repent, believe on Christ and be born again. Jesus believed that the whole nature of the sinner — intellect, emotions and will — is in bondage to sin. Billy Gra-

ham believes that part of man's nature — the will — has not been disabled by sin. He says, "It is actually the **will** that makes the final and lasting decision" (**Peace With God**, p. 131).

Thus we see that Arminianism has too high a view of the unregenerate self-consciousness. The Arminian view of the nature of man is essentially the same as the Roman Catholic view as worked out by the Romanist theologian Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. Thomas taught that man was created as an autonomous being; that is, man was free to plan for himself, independently of the plan of God. This autonomy is part of man's makeup as a creature of God and is essential to his manhood. Billy Graham writes from this Roman Catholic view-point when he says: "We do not know Christ through the five physical senses, but we know him through the sixth sense that God has given to every man — which is the ability to believe" (**Peace With God**, New York, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1953, p. 146. This book is a fairly typical sample of the Evangelical type of theology). Here we see that Billy Graham differentiates between the physical senses and believing as a "spiritual" sense, but it is clear that for him believing is a **natural** ability in the same sense that hearing and seeing are natural abilities of man as a creature of God. Hearing, seeing and believing are all essential aspects of man's makeup. In this, Billy Graham confuses things metaphysical and ethical. True, there is a kind of faith which does belong to the nature of man as man — that is, for example, the certainty that the sounds we hear and the objects we see are not mere illusions, but are **real** sounds and **real** objects. This psychological certainty is a metaphysical aspect of faith and is correlative to the metaphysical "senses". But **religious** faith is an **ethical** bias and when we speak of this aspect of faith we must not consider man as a creature of God merely, but a **fallen** creature.

It is true that when man was created he had faith in God. Belief in God was part of man's "nature" in paradise, before the fall. But even in paradise this "ability to believe" was not a natural function like seeing and hearing. Even in the perfect state man's faith was imparted to him supernaturally. When man sinned against God his sin caused an **ethical** (but not a metaphysical) break in the believing-relationship of man to God. After the fall man was still a man and he could still think and "believe", but his thinking and believing were now pointed **away** from God. It was the **ethical** aspect of man's faith that was destroyed by sin. In sinning against God man did not lose his natural "ability to believe" that 2 x 2 equals 4 or that the sun rises in the east, but he lost his ability to believe in God to the saving of his soul. It is this "ability" that must be restored through regeneration before man can find his way back to God. If the natural man has the ability to be-

lieve on Christ then he does not need supernatural "help" in order to become a Christian. If he has the natural ability to believe then he can believe on Christ **without** regeneration. He can become a full-fledged Christian if only he will convert his intellectual faith into religious faith. "Let that intellectual faith, that historical faith that you may now have, yield itself to Christ in full surrender, earnestly desiring His salvation, and upon the authority of the Word of God you become a child of God" (*op. cit.*, p. 149.). Here Billy Graham, in agreement with Romanism, mixes temporal and eternal categories.

According to Billy Graham and all Arminians man as a fallen creature has not lost the ability to exercise his faith in God. He does not need to be born again in order to believe. He is born again **when** he believes. "You must open your heart and let Him (Christ) come in. At that precise moment the Holy Spirit performs the miracle of the new birth" (p. 108). Here we touch the pivotal point of the Arminian scheme of salvation. According to Arminianism regeneration **depends upon** and **follows** the action of man in permitting God to perform his work. Man first acts by his "free will"; then God gets his chance to act. "The whole matter or receiving new life (regeneration) is like a coin. A coin has heads and tails. The receiving of new life has a divine side and a human side. We have seen the human side in our chapter on conversion, we have seen what man must do (that is, repent and believe, JAH). Now let's see what God does" (p. 136). In line with this order of God's work following man's decision, the chapters in Graham's book entitled "Repent" and "Faith" **precede** the chapter on "The New Birth" because in the Arminian scheme of salvation one can repent and believe without the new birth. One **must** repent and believe **before** he can be reborn.

Behind all this is the basic assumption of Romanist-Evangelical theology that man has absolute freedom or self-determination. This means that in some areas at least man is wholly independent of the plan of God. Conversely this means that God does not control whatsoever comes to pass. There are some facts over which God has no control. On this view God makes salvation "possible" for everybody but does not make salvation absolutely certain for anybody. It is man and not God who makes the final and lasting decision in this matter. God is not absolutely sovereign in his decree but is limited by man's decision.

This amounts to a denial of God's incommunicable attributes of aseity or independence, immutability and eternity; for in the Arminian scheme God's decree must **depend** upon man's decision, it must be **adjusted** to man's will, and it must **wait** upon man's choice in time. This places God on a par with man and reduces the being of

God to an aspect of the universe. God is then a finite God.

Of course, most Arminians do not follow this line of reasoning, but it is nevertheless implied in their basic assumption of human autonomy. Billy Graham would not directly deny the absoluteness of God's attributes. In his preaching he sometimes speaks of the "mighty" God. But a God who does not control all that comes to pass in time but has to adjust himself to what man will do is not the **almighty** God of Christianity. The Arminian view is that God does not elect particular men to eternal life. The ultimate decision is made by each person for himself. This implies that (a) God has a limited sovereignty, since there are some facts over which he has no control and (b) man has a measure of sovereignty alongside of God, since he is in some way independent of the counsel of God.

The point we must stress is that if you have a non-biblical view of man you cannot have a biblical view of God. "If you hold that man has absolute freedom in any area of life, you cannot at the same time believe in the God of Christianity who by his counsel controls whatsoever comes to pass. It is the non-biblical, non-Christian view of man as autonomous that dominates the Roman Catholic and Evangelical theology and evangelism.

If we are to be consistent Christians we must have a view of free will that is taken from the Bible. As Reformed Christians we believe that God by his counsel controls whatsoever comes to pass. We stress this point when we speak of the Bible doctrine of divine sovereignty. Only if we also take our doctrine of man from the Bible can we have a view of human free will that is consistent with our view of divine sovereignty. It is better not to speak of **free** will unless you understand that man's will is free only in the sense that it acts freely according to the ethical bias of his personality. This means that the natural man chooses sin freely and willingly because he delights in it, but is not free to choose to love God or believe on Christ because his will is also in **bondage** to his sinful nature. This is what Billy Graham and all Arminians deny, however loudly they may talk about sin as "the thing God hates." Man is not free to do the **impossible**. According to the Bible it is impossible for the natural man to love God since God is "the thing man hates" as a sinner. The carnal mind is enmity against God. How then can it be at "peace with God" unless it **first** be renewed unto knowledge (Col. 3:10)? Billy Graham says, "You must open your heart and let Christ come in." The Bible way of salvation is exactly the reverse of this. Lydia, for example, is spoken of as one "whose heart **the Lord opened** to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14). Billy Graham's persistent appeal to people to make a "decision" for Christ is

based on his own belief that man as a sinner is able to do of his own ability what the Bible says man cannot do except he first be born anew by the Spirit who works **independently** of man (John 3:6-8).

Can we as Reformed Christians agree with Billy Graham when he says, "You can decide right now that you want to be born again. You can decide right now to wipe out your sinful past and make a new start, a fresh start, a right start" (p. 133-4)? We can agree with Billy Graham on this point only if we also agree with him that man has not fallen as far in sin as the Bible says he has and that man has a measure of sovereignty over against the "mighty" God.

The point has just been stressed that we cannot hold a Reformed or biblical view of divine sovereignty and an Arminian or non-biblical view of free will. Many Christians have not clearly understood this. During my days in college I heard the wife of a Fundamentalist pastor explain their church's position thus: "We take the best out of Calvinism and the best out of Arminianism and combine them." More recently a minister of a Reformed church stated that although we must always emphasize God's sovereignty, we can at least learn something about man's responsibility and free will from the Arminians. These statements are virtually the same and both are based on the assumption that the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism is only a matter of emphasis — that Calvinism emphasizes divine sovereignty

while Arminianism emphasizes human responsibility. If this were true, then of course the truth would lie somewhere between Calvinism and Arminianism, and to have the whole truth we would have to hold both Calvinism and Arminianism. Actually, Arminianism implicitly denies divine sovereignty and thereby also falsifies its own doctrine of human responsibility and free will. For how can man be responsible to a God who is not sovereign, and how can man determine his own salvation if salvation is only a "possibility"? Calvinism, on the other hand, not only emphasizes divine sovereignty but also includes human responsibility. The whole truth is to be found in Calvinism and need not, indeed cannot, be supplemented by any element of truth that might be supposed to be found in Arminianism.

Salvation is actually impossible on the Arminian principle. For unless the plan and therefore the work of God is back of all that takes place in the life of man, he could never be sure that his decisions would have any relation to the "facts" of Christianity — the incarnation, death, resurrection of Christ, etc. For then Chance would be supreme in the universe. The "facts" of Christianity would only give men a chance to be saved. Nothing can be certain in a world run by Chance. Hence it is only because Calvinism is true and Arminianism is **not** true that men are saved. It is because the plan of salvation is **not** what the Arminian says it is, a matter of chance, and **is** what the Calvinist says it is, a plan wholly controlled by God, that Arminians themselves are saved.

Psalm Twelve

God's Judgment on Deceivers: His Mercy to Keepers of the Truth

By the Rev. Frank D. Frazer

THE ENTREATY OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN

"Save, O Jehovah! for the godly man has passed away; For the faithful have disappeared from among the children of men."

This is not the complaint of a pessimist; it is a prayer of faith. It speaks the truth made ominous by present conditions in society; the very truth of many words of God as written. "There is none that doeth good (as the holy law of God requires), no, not so much as one." (Ro. 3:9-18). **"They speak lies, every one to his neighbor; Smooth lips speak from a double heart."** "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

The double heart is the source of all duplicity,

the "double talk" and the "double dealing", so prevalent today in popular religion and morals; in church and state; in business and in politics; not only in the frivolities of entertainment, but in the methods and content of so-called "progressive education"; not only in dark places of the earth, but in the markets, on the streets, and wherever men gather together there is the propaganda of deceit confusing and corrupting all human relationship, ignoring and denying the Word of God.

It was by deceitful words that our first parents fell into this state of confusion, for when a deceitful word is shot, as an arrow, into the mind and is **allowed to stay**, it quickly produces a corrupt thought; the corrupt thought produces a lust in the heart; then "lust when it hath conceived

bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death."

The deceiver is first of all an enemy of the God of truth, of the Christ who is the True and Faithful Witness; then of mankind, which God created in His own image and for His own glory. Hence the effect of deceitful words appears first in religion, in matters of human relationship with God. The fatal workings of deceit are accomplished at the foundations of society, and there the deceiver's purpose to destroy the human race, because God created it, is plainly in evidence.

Since every man has a heart that is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" which he is unable to change in himself or in another, and since he has a tongue that "no man can tame; an unruly evil, full of deadly poison", what can any man do to help himself or to help society? He can pray to Almighty God who is able to save to the uttermost. "Let Jehovah cut off all those of deceitful lips", literally, "all those who are smooth of lips", "smooth as butter", "soft as oil", slippery, to cause the fall of all who are not aware of the danger. (Let Jehovah cut off all those) "of a tongue that speaketh great things", — "vile conceits in pompous words expressed". "The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things . . . and the tongue is a fire . . . set on fire by hell." (Jas. 3:2-12).

Out of the confusion there comes the assumption that there is no standard of truth and right. Let every man make the law for himself. Let him speak and do as he pleases. The Ecumenical Church today speaks great things and exalts itself among the children of men. It may say that "Christ is God and Saviour", if that serves its purpose, but with the proviso that every man may interpret these words according to his own conceptions of God, and of what he needs of a Savior. It knows of no other standard by which they can be measured, for the written Word of God is rejected as outworn and unsuited for this generation. Yet, if you so choose, you may have the Word of God, provided you do not insist that your neighbor accept it as true. He has a right to his own opinion without reference to your God. Such is the world's interpretation of freedom of religion and freedom of speech, whereby they push out of the way and persecute all who proclaim the Word of God as the truth, and testify against them.

"Who have said, With our tongue we will prevail; Our lips are our own: Who is lord over us?" No higher power than their own is acknowledged. Their aim is to rule, to coerce and crush all opposition; to usurp the government of church and state; to take away a man's right to work for the support of himself and his family; an employer's right to hire whom he chooses; to control every line of business, and every activity of society.

But, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

JEHOVAH ANSWERS

"Because of the oppression of the poor; because of the groaning of the needy; Now will I arise, saith Jehovah; I will set him in safety: he longeth for it." Literally, "he breatheth for it", "he panteth for it", in the intensity of his effort to get away from the power of evil, he spends the very breath of his life. He pours out the deep desires of his soul to his God and Savior for things agreeable to His will. Such prayer God hears and answers. "He saveth from the sword of their mouth, even the needy from the hand of the mighty. So the poor hath hope; and iniquity stoppeth her mouth." (Job 5:15, 16). "Let the lying lips be dumb, which speak against the righteous insolently, with pride and contempt. Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that take refuge in Thee, before the children of men! In the covert of Thy presence Thou wilt hide them from the plottings of man: Thou wilt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

God is ready and waiting to save now all who call upon Him in truth; but His cutting-off in judgment, He leaves, in long-suffering mercy, to give further opportunity to repent, until the day He has appointed for it. So He does not promise to cut off the deceitful lips immediately. He will attend to that in His own time. But He will save now in the refuge He has provided for all those who put their trust in Him; He gathers them under the shadow of His wings. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment." (2 Pet. 2:9). And God, in His wisdom and goodness, has another purpose for His own people and His own glory, in permitting the deceiver to continue his nefarious work for a "little while". It is for providing the genuineness of His people's faith in Him. So, "for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the re-appearance of Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 1:3-12).

There is a law of the Kingdom of God which reads, "The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped." (Ps. 63:11). This law has been published to the world, "to the end that every mouth may be stopped and all the world brought under the judgment of God." (Ro. 3:19). For, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." It was the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all judgment had been committed, who pronounced the seven terrible woes of Matthew 23 on the religious and national leaders of Israel, for their hypocrisy in false teaching and

corrupt living in defiance of the law of God while professing to honor and teach it to others. This was His merciful warning to those high in the councils of church and state of that generation, that they might repent before it was too late. They paid no heed to Him, and the execution of judgment came when they were not looking for it. The laws of God do not change with the generations of men. Therefore, let all who would be leaders and teachers of this generation lay to heart the words of Christ.

JEHOVAH'S ANSWER GIVES ASSURANCE AND COURAGE TO HIS PEOPLE

They know that **"The words of Jehovah are pure words; As silver purified in a furnace on the earth: Refined seven times."** — that is, perfectly pure, without the minutest flaw, or least trace of any impurity. They constitute the absolute standard of truth to be depended on by every one who desires to know of His saving grace; of His mercy now, and of His judgment to come. **"THOU JEHOVAH, Thou wilt keep them: Thou wilt preserve them from this generation forever."**

He certainly will preserve the words of His Covenant from perversion and suppression by this generation. He certainly will preserve His own people from coercion of the liberalism of this generation; and He will do so as long as this generation lasts, **"This generation"** which keeps reproducing itself, as it has done since the first entrance of sin. In the days of Christ on earth, He called it "a generation of vipers" for it was the same as that of David's time. "They sharpened their tongue like a serpent; adder's poison is under their lips." (Ps. 140:3).

For ourselves and for our children, for our Church and our nation, we surely need to make the prayer of this Psalm our prayer today. We are not to ask to be taken out of this world, for we have been sent into this world with a message for this generation. Who will deliver Christ's message to this generation, if we do not? In order to fulfil our mission we must ask that we be kept from the evil one; from the sham, half-truths, and

compromises of this "wicked and adulterous generation" of foul and vicious men. For, **"The wicked will continue to push themselves forward on every side, As long as vileness is made honorable among the children of men."** — as it is today, when we have it coming into our homes by newspapers, magazines, and books; through radio and television receivers, making our children and ourselves so accustomed to it that we become unconcerned, then off guard, then snared in the meshes of the lie. "Vice is a monster of so frightful mien, As to be hated needs but to be seen. Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, We first endure, then pity, then embrace." If we do not want this to happen to us, we should not let ourselves see it except from God's point of view, neither let ourselves hear it except from the refuge in Christ and His Word.

"All who would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus". (2 Tim. 3:12-17).

Again, this last verse of our Psalm is not some doubter's return to his gloom, but a fact of the righteous man's experience which, by faith, he has been able to understand, and to go on with his work with hope undimmed.

Remember that Christ said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (Jn. 16:33). "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not Him that sent me." (Jn. 15:20, 21). "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Mt. 5:11,12).

Reviews of Religious Books

The favorable reviewing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Within the limits of the editorial policy of Blue Banner Faith and Life each reviewer is solely responsible for the opinions expressed in his reviews. Please purchase books from your book dealer or direct from the publishers; do not send orders to the manager of this magazine.

THE WORLD'S COLLISION, by Charles E. Pont. W. A. Wilde Co., 131 Clarendon St., Boston, Mass. 1956, pp. 298. \$3.50.

The dust jacket of this volume informs us that

it concerns the atomic age, the one world idea in the light of the Bible, and World War III. The author's viewpoint is Premillennialism of the Pre-tribulation Rapture type, with a very strong em-

phasis on the literal fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel or the Jews. As the reviewer is basically in disagreement with this viewpoint concerning Biblical prophecy, it is inevitable that he must disagree with a large portion of the contents of the book.

The idea that Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel may really refer to Christians and the Christian Church, the author rejects as spiritualizing and "Scripture-twisting." We will not apply the latter term to his (we think greatly erroneous) method of interpretation of Old Testament prophecy. Why cannot those Christians with whom we disagree about matters of interpretation be simply adjudged mistaken, without reflections on their motives or their sincerity in handling the Word of God?

The author's whole method of handling Old Testament prophecy concerning Israel, we believe, errs by reason of an improper assumption, namely, the assumption that the gracious promises of the Old Testament are addressed to the literal or physical descendants of Abraham. The contrary proposition, which the reviewer believes to be Scriptural, has been argued at some length in a previous issue of this magazine (April-June, 1952, Vol. 7, pp. 85-88), to which the reader is referred for a statement on the subject. We believe that the gracious promises of the Old Testament are addressed to the **genuine** Israel, and that the Bible, Old Testament and New, clearly teaches that believing Christians are the genuine Israel. Galatians 3:7 and 3:29 are two verses which we believe prove this point, though many more passages relevant to the matter may be cited.

In short, we believe that the author of this book, in common with the prophetic school which he represents, has followed a basically erroneous method of interpreting the Bible, which has led him to numerous unsound conclusions.

There are indeed things in the book with which we are in hearty agreement. For example, the author's polemic against the idea of a single world government impresses us as Scriptural. The reviewer believes that division into many national sovereignties is one of God's ways of limiting and controlling human sinfulness, and that the Tower of Babel incident in Genesis shows God breaking up an attempted false unity of the race upon a secular or humanistic basis. Those who today advocate world government based on faith in man are trying to build the Tower of Babel over again. The only true unity of the human race can be none other than that based on the Lord Jesus Christ as King.

Apart from the author's basic principle of interpretation of the concept of "Israel," we wish to point out one or two tendencies of the author's method of writing which we believe to be improper.

First, in stating highly debatable propositions, concerning which Bible-believing Christians differ radically, the author habitually uses such strongly confident expressions as "undoubtedly," "clearly," "of course," "it appears certain." We shall cite one example of each of these: "Every reference in Ezekiel to names in the Rosh train undoubtedly refer to Russian 'republics' or satellites" (p. 211); "A study of Daniel 7, 9 and Revelation 17, 19, clearly shows that the revived Roman Empire will be a political system, first controlled by an ecclesiastical system, the latter soon being rendered lifeless by the political system" (p. 232); "Everything under these four headings refers of course to that time known as the seventieth week of Daniel" (p. 236); "It appears certain that in Gog's train, every nation from Persia to Germany has been included, either voluntarily or by compulsion, with the prince of Rosh leading them all, 'commanding' them all" (p. 215). These are typical of the author's too-confident statements on highly debatable matters. The fact is that these interpretations are rejected by a great many believing Bible scholars, therefore such positive expressions as "undoubtedly" are hardly in order.

Secondly, the author manifests a tendency to treat opinion as if it were proof. For instance, the author "proves" that modern Germany is identical with the Biblical Gomer by citing a series of authors, none of which affords anything more than an expression of opinion on the subject (pp. 212, 213). At no point is any real evidence given to prove that Germany is Gomer. Again, the author "proves" that Cush, or the river Gihon, or some other Biblical geographical feature, was located in a particular place, by citing the maps in the Scofield Reference Bible (1917 edition). The fact that the Scofield Bible's maps have Cush or Gihon in a particular place proves nothing at all — it is mere opinion, which may or may not be correct. The fact is that the location of the Cush and Gihon of Genesis 2 is unknown.

In the third place, the author seems to us to err frequently by confusing the **interpretation** of a prophecy with its **fulfilment**. This is a very common error in the school which the author represents. The interpretation or meaning of a prophecy is one thing; its fulfilment is another. To confuse or identify these two is a fruitful cause of error. For instance, it may be held that Revelation 13 predicts the rise and career of a tyrannical world-dictator who will bitterly persecute Christianity. That is an interpretation of the prophecy, and concerns its **meaning**. But when someone says, "Napoleon (or Mussolini, or Hitler, or Stalin, or some yet-future Russian leader) is the dictator," he is no longer dealing with the meaning of the prophecy but with its **fulfilment**. As long as we are dealing only with the meaning

of prophecy, we have only the inspired Word of God to interpret. But when we begin to deal in the fulfilment of prophecy, we have to deal also with fallible human reports of history and current events, hence there is a great possibility of human error opened. Those who thought the Kaiser or Hitler or Stalin might be the antichrist predicted by Scripture, were trying to nail down the fulfilment and were evidently mistaken in their opinion about it. But the author of the book under review does this sort of thing frequently. We shall quote a paragraph from the author's interpretation of Ezekiel 39:

"The leader of the northern invaders will be buried by the Jews. We are not informed as to who he is. It could be Nikolai Bulganin, or Zhukov, but most likely will be his successor, a man even more ruthless and anti-Semitic than Stalin. Gog himself is buried in Palestine which indicates that he was not going to miss one hour of the great show of wiping out the children of Israel. He was going to be in the front row. So the Jews bury him in Palestine, with 'all his multitude' (Ezekiel 39:11)." (P. 241).

Again and again the power mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is said to be Soviet Russia. The author states: "In Joel 2:20 we are told that God will drive the Red armies into a barren area between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas. And there He will create his stink" (p. 242). All this is to confuse the meaning of prophecy with the fulfilment of prophecy. The meaning can be known by sound exegetical study of the Scripture text; the fulfilment cannot be known, certainly and in particulars, until God causes it to come to pass. How many Old Testament prophecies are declared in the New Testament to have been fulfilled by particular events of the Gospel record, where we could never have guessed, on the basis of the Old Testament alone, that such would be the fulfilment? Who would have thought, on the basis of the Old Testament prophecy alone, that Jeremiah 31:15 would be fulfilled by the event described in Matthew 2:16-18? In this case, certainly, the meaning of the prophecy was understandable by Jeremiah and others of his day; but the time and circumstances of the fulfilment were probably unknown until Herod actually ordered the massacre of the infants of Bethlehem.

We hope that the present review will lead some who tend to accept the statements of writers on prophecy rather uncritically, to dig deeper and to examine the assumptions and the principles of interpretation upon which the structure has been built. — J. G. Vos

PREDESTINATION: ITS MEANING, ITS BLESSINGS, ITS EVIDENCES, ITS IMPLICATIONS, by George B. Fletcher. Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, Pa. No date, pp. 24, pocket size, paper cover. 15 cents; 2 for 25 cents.

If you are not too clear on this question of predestination, if you are a bit hazy about God's passing by some sinners and leaving them to suffer eternal punishment, then do send for this little pocket size book in the next mail. It is worth a dollar, but you can get eight of them for your dollar and do a bit of witnessing by passing the "bonus" out to your neighbors. Or if you want to do a good work, get a supply of them for the tract rack at the church.

Read it two or three times — you will find it delightfully interesting — and study the chart that makes the whole scheme so clear and you will never have another doubt about the truth of predestination.

Pastors, if we will endeavor to present the gospel of electing love to our people as attractively as it is presented here, we will get somewhere with those who "just can't see it." I plan to use the good illustrations given by Mr. Fletcher in my own preaching.

— Joseph A. Hill

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE FOR BEGINNERS, by Henry Baker. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1954, pp. 32, pocket size, paper cover. 20 cents.

"In this booklet the Rev. Henry Baker demonstrates that doctrine can be made understandable to young children. He here presents in simple form those Biblical truths which, when unfolded and developed, constitute an organized system of Scripture knowledge" (quoted from the cover). This is a catechism-type study containing twenty-four lessons suitable for use in Sabbath School classes and Junior societies, and for Sabbath afternoon instruction in the family. If this is properly used as an outline for developing a picture of the Bible as a whole in young minds, the parent will soon find that it is the children who are asking the questions.

Covenant keeping in the home is the real solution to the problem of "how to keep our young people in church." This kind of sound instruction in the home is the place to begin. If in this way our covenant children are securely tied to their moorings they will not drift with the current of our times.

— Joseph A. Hill

THE DEFENSE OF THE FAITH, by Cornelius Van Til. The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., P.O. Box 185, Nutley 10, N.J. 1955, pp. viii, 436. \$4.95.

Dr. Cornelius Van Til is Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He is a thoroughgoing and consistent Calvinist. In this major work on Christian Apologetics he seeks to present an apologetic that is consistent with the Reformed faith and there-

fore with biblical Christianity. He contends that if we are to be consistent Calvinists we must have a Reformed method of apologetics as well as a Reformed system of theology. This means that we are not only to hold the doctrines of Christianity as they are set forth, for example, in the Westminster Confession of Faith, but we must also have a Reformed way of presenting the doctrines of Christianity to non-believers.

The author shows that the traditional method of apologetics among Reformed theologians — with the exception of men like Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck — has been essentially the same as the apologetic method employed by Arminian theologians. The apologetics taught at “Old Princeton” under Benjamin B. Warfield, William Brenton Greene, Jr. and others was essentially no different from that which is set forth by Butler the Arminian in his famous **Analogy**. These theologians, while holding to the Reformed faith, employed a method of defending the faith that was more in line with Arminianism than with Calvinism.

Facing this fact, Van Til had to choose between the inconsistent apologetic method of “Old Princeton” and the more consistently Reformed method of the Amsterdam theologians, Kuyper and Bavinck. He chose in favor of the latter. Then at several points where Kuyper and Bavinck deviated from generic Calvinism, Van Til differs from them in favor of Calvinism. Because of his departure at certain points from these classical representatives of the Reformed faith, Van Til’s critics have called him a “Reconstructionist”. The truth is that Van Til in differing with these great Reformed thinkers has not remolded the Reformed faith but has sought to “improve” the traditional Reformed thought by removing certain elements that are inconsistent with generic Calvinism.

Van Til points out that many present day Calvinists are also inconsistent with the Reformed faith in their method of defending the faith. J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., Edward J. Carnell, Wilbur M. Smith and many others are inconsistent Calvinists in that their way of presenting Christianity involves the controlling principle of Roman Catholic and Arminian theology.

Romanism and Arminianism are essentially the same in their basic assumptions. Underlying the Romanist-Evangelical theology is the assumption of human ultimacy or self-dependence. The Romanist and Evangelical (Arminian) theologians assume that the natural man can know much about the universe and God by means of natural reason without the light of Christianity. Based upon this assumed autonomy of human reason the Romanist-Evangelical method of defending Christianity is to examine the facts and laws of nature, etc., to see whether God exists and Christianity is true.

In contrast to this method, Reformed apologetics holds that only since God **does** exist and Christianity **is** true are the facts and laws of nature what they are. Unless we **pre-suppose** the existence of God and the truth of Christianity as a whole the facts and laws of nature cannot even be intelligible. If God did not exist and Christianity were not true there would be no facts and laws of nature; all would be chaos in a universe of Chance.

The author shows that the Reformed method of apologetics is “consistent with the nature of Christianity” while the Romanist-Arminian method involves the controlling principles of non-believing science and philosophy. “These principles are (a) that man is not a creature of God but rather is ultimate and as such must properly consider himself instead of God the final reference point in explaining things; (b) that all other things beside himself are non-created but controlled by Chance; and (c) that the power of logic that he (the non-believer) possesses is the means by which he must determine what is possible or impossible in the universe of Chance” (p. 350).

Since the Romanist and Arminian assume that the non-believer is right with respect to these basic principles, they have no way of telling the non-believer just how Christianity differs from his own position and why he should accept Jesus Christ as his Savior (p. 335). In other words, the Romanist-Evangelical type of apologetics offers no challenge to unbelieving thought and can present no effective witness for the truth of Christianity.

Dr. Van Til exposes the fallacy in the notion that Evangelical Christianity is true Christianity minus the “five points of Calvinism”. It is commonly supposed among Reformed Christians that we need only to add the “distinctively Calvinistic doctrines” to Evangelical Christianity in order to have full-orbed Christianity. The impossibility of this construction of Christianity is seen when we realize that Evangelical Christianity rests on the foundation of Roman Catholic theology. Romanism deals with theism first and with Christianity afterwards. It seeks to prove the existence of God by means of reason unaided by Scripture. Therefore the God that Romanism proves cannot be the God of revelation. Yet having proved this theistic Something, Romanism is bound to construct a Christianity that will fit on to the deformation of theism it has “proved”. This means that every Christian doctrine presented by Roman Catholics or Evangelicals is falsified by their assumption of human ultimacy or autonomy. Take the doctrine of atonement for example. The Arminian conception of the atonement of Christ is distorted by its view of “free will” as autonomous or independent of the plan of God. According to the Arminian view, the effectiveness of the atonement does not depend wholly upon God but

partly upon man. The Arminian doctrine of the atonement is not the same as the Reformed doctrine of the atonement.

It will be readily seen that the question of apologetic method has a bearing on the subject of "evangelical cooperation" and on the question of interdenominational relationships as a whole. Van Til makes it clear that since Reformed Christians cannot cooperate with Evangelicals in building the structure of Christianity, neither can they cooperate with them in presenting the doctrines of Christianity. If we are not to participate in a false kind of witnessing for the existence of God and the truth of Christianity, we must cultivate fraternal and cooperative relations with Reformed Churches rather than Evangelicals.

On the other hand, as Reformed Christians we cannot use the Romanist-Evangelical approach when witnessing to unbelievers. We are not to appear as a Christian first, and later as a Reformed Christian. We are not to seek to defend theism first in order after that to defend Christianity. We are not to seek to win non-believers to a "simple" (Evangelical) Christianity first, and afterwards try to win them to Calvinism. If we are to win men to Christianity at all we must have a distinctively Reformed way of presenting every doctrine of the Christian faith.

This is one of the most important books that have been published in recent years. Our church cannot afford to ignore the whole question of Reformed apologetics as it examines "the doctrinal and creedal bases of the church's task" and as it fulfills its task of witnessing to an unbelieving generation.

— Joseph A. Hill

THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM, by Edwin H. Palmer. The Men's Society of the Christian Reformed Church, 422 E. Exchange St., Spring Lake, Mich. 1955, pp. 88, paper cover. \$1.00.

This is a series of easy-to-understand sermons on the Calvinistic doctrine of salvation by a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church. In particular it is a study of the five points at which the Calvinistic doctrine of salvation has been perennially denied by Arminian or Evangelical Christians. These five Calvinistic doctrines are: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints. Evangelical Christianity in general denies these doctrines, even though the whole debate centering around them was settled for the church of Jesus Christ more than three hundred years ago at the international Synod of Dordt. These doctrines are not popular today, but they are true. These "five points" are all clearly taught in our doctrinal standards as part of the official faith of our church. Also, the corresponding errors of Evangelical Christianity are rejected by the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony; for example, the

error "that he (man) can will or act independently of the purpose or the providence of God" (Chapter II, Error 3); and the error "that God created any thing without determining what should be its final end and condition" (Chapter VI, Error 1); and the error "that Christ died equally for all mankind" (Chapter X, Error 3), etc.

We should realize that the mass-evangelism that is currently popular is based upon these errors.

I would suggest that sessions obtain copies of this neat little book and use it as the basis of a six or twelve weeks' study in the mid-week prayer meeting. The elders will find stimulating questions on each chapter to help them in leading the meetings.

— Joseph A. Hill

THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO THE OLD TESTAMENT, by F. F. Bruce. Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 39 Bedford Square, London W. C. 1, England. 1955, pp. 20, paper cover. 6d. In U. S. A.: The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1444 N. Astor, Chicago, Ill.

This Presidential Address delivered at the Inter-Varsity Conference, April, 1955, is a clear, truly Scriptural exposition of the Christian's use of the Old Testament. Written by a recognized authority in the field of Biblical History and Literature in simple, every-day language for the non-theological student, it is a valuable aid to all lay leaders in the church in helping youth to understand and appreciate and use the Old Testament more effectively.

Subjects discussed are The Old Testament's Witness to Christ, Divine Revelation in the Old Testament, and Man's Response in the Old Testament (a) in Words (b) in Deeds.

The section of Man's Response in Words has an especially good and interesting discussion of the meaning and use of the poetical works of the Old Testament. Having shown that the Psalms are the inspired words "in which a man of God responds (underlining indicates author's italics) to the revelation he has received," he adds, "and because they are words of inspiration they serve to express our response to God as well, although we have to come to know Him through His perfect revelation in Christ." pp. 11 & 12.) Naturally the Christian fills the words of the Psalmist with a deeper, Christian meaning, as the author explains.

A few quotations will indicate the merits of the work. "The whole Bible sets forth the gospel of our redemption, and the Old Testament is much more than a preface to this gospel; it is itself the first part of the saving history." (p. 7) "The narrative parts of the Old Testament provide a broad canvas on which the revealed character of God is portrayed in His dealings with men, more particularly with His people Israel." (p. 17) "To ap-

proach the Old Testament in the light of Christ's fulfilment of all its parts is to approach it aright; **this** is the Christian approach to the Old Testament." (p. 20).

— E. C. Copeland

LOVE THE LORD THY GOD, by Herman Hoeksema (Vol. VIII of Exposition of The Heidelberg Catechism). Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1955, pp. 290. \$3.00.

The appearance of this exposition of the Catechism at this time is a timely reminder to the church of her responsibility to bring up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord through clear, systematic instruction in the doctrines of the Word of God. Sad indeed it is that even in Evangelical circles catechising and indoctrination are too generally looked upon as non-Biblical, divisive methods are rather than a steadfast continuation in the teaching of the Apostles which was characteristic of the church in the early days after Pentecost.

The Heidelberg Catechism takes up doctrine in the order of experience of the Christian, whereas the Westminster Catechism approaches the same doctrines from the order of revelation. It is also so arranged as to provide a week's assignment at a time for the mastery of the congregation. These divisions are called Lord's Day I, II, III, etc.

This volume is an exposition of part three of the Catechism which deals with the reasons for gratitude to God for the deliverance He has wrought for man through the redemption purchased by Christ. It describes the perfect freedom of man under God's sovereignty, regeneration, the nature of the New man and the death of the Old, the nature and place of Good Works in the life of the Christian, the law and the Christian, and the nature of God and of His worship.

The Reverend Hoeksema is a very practical, lucid writer. His work reads as much in the nature of a story as of a doctrinal treatise. It would be a valuable addition to church libraries to assist pastors, Sabbath School teachers and others in presenting the solid framework of the Christian life in clear, accurate, and attractive form.

— E. C. Copeland.

THE CAMBRIDGE SEVEN, by J. C. Pollock. Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 39 Bedford Square, London W. C. 1, England, 1955, pp. 112, paper cover. 3s. 6d. In U.S.A.: The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1444 N. Astor, Chicago, Ill.

This is a timely biographical work sub-titled *A Call to Christian Service*. It recalls the spiritual revival that began at Cambridge and swept through British Universities in the 1880's. These seven were all men of high social and political rank who "forsook all and followed" Christ to

serve in the China Inland Mission, among them the famous cricketer, C. T. Studd.

One factor that greatly influenced the movement was the Moody Mission in Cambridge University in 1882 conducted at the invitation of the Students' Christian Union. This book comes from the press just as another mission is being conducted there (Nov. 6-13, 1955) this time by Dr. Billy Graham. The Prologue ends with this prayerful paragraph: "The Cambridge Seven emerged when British universities had been stirred to the depths by the work of D. L. Moody, the American evangelist. That seventy years later, in similar circumstances, God may call forth similar bands is the prayer of many."

These sketches of the seven (Montagu H. P. Beauchamp, W. W. Cassels, D. E. Hoste, Arthur T. Polhill-Turner, Cecil H. Polhill-Turner, Stanley P. Smith, C. T. Studd) describe their lives at the time of their conversion and their individual and united influence on the spiritual awakening in the universities up to their departure for China as a group on 5th February, 1885. A brief epilogue states the main features of the individual lives after arrival in China.

This is another challenging work to put in the hands of young people.

— E. C. Copeland

IN UNDERSTANDING BE MEN, by T. C. Hammond. Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 39 Bedford Square, London W. C. 1, England. 1954, pp. 208. 7s. 6d. In U.S.A.: The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1444 N. Astor, Chicago, Ill.

This "Handbook on Christian Doctrine for Non-Theological Students" has gone through five editions and seven reprints since March, 1936. It is designed as a study guide of the salient doctrines of the Christian faith for all Evangelical Christians regardless of denomination. Following an Introductory Study of the Importance of Doctrine, there are seven parts: Final Authority in Matters of Faith; The Godhead; Man and Sin; The Person and Work of Christ, with an appendix: The Doctrine of the Atonement; The Holy Spirit; The Corporate Life of the Christian; The Last Things.

Each section is divided into appropriate sub-sections. Each sub-section is briefly, clearly discussed. There is a list of Scripture references for study. There are questions for discussion; and there is a good bibliography. Any church group will find it to be a very interesting, instructive, and inspirational guide to a firmer foundation in the basic things of our faith.

Written by an Archdeacon of the Church of England it expounds the Calvinistic faith as set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles and the Westminster Confession of Faith. It is written with

all evangelicals in mind, and leaves matters of differences in administration for individual study with appropriate suggestions in many cases. It takes up the basic doctrines listed in a truly Reformed fashion with no hedging or soft-pedaling of Scriptural teaching on such things as the authority of the clergy or the nature and meaning of the sacraments. For example, in discussing the characteristics of the true church, Apostolicity is defined as "its being built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets' and in perpetual adherence of its members to the Apostolic teaching as recorded in the New Testament. What it **certainly does not** mean is a continuous succession of leadership preserved in a regular transmission of 'Orders' from Bishops who can trace a lineage back to the Apostles. This is disproved by Scripture and by history . . ." (p. 163). "Ordination is not to any **power** over the church; it is an official recognition, commendation and setting apart of one whom God has previously endowed." (p. 169).

There are three sections that made a special impression on the reviewer. In the section on "Final Authority in Matters of Faith" the comparison between Reason, the Church, and the Scriptures is especially clear in describing the right place of each. The section dealing with the Holy Spirit's work in the salvation of man would steer evangelists, personal workers, etc. from the error of "decisionism". The section on "The Corporate life of the Church" very clearly and accurately describes the nature of the visible church, and so should help to clarify the Scriptural doctrine of church unity, a pressing issue in our day.

The church is bound to be strengthened and stirred up by such studies. The discussions are most refreshing and thought provoking in this presentation. Pastors will find it very helpful in fresh presentation of these doctrines in sermons, communicant classes, at the administration of the sacraments. The work is most heartily recommended.

— E. C. Copeland.

STYLISTIC CRITERIA AND THE ANALYSIS OF THE PENTATEUCH, by W. J. Martin. The Tyndale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London W. C. 1, England. 1955, pp. 23, paper cover. 1s. 6d. In U. S. A.: The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1444 N. Astor, Chicago, Ill.

This Monograph by the Rankin Lecturer in Hebrew and Semetic Languages in the University of Liverpool is a study of the principle and methodology of criticism. From the time of the French Revolution the critics of ancient literature have based their criticism of style and authorship on the appearance and frequency of the words used. Wolf in studying the works of Homer, Driver, Wellhausen, and others in studying Biblical literature have all agreed that Homer and the Septua-

gint were collections of fragmentary works by earlier writers or legends. Moses and Homer were either the pirates of the works of the common people or they have been wrongly attributed to them. (See p. 6.) This method, of course, is highly subjective and imaginative. Even the verification of sources in a document would not necessarily indicate different hands as the work of J. L. Lowes on Coleridge so remarkably shows. (p. 20.)

Dr. Martin calls for scholars "to sit close to the facts and to eschew inferences that lack completely any objective substantiation. We deal, not with what was not written, not with some mythical torso, but with what actually lies before us." (p. 21). He maintains that from the study of the style of the Pentateuch there is sufficient evidence of its unity as coming from one source, and that that source is Moses. (p. 23.)

This is a very worth-while article for the one who is interested in a scholarly reply to the untenable theories of Old Testament criticism.

— E. C. Copeland.

RECENSIONS OF THE SEPTUAGINT PENTATEUCH, by D. W. Gooding. The Tyndale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London W. C. 1, England. 1955, pp. 24, paper cover. 1s. 6d. In U. S. A.: The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1444 N. Astor, Chicago, Ill.

The Tyndale Old Testament Lecture, 1954, is a study of the variations that exist in the Septuagint Pentateuch in an effort to unfold the story of the development of the Septuagint manuscripts. It is clear that there have been various attempts to revise the Septuagint. Origen's revision and Lucian's revision are considered and some others are mentioned. The study of Septuagintal textual criticism is further complicated by the fact that it is a translation and therefore involves a study of the Hebrew Textual manuscripts in an effort to account for the variations in the Greek. There are 8 pages of illustrations of the variations.

This article will be of interest to the linguist and critic.

— E. C. Copeland.

THE APOSTOLIC PREACHING OF THE CROSS, by Leon Morris. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan; The Tyndale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London W. C. 1, England. 1955, pp. 296. \$3.50 or 15 shillings.

Dr. Morris, the Vice-Principal of Ridley College, Melbourne, here presents a very discerning study which will no doubt become a part of the classical Reformed literature expounding the work of our Lord.

This work is an attempt to understand what exactly was in the minds of the apostles when they used such words as "redeem," "covenant," "propitiate," "reconcile," "justify," etc. Dr.

Morris studies them in the light of Old Testament teaching, taking up all the related Hebrew words. Greek words are examined as they are used in the Septuagint as well as in the New Testament and in contemporary literature. He also examines the material to be found in ancient Rabbinic literature. The work is also carefully documented with many footnote references to modern works. At the end there is an index of Greek words, a general index, and an index of Scripture passages. These are valuable aids to the use of such a work.

This is the work of a sound Reformed theologian, thoroughly done in a masterly fashion. It is a valuable source book for the pastor's study. It is highly recommended.

—E. C. Copeland

SONGS OF SOVEREIGNTY: THREE SERMONS EXTOLLING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CHRIST, by John Owen. Sovereign Grace Book Club, 413 S. E. First Street, Evansville, Indiana. 1955, pp. 120. No price stated.

Dr. John Owen should not require any introduction to those of Reformed persuasion. In this little volume there are eight discourses on five texts of Scripture, some texts having two sermons assigned to them. The sermons are grouped in three sections, the first containing five sermons, the second, one, and the third, two.

In the first section the sovereignty of God is shown in the defeat of human power and in the prevailing nature of the Divine power of the Gospel. The second section deals with the sovereign power of God as manifested in the steadfastness of the promises. This sermon preached before Parliament on February 28, 1649, voiced a much needed warning against the sinfulness of staggering at the promises as it applies to the political sphere. The last two sermons deal with the sovereignty of God as manifest in the doctrine of the everlasting Covenant.

Though preached over three hundred years ago these sermons have a vital message for the nation, the church and the individual believer of our day. The style is not modern, but any person with an average knowledge of English will have no difficulty in understanding these discourses. Unlike the popular type of preaching so prevalent today, Dr. Owen deals with the text and applies it with numerous parallel passages of Scripture to the needs of the nation or the individual. At the same time the attention of the reader is kept focussed on the all-important doctrine of the Covenant of Grace as it embraces regeneration, justification and sanctification.

A volume such as this should prove of value to every thoughtful student of the Bible, and especially to seminary students and young ministers.

A table of contents and an index would add to the usefulness of the book.

— Alexander Barkley

EXPOSITION OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, by Robert Haldane. Vol. I, being an exposition of Romans chap. 1-3. Sovereign Grace Book Club, 413 S. E. First Street, Evansville Indiana. 1955, pp. 159. \$2.00.

This commentary was first published during the years 1835-39. The author, Robert Haldane, was born in 1764 of noble parentage in Scotland. Owing to the death of his father his mother had the task of training the children from their early years. The two sons later testified that it was through the instrumentality of this saintly woman that they were shown the way of life.

The Exposition on Romans was largely the outcome of eight months spent by Robert Haldane in Geneva. In that historic city he gathered around him a company of students and gave them lectures on the Epistle to the Romans. These students who had been receiving the husks of Arian and Socinian doctrine from their professors, welcomed Haldane's expositions. Among the converts were Merle D'Aubigne, L. Gaussen and Caesar Malan. Robert Haldane was not a minister and does not claim to be a scholar, yet this commentary manifests intellectual acumen and powers of spiritual discernment far beyond the average. Dr. Chalmers described it as "a well-built commentary" and recommended it to the students of theology.

Dr. Alexander Whyte maintained that the status of any commentator on Romans must be determined by his analysis of chapter 7 of the Epistle. There is another test just as effective and that concerns the meaning of the expression "the righteousness of God" which appears in 1:17 and 3:21, 22. These words contain the key to the whole Epistle and Mr. Haldane devotes some twelve pages to the exposition of them. On page 131 he writes: "No explanation of the expression, 'the righteousness of God,' will at once suit the phrase and the situation in which it is found in the passage before us, but that which makes it that righteousness, or obedience to the law, both in its penalty and requirements, which has been yielded to it by our Lord Jesus Christ. This is indeed the righteousness of God, for it has been provided by God, and from first to last has been effected by His Son Jesus Christ, who is the mighty God and the Father of eternity."

In the course of the Exposition attention is directed to the grievous errors of three other commentators: MacKnight, Moses Stuart, and Tholuck; the first a Scottish Presbyterian; the second an American Independent, and the third a German Lutheran. In contrast to the cold, critical and unreliable assertions of these writers Haldane holds forth the genuine doctrines of grace with due emphasis, and shows how every aspect of the Divine dealing with man contributes to their illustration.

The reissuing of this commentary is worthy of commendation. Every devout student of the Epistle to the Romans will find in it many gems of theology, and much that will add to his understanding of an Epistle described by Calvin as "so methodical, that the very entrance of it is framed according to art."

— Alexander Barkley

YOU ARE GREATER THAN YOU KNOW, by Lou Austin. The Partnership Foundation, Winchester, Va. 1955, pp. 206. \$3.00.

This book, the contents of which are certainly striking and unusual, presents a concept of religion which cannot be reconciled with Biblical Christianity. Here is a type of religion which is completely subjective, lacking the objective historical redemption which is so prominent in the Bible. The position of the author, in general, is similar to that of the Quakers or Society of Friends, rather than that of historic Biblical Christianity. The author's position also resembles quite strongly in some respects that of the movement associated with the name of Glenn Clark, and that of the movement associated with the name of Frank N. D. Buchman (formerly called "First Century Christian Fellowship" but now known as "Moral Rearmament").

The book sets forth mysticism of a pantheizing type, which sees no need of, and leaves no room for, God's historical plan of redemption through Christ. To the author, Christ is a specimen or example of "the Partnership Life" rather than the Saviour who bore the guilt of our sins by His substitutionary sufferings and death on the cross.

The main differences between this book and Biblical Christianity may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. The book confuses and breaks down the distinction between God and man, which is always kept clear and sharp in the Bible. God is spoken of as being "in" man, and man is virtually regarded as a part of God. Note, for example, the statements on pages 68-9: ". . . there is no such thing as an individual. Each person is an individual partnership with me. I have integrated my Spirit within each human being. . .". The Bible, on the other hand, never regards God and man as becoming **integrated**. They are always clearly distinct in the Bible, though ethical and religious union and communion may be established between the two. Where the Bible speaks of ethical and religious union with God, the author of the book under review understands metaphysical "integration" or unity of essential being between God and man. He looks at God's transcendence and His immanence disjunctively, as an either-or alternative, and rejects the former while affirming the latter.

2. The book confuses physical or material concepts with those that are ethical and spiritual. The author speaks of "breathing out ego, breathing in God" as if God were a material substance like air. But man cannot rid himself of egotism, nor can he attain spiritual communion with God, by any act or process that can be compared to breathing (see page 83).

3. The book confuses Christ's unique relationship to God the Father with a "Partnership" concept which is regarded as being attainable by any human being. The Bible represents Christ's relationship to God the Father as absolutely unique. No other human being can ever be one with the Father in the same sense that Christ is. Mr. Austin, however, evidently believes the contrary to be true.

4. This book completely lacks any idea of human sin as something involving objective guilt before God — something which can only be forgiven on the basis of a substitutionary atonement provided by God. The Bible says that Christ died for our sins, but Mr. Austin holds that Christ died to teach us that God is within us and manifests Himself through us (page 173, top).

5. The book confuses the **redemptive relationship of Christians to God** with the **natural relationship of all human beings to God**. Texts of Scripture which speak of Christian believers, the author of this book represents as speaking of **man as such**, or people in general.

The harm which this thoroughly unsound book may do will only be increased by the manifest earnestness and sincerity of the author. Mysticism such as this book presents is not a variant form of Biblical Christianity, but rather an entirely different type of religion which grows from a different root. Such mysticism is evidently on the increase at the present time. It seems to appeal especially to people who feel the need of vital religious experience but who lack a clear grasp of the doctrinal structure of Biblical Christianity. Those who are so doctrinally naive that they do not realize that in true Biblical Christianity subjective experience is rooted and grounded in objective redemption, tend to be easily captivated by religious mysticism such as that exemplified by the book under review.

— J. G. Vos

WE ARE THE LORD'S, by Jean Vis. Society for Reformed Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1955, pp. 175, \$2.50.

This fine book is a short, lucid explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism. To one who is committed to and a lover of the Westminster Standards, this is a welcome and fascinating book. Its emphasis is Reformed throughout.

In the compass of only 175 pages the author

cannot give an intensive or exhaustive study of such an important Church Standard. However, this is a reliable and welcome aid to the understanding of the Reformed faith as it is expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism. The Author has well arranged this book so that it could be used as devotional reading, or as an individual or class study book with a number of thought, research, or discussion questions at the close of each short chapter. Such a volume will be of value to every Christian, but especially to young people and ministers.

Here we have a welcome antidote for the modern "entertaining sermon." Jean Vis is a minister in the Reformed Church in America. This informative book is arranged to help in the ministry or doctrinal preaching that the people might be instructed in the right way of the Lord.

These are a few quotations:

"Hence we must learn to know, trust, love and glorify God alone, committing 'even the least thing' to his care. And there we all stand condemned." p. 132.

"The young convert is asked: Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour? Seldom the question is added: Do you surrender your soul and body to **your Lord**? The new disciple needs much guidance in this direction. When this is lacking or minimized he does not practice his religion in every area of life, and has little joy and less enthusiasm in his discipleship." p. 46.

"Thus the law still stands for them that are saved by grace. In the light of that law we see our imperfections; we learn more and more to know our sinful nature and we pray for the grace of the Holy Spirit to strive for perfection. Its obedience now is not by reason of an outward force but by an inward compulsion." p. 129.

"1. **Jesus suffered the pains of hell**, during all his suffering, but especially on the cross, when he said: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' To be forsaken of God is hell." p. 62.

These are just samples of the good things of this book.

— Philip W. Martin

STAND FAST, by John Arnold. The Society for Reformed Publications, 1519 East Fulton Street, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1955, pp. 31, 35 cents per copy, 3 copies \$1.00.

The Rev. Mr. Arnold has served as a Chaplain in the U.S.N.R. and has written this book for young people in the armed forces of our Nation. The chapter headings are all from army life, beginning with "Reveille" and ending with "Taps" and "Farewell." While this booklet is written for members of the armed forces, it is a good one to place in the hands of any young person, especially those who are leaving home for any reason.

The emphasis on the sovereignty of God over all is striking and encouraging. "We serve no ordinary leaders, but rather God's Son, Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords." p. 11. "Our first allegiance is to Him and to His kingdom. It is imperative that we know our leader and all His qualifications for such a command" (p. 10). "But always remember that we are to be judged by God's standards, not by what the crowd does. . . Be a man, do what you know is right, and refuse to be led around like a puppet by the crowd" (p. 22). "Take each step with your saviour and He will safely guide you through all the dangers which surround you on every side" (p. 23). May our God make each of our young people brave and keep them true to our Covenant God.

— Philip W. Martin

WHAT JESUS MEANS TO ME and **COMFORT FOR THE SORROWING**, by William Goulooze. The Church Press, 180 W. 26th St., Holland, Michigan, 1955. Each contains 24 pages and is priced at 25 cents; ten or more, 20 cents each; one hundred or more, 15 cents each.

The Rev. Mr. Goulooze, ThD., D. D. has suffered much through several years of lingering illness and pain. These sufferings have brought him closer to the Lord in fellowship. While these booklets are written primarily for those in sorrow and pain, yet they are good reading for all. They are written in the form of short meditations and contain much Scripture, numerous poems and testimonies. There is a healthy emphasis on the rich promises of our Saviour, Who suffered so much for our sins.

We are sorry that the author has so-called "pictures of Jesus" on the front covers. No man or church has the power or authority to repeal the second commandment.

— Philip W. Martin

THERE IS NO PURGATORY, by George C. Douma. The Church Press, 180 W. 26th St., Holland, Michigan 1955, pp. 24, 25 cents per copy, 8 copies for \$1.00, \$10.00 per hundred.

This is a reprint of a sermon preached by the pastory of Calvary Reformed Church, 1513 E. Fulton Street, Grand Rapids, Michigan, October 30, 1955. All the tenderness and fairness which could be mustered is used to prove the statement of the theme of this sermon. Pastor Douma has quoted from the approved Roman Church Catechism and from the Douay version of the Bible and Apocryphal books. The author conclusively proves his point by showing that there is no evidence in Scripture for a purgatory, but rather that the Bible teaches that there is no such place. This is a good booklet for all, especially for those who work among Roman Catholics.

— Philip W. Martin

UNDERSTANDING THE PUPIL: PART I — THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD, by Marjorie E. Soderholm. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan. 1955, pp. 65, paper cover, plastic binding. \$1.00.

This little book is a help for teachers of very young children in the Church School or Sabbath School. The author is Instructor in Christian Education at Trinity Seminary and Bible College, Chicago. Attractively illustrated with photographs of young children engaged in various activities, the booklet presents a nice appearance. The author's viewpoint is that of Biblical Christianity. The book is filled with relevant information and excellent practical suggestions, and should prove useful to anyone who works with little children in the Church.

— J. G. Vos

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL MATERIALS: BEGINNER, PRIMARY, JUNIOR AND INTERMEDIATE. Great Commission Publications, 728 Schaff Building, 1505 Race Street, Philadelphia 2, Pa. Prices of materials as follows:

Beginner Teacher's Manual	75c
Beginner Pupil's Workbook	20c
Beginner Worksheets for one pupil	8c
Primary Teacher's Manual	75c
Primary Pupil's Workbook	20c
Primary Worksheets for 4 pupils	25c
Junior Teacher's Manual	75c
Junior Pupil's Workbook	20c
Junior Worksheets for 4 pupils	25c
Intermediate Teacher's Manual	75c
Intermediate Pupil's Workbook	20c
Intermediate Worksheets for 4 pupils	25c
Flannel-Map Set	\$3.25

In the course of many years of experience in Vacation Bible School work the reviewer has never seen a better set of helps than these published by the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. From the technical standpoint these materials are of high quality. The printing and paper are good, the illustrations and maps well done, and the whole appearance attractive. More important than such considerations, however, is the matter of the theological viewpoint of the contents. The reviewer has used some Vacation Bible School helps from other publishers which were most attractively gotten up, but were marred by the presence of Arminian, Dispensational and other forms of error. In one case the story of Abraham offering his son Isaac on Mount Moriah was reconstructed so that Abraham only imagined that God wanted him to offer Isaac; it was all a terrible mistake on Abraham's part. In other cases the Arminian doctrine of universal atonement, and related Arminian concepts, were imbedded in the material. The Arminian notion that salvation depends wholly on a "decision" which the sinner has power to make

was sometimes prominent. Of course, such materials can be used and the errors counteracted or corrected, but it is not easy to offset the influence of erroneous theology in materials placed in the hands of pupils and teachers. The temptation is always to be satisfied with materials that are relatively sound in that they are based on acceptance of the Bible as true, and are "evangelical" in viewpoint, even though they are not truly in harmony with the system of doctrine to which we as a Church are bound by covenant vows.

It is a pleasure to recommend the set of materials now under review, because they are truly in harmony with the Reformed Faith which we are bound by covenant vows to hold and to promote. Teachers and pupils will not find in these helps any false antithesis between the Old Testament and the New, nor between law and grace. Nor will they find the Arminian theology which exalts man and his powers. They will find in these materials the system of truth set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter Catechism. The Biblical material is accurately presented, too, in keeping with truly sound exegesis. There are suitable applications to the lives of the pupils.

The Beginner theme is "The Children's Savior", with the following daily subjects: Jesus the Savior is Born; Jesus Forgives Sin; Jesus, Lord of Heaven and Earth; Jesus, Lord of Life; Jesus Loves Children; Loving Jesus Most; Jesus, the Lowly King; Two Men Deny Jesus; Jesus Keeps His Promise; Jesus Goes to Heaven. All the materials are prepared for use in a two-week school with ten sessions.

The Primary theme is "Fathers and Sons." This takes up Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Jacob and Laban, Joseph, Joseph's Brothers. The Junior theme is "The Ten Commandments," with illustrative and story material taken from various parts of the Bible. The Intermediate theme is "The Exodus," which includes Biblical material from the call of Moses to Israel's entrance into Canaan. In the Intermediate Workbook there is a particularly good outline map (two-page spread in middle of book) of Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula and southern Canaan. Unlike maps found in some helps, this one is large enough that pupils can see everything clearly and easily, and can write in it without crowding. The same workbook also has some drawings taken from archaeological sources illustrating life in ancient Egypt which are excellent.

Each of the pupil's workbooks contains two or three hymns at the back of the book. We do not approve of this as we are committed to the principle of exclusive use of the inspired Psalms in worship. The reviewer was glad to note, however, that a portion of the 19th Psalm (four stan-

zas with chorus) taken from the United Presbyterian Psalter of 1916 is included in the Junior and Intermediate books.

Those who are looking for sound Vacation

Bible School helps of high quality and thoroughly usable would do well to send for a sample set of these materials.

— J. G. Vos

Books Received

The announcement of the books listed below should not be construed as a recommendation. A review of those found in this list which we regard as having value for our readers will be given in a later issue.

Publications of Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich.

THE SELF-DISCLOSURE OF JESUS, by Geerhardus Vos. 1954, pp. 311. \$4.00.

MAN OF SORROWS, by Herman Hoeksema. 1956, pp. 129. \$2.00.

REDEMPTION ACCOMPLISHED AND APPLIED, by John Murray. 1955, pp. 236. \$3.00.

ANCHOR OF HOPE, by Preston J. Stegenga. 1954, pp. 271. \$3.50.

PHILOSOPHY OF REVELATION, by Herman Bavinck. 1953, pp. x, 349. \$3.50.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE, by Bernard Ramm. 1954, pp. 368. \$4.00.

THE GOSPEL OF THE SPIRIT, by Samuel E. Pierce. 1955, pp. 104. \$1.50.

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS AND TO PHILEMON, by J. J. Mueller. 1955, pp. 200. \$3.50.

BY GRACE ALONE, by Herman Kuiper. 1955, pp. 165. \$2.50.

THE PARABOLIC TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE, by G. H. Lang. 1955, pp. 400. \$3.50.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR FOR GOD'S SAKE, by Herman Hoeksema. 1955, pp. 195. \$2.50.

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD, by W. H. Griffith Thomas. 1955, pp. xv, 303. \$3.00.

HOLY FIELDS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY LAND, by J. Howard Kitchen. 1955, pp. 160. \$2.50.

Publications of Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich.

DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS OF JOHN CALVIN, ed. by Charles E. Edwards. 1954, pp. 120, pocket size. \$1.00.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS, by Robert Johnstone. 1875, reprinted 1955, pp. xii, 490. \$3.95.

PROPHECY AND HISTORY IN RELATION

TO THE MESSIAH, by Alfred Edersheim. 1901, reprinted 1955, pp. xxiv, 391. \$3.75.

THE CHURCH IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE, by William M. Ramsay. 1954, pp. 510. \$4.20.

CHRISTIANITY IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE, by George T. Purves. 1955, pp. xx, 343. \$3.00.

I AND II THESSALONIANS, by William Hendriksen. 1955, pp. 214. \$4.50.

LEADERS OF ISRAEL: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HEBREW PEOPLE, by George L. Robinson. 1955, pp. x, 246. \$2.75.

THE SECRET OF THE LORD, by William M. Clow. 1955, pp. 353. \$2.95.

SEVEN WORDS OF LOVE, by G. Hall Todd. 1955, pp. 71. \$1.50.

THESE ALSO SUFFER, by William Goolooze. 1955, pp. 86. \$1.75.

Publications of Sovereign Grace Book Club, 413 S. E. First St., Evansville, Indiana

EXPOSITION OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, by Robert Haldane. Vol. II (Chap. 4-7), pp. 310. \$2.00. Vol. III, pp. 160. \$2.00.

THE SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST, by Richard Baxter. Photo reprint of 1840 edition, pp. 176. No price stated.

PRAYER, by John Bunyan; THE RETURN OF PRAYERS, by Thomas Goodwin. 1955, pp. 60, paper cover. \$1.00.

KEEPING THE HEART, by John Flavel. 1955, pp. 96, paper cover. 75 cents.

Publications of The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., P.O. Box 185, Nutley 10, N. J.

VOICES FROM HEAVEN AND HELL, by J. Marcellus Kik. 1955, pp. 192. \$2.50.

CHRISTIANITY AND EXISTENTIALISM, by J. M. Spier. 1953, pp. 140. \$3.00.

CHRISTIANITY AND IDEALISM, by Van Til. 1955, pp. 139, paper cover. \$1.80.

Publications of W. A. Wilde Co., 131 Clarendon St., Boston 16, Mass.

MISSION ON MAIN STREET, by Helga Bender Henry. 1955, pp. 200. \$2.75.

THE LIVING BIBLE CHAPTER BY CHAPTER, by Amos R. Wells. 1955, pp. 343. \$2.00.

THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A YEAR, by Amos R. Wells. 1955, pp. 127. \$1.50.

PROTESTANT BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION, by Bernard Ramm. 1950, pp. 197. \$2.50.

Publications of Other Firms

BIBLE DOCTRINE: UNIT ONE BOOKS ONE AND TWO, by Dorothy Partington. Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. 728 Schaff Building, 1505 Race St., Philadelphia 2, Pa. 1955, two volumes, total about

325 pages, paper covers, plastic binding. No price stated.

THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST, by Arthur W. Pink. Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, Pa. 1955, pp. 313. \$3.95.

SCHEEBEN'S DOCTRINE OF DIVINE ADOPTION, by Edwin H. Palmer. J. H. Kok, N. V., Kampen, Netherlands. 1953, pp. xi, 202, paper cover. Florins 5.90.

THE FREE OFFER OF THE GOSPEL, by John Murray and Ned B. Stonehouse. Lewis J. Grotenhuis, Belvidere Road, Phillipsburg, N. J. 1955, pp. 27, pocket size, paper cover. 25 cents.

TAUGHT OF THE LORD: HELPS FOR JUNIOR LEADERS, by Anna P. McKelvy. 1954, pp. 60. 8½x11 inches, plastic binding, paper cover. Order from Chester R. Fox, 209 Ninth St., Pittsburgh 22, Pa.

Some Noteworthy Quotations

Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but I do not know any man who sets them aside.

— Joseph Parker

Let me speak to Christless persons who are at ease. Many of you hearing me know that you are in a Christless state; and yet you know that you are at ease and happy. Why is this? It is because you hope to be brought to Christ before you die. You say, another day will do as well, and I will hear thee again of this matter; and therefore you take your ease now. But this is very unreasonable. It is not worthy of a rational being to act in this way. God has nowhere promised to bring you to Christ before you die. God has laid Himself under no manner of obligation to you. He has nowhere promised that you shall see tomorrow, or that you shall hear another sermon. There is a day near at hand when you shall not see a tomorrow. If this be not the last, there is a sermon yet to be preached which will be the last you will ever hear.

— Robert Murray McChesney

The starting-point of every motive in religion is God and not man. Man is the instrument and means, God alone is here the goal, the point of departure and the point of arrival, the fountain from which the waters flow, and at the same time the ocean into which they finally return.

— Abraham Kuyper

God regenerates us, — that is to say, He rekindles in our heart the lamp sin had blown out. The necessary consequence of this regeneration is an irreconcilable conflict between the inner world of our heart and the world outside, and this

conflict is ever the more intensified the more the regenerative principle pervades our consciousness. Now, in the Bible, God reveals, to the regenerate, a world of thought, a world of energies, a world full of beautiful life, which stands in direct opposition to his ordinary world, but which proves to agree in a wonderful way with the new life that has sprung up in his heart.

— Abraham Kuyper

All organized communities, civil and ecclesiastical, have a common responsibility, a moral personality in the sight of God, and are dealt with accordingly, rewarded or punished according to their conduct, as such. As their organized existence is confined to this world, so must the retributive dispensations of God respecting them be.

— Charles Hodge

It is the radical principle of the Bible, and consequently of all true religion, that God is all and in all; that of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things. It is the tendency of all truth to exalt God, and to humble the creature; and it is characteristic of true piety to feel that all good comes from God, and to desire that all glory should be given to God.

— Charles Hodge

It is the duty of Christians to receive kindly their brethren, and to aid them in every way within their power, and to do this from religious motives and in a religious manner, as becometh saints.

— Charles Hodge

It is the duty of Christians to be constantly

watchful over the peace and purity of the Church, and not to allow those who cause divisions and scandals, by departing from the true doctrines, to pursue their course unnoticed. With all such we should break off every connection which either sanctions their opinions and conduct, or gives them facilities for effecting evil.

— Charles Hodge

False teachers have ever abounded in the Church. All the apostles were called upon earnestly to oppose them. Witness the epistles of Paul, John, Peter, and James. No one of the apostolical epistles is silent on this subject. Good men may indeed hold erroneous doctrines; but the false teachers, the promoters of heresy and divisions, as a class, are characterized by Paul as not influenced by a desire to serve Christ, but as selfish in their aims, and plausible, flattering, and deceitful in their conduct.

— Charles Hodge

Christians should unite the harmlessness of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent. They should be careful neither to cause divisions or scandals themselves, nor allow others to deceive and beguile them into evil.

— Charles Hodge

However much the Church may be distracted and troubled, error and its advocates cannot finally prevail. Satan is a conquered enemy with a lengthened chain; God will ultimately bruise him under the feet of His people.

— Charles Hodge

The veracity of God, and not the reasonableness of any doctrine, is the ground of our faith.

It is the work of the Gospel to cast down reasonings against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ.

— R. P. Testimony, IV.4

The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government, in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.

— The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXX.1

The Lord Jesus Christ hath instituted Church Discipline, in order to remove scandals, and prevent their unhappy effects; and no Church can, without the faithful and spiritual application of it, hope for His countenance and blessing.

— R. P. Testimony, XXXI.3

The trouble with the paganism of ancient Greece, as with the paganism of modern times, was not in the superstructure, which was glorious, but in the foundation, which was rotten.

— J. Gresham Machen

Faith is being exalted so high today that men are being satisfied with any kind of faith, just so it is faith.

— J. Gresham Machen

At the very root of the modern liberal movement is the loss of the consciousness of sin.

— J. Gresham Machen

Paganism is optimistic with regard to unaided human nature, whereas Christianity is the religion of the broken heart.

— J. Gresham Machen

Religious Terms Defined

SEMIPELAGIANISM. A theological system of the Middle Ages, essentially the same as the Arminianism of the present day. Semipelagianism taught: 1. That what God does toward saving any, He does equally for all. 2. That Christ died for all men. 3. That man, before receiving divine grace, can have faith in Christ and holy desires. 4. That man's free will, by which he accepts divine grace, has not been rendered impotent by sin. This system is properly called Cassianism, after Cassian, its promoter.

SLANDER. Uttering false speeches against our neighbor, to the prejudice of his fame, safety, welfare; and that out of malignity, vanity, rashness, ill nature or bad design. (Buck's Theological Dictionary).

SOUL. That element of the human personality which is not composed of material substance,

which cannot die, which makes man different from the animals, and which is the seat of the image of God in man. The soul is also called the spirit and the mind, with emphasis on its various characteristics.

SYNERGISM. A heresy of the Reformation period which held that the salvation of sinners is partly accomplished by divine power and partly by human power. The term literally means "working together." Synergism is opposed to Monergism, which holds that the salvation of sinners is accomplished by divine power alone, sinful man having no power of his own to will or do what is spiritually good.

TABERNACLE. The portable tent sanctuary constructed by the Israelites in the wilderness in the time of Moses, which was used as the center

of their religious worship until the Temple was built by Solomon. No structure used for Christian worship should ever be called either a tabernacle or a temple, for the typical worship associated with both belonged to the Old Testament period of figures and shadows only.

TALMUD. A collection of Jewish writings, composed after the time of Christ (about A.D. 270-500), constituting an explanation of and commentary on the text of the Old Testament.

TARGUMS. A collection of paraphrases of the Hebrew Old Testament in the Aramaic language, made in the third and fourth centuries after Christ. The Targums were read by those who could read Aramaic but not Hebrew.

TOLERATION. The act of a government or ruler in permitting something which is not fully approved. Religious toleration differs from religious liberty in that the former is based upon the assumption that the State has jurisdiction over the sphere of religion, whereas the latter is based upon the assumption that the State does not have jurisdiction over the sphere or religion. It is therefore a mistake to regard toleration as equivalent to liberty.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION. The Roman Catholic error concerning the Lord's Supper, which holds that the bread and wine are miraculously changed into the real body and blood of Christ, while retaining only the qualities of bread and wine.

TRENT, COUNCIL OF. The Roman Catholic council which met at intervals from 1545 to 1563 to decide the issues raised by the Protestant Reformation. The decrees of the Council of Trent constitute basic dogma of the Roman Catholic Church today, and mark that body as apostate from Biblical Christianity.

UNIVERSALISM. The doctrine that all human beings shall finally be saved unto eternal life. Those who hold this doctrine base it upon general considerations such as the goodness of God. It is, however, directly contrary to numerous statements of Scripture.

VISION. 1. A mode of divine revelation in Bible times, in which a visual impression was made upon the human consciousness while the person was awake. 2. A more general term meaning supernatural divine revelation, as in Dan. 9:24. (The common modern usage of "vision" as meaning intelligent awareness of the future possibilities of something, is not found in the Bible).

WESTMINSTER. A part of London, England, in which is located Westminster Abbey, the most renowned church building in the British Commonwealth and Empire. The spelling "Westminster" which is sometimes seen is incorrect and rests upon the mistaken notion that the name has some connection with the word "minister" meaning a clergyman. Actually, "minster" is derived from the Latin word for "monastery."

WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY. The historic special synod called by the English Parliament during the reign of Charles I to settle the government, liturgy and doctrine of the Church of England. This synod met first in 1643 and continued several years.

WESTMINSTER STANDARDS. The historic doctrinal and administrative standards of world Presbyterianism, produced by the Westminster Assembly about the middle of the 17th century. These standards include the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism, the Shorter Catechism, a Form of Church Government and a Directory for Worship.

WILL-WORSHIP. Ways of worshipping God not appointed in His Word, but derived from human reason, preference, or tradition. Will-worship is sinful even though the motive prompting it may be a pious one.

WORKS, GOOD. Those acts of a regenerate person which are commanded in Scripture and are performed with a motive of love to God.

WRATH OF GOD. God's absolutely righteous anger at sin, and His infliction of deserved punishment upon those guilty of sin.

Studies in the Book of Genesis

LESSON 111

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

We now come to chapter 26 of the Book of Genesis. This chapter deals with events in the life of Isaac, and portrays the only scenes we have in which Isaac is the most prominent character,

for his son Jacob soon comes to occupy the center of attention. The character of Isaac as portrayed in Genesis is rather passive than active; in this respect Isaac forms a contrast to his father Abraham. Also, there is little that is original in the life of Isaac; most of the recorded events are parallel to similar events in the life of Abraham (the barrenness of his wife, danger in Gerar, treatment by Abimelech, two sons of each patriarch differ-

ing sharply in character). This passive and unoriginal character of Isaac serves to bring out a principle of God's plan of redemption and revelation. "The redeeming work of God passes by its very nature through three stages. Its beginnings are marked by a high degree of energy and productivity; they are creative beginnings. The middle stage is a stage of suffering and self-surrender, and is therefore passive in its aspect. This in turn is followed by the resumed energy of the subjective transformation, characterizing the third stage. Now the middle one of these stages is represented by Isaac. The principle finds expression, however, not merely in the general lack of originality, but more positively also in the account of the demanded sacrifice of Isaac" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 106). The structure of the plan of redemption and revelation just described finds its fullest realization, of course, in the Biblical structure of the history of redemption. The preparatory period from Adam to Christ ("creative beginnings") is represented by the active life of Abraham; the period of Christ's earthly ministry and passion ("suffering and self-surrender") is represented by the quiet, passive life of Isaac; the period of application, from Christ's resurrection to the end of time ("resumed energy of subjective transformation") is represented by the life of Jacob with its new activity and subjective transformation.

The common method of treatment of the history of the patriarchs, as seen countless times in Sabbath School lesson helps and the like, errs, we believe, in placing the chief emphasis on the personal character of these men. Their character is not the most important thing; what is most important is their place and function in the divine plan. "In the history of revelation, character is not to be regarded as an ultimate datum; the revelation does not spring from the character; on the contrary, the character is predetermined by the necessities of the revelation" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 106). This means that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not vehicles of revelation because their character fitted them to be such, but on the contrary that their character became what it was because God had chosen them to be vehicles of revelation. It was not a case of God finding men fit to be channels of revelation, but of God making them such. In other words, their character was the product, not the source, of their place in the divine structure of redemption-revelation. Our religiously man-centered age tends to think of character rather than of redemption, and of ethics rather than theology.

The first incident recorded in chapter 26 is a famine in the land of Canaan. This was about a century since the famine in Abraham's time (12:10). Isaac went to Gerar, in the Philistine country along the southwest coast of Palestine. The king of the Philistines is called Abimelech. It is uncertain whether this is a personal name,

or a title of all Philistine kings, like "Pharaoh" in Egypt and "Caesar" in Rome. In any case, the Abimelech of chapter 26 was probably not the same individual as the one in chapter 20.

While Isaac is living at Gerar, the Lord appears to him and warns him not to enter Egypt. It is possible that Isaac was planning to go to Egypt, as Abraham had done. But God forbids this, and the word to Isaac is: "dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of." This means that Isaac is to dwell wherever God may direct him to from time to time. He is to sojourn in the land of Canaan, and God will be with him, and will bless him.

Next, the divine promises to Abraham are renewed to Isaac. The oath sworn by God to Abraham shall certainly be performed. The promises are three in number: (1) the inheritance of the land; (2) numerous posterity; (3) blessings to come to all the nations of the earth through Isaac's seed. The statement of the promises is followed by the statement: "Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." This is a strong emphasis on Abraham's faithful obedience to God. Yet the basis of the promises is not man's faithfulness but Jehovah's oath, as seen by the last clause of verse 3; the basis of the promises is not human works but divine grace. "Moses does not mean that Abraham's obedience was the reason why the promise of God was confirmed and ratified to him; but from what has been said before, (chap. 22:18), where we have a similar expression, we learn, that what God freely bestows upon the faithful is sometimes, beyond their desert, ascribed to themselves; that they, knowing their intention to be approved by the Lord, may the more ardently addict and devote themselves entirely to his service: so he now commends the obedience of Abraham, in order that Isaac may be stimulated to an imitation of his example" (Calvin).

As Isaac continues to dwell at Gerar, he repeats Abraham's sin of untruthfulness, telling the men of Gerar that his wife is his sister. It is strange that Isaac had not learned from the history of his father the wrongness and folly of such conduct; but, as Leupold comments, sin is never logical. The liberal critics, of course, allege that this incident is just another version of the "legend" about Abraham in chapter 20. But this is shown to be untrue by the clear differences between the two accounts. In chapter 20 there was no famine; in chap. 26 there is one. In chap. 20 Sarah was actually taken, but in chap. 26 Rebekah is not taken by the Philistines. In chapter 20 God intervened to solve the problem, but in chap. 26 the discovery is accidentally made by Abimelech that Rebekah is Isaac's wife not his sister. Moreover, in chap. 20 Abraham is given a lavish gift, but in chap. 26 there is no mention of

such a transaction. Clearly, then, the two accounts, though they have their main theme in common, differ greatly in circumstances and details. Certainly there is no reason for identifying the two or regarding either of them as a mere "legend" as the critics tend to do. The critics fail to realize that history repeats itself; they reason as if the same kind of sin can be committed only once in a given family line.

"And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife" (26:8). The word "sporting" Leupold translates as "caressing." Obviously this was not the way a man would treat his sister; therefore, the king concludes, she must be his wife. Isaac is summoned and charged with untruthfulness. It is certainly a shame to the covenant people of God when the people of the world can justly charge them with being unethical. Isaac must have been terribly ashamed. Having no real excuse, all he can say is that he feared death on account of Rebekah being his wife.

Isaac is duly rebuked by Abimelech, who possibly remembers hearing about the incident concerning Abraham (chap. 20). Thereupon Abimelech issues strict orders to his people that neither Isaac nor Rebekah is to be molested, on penalty of death (26:11). In this history we can see not only the shameful lapse of Isaac into sin, but also the common grace of God at work among the Philistines. Even where salvation is not found, God's common grace operates restraining sin and promoting civic righteousness. Abimelech was not, like Isaac, heir to redemptive promises of God; but he is used by God to restrain

human sinfulness and maintain law, order and justice in human society.

Questions:

1. How may the character of Isaac as portrayed in Genesis be described?
2. How can we explain the fact that Isaac appears as a rather passive character, lacking in originality?
3. How are the successive stages or periods of God's historical work of redemption illustrated by the history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?
4. Which is more important in the history of the patriarchs, their character or their function in the divine plan? Why?
5. How long after the famine of Abraham's day was the famine in Isaac's day?
6. Why did Isaac not enter Egypt in the time of famine?
7. What divine promises are renewed to Isaac?
8. What is the basis or ground of these promises?
9. Why is Abraham's obedience strongly stressed by the Lord immediately after giving the promises to Isaac?
10. What view do liberal critics take of the incident of Isaac representing Rebekah as his sister?
11. Why was this incident particularly shameful on Isaac's part?
12. How is God's common grace shown in this account?

LESSON 112

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

"Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him" (26:12). Isaac is the first of the patriarchs to engage in any form of agriculture, so far as is shown by the record. There is no record of Abraham planting seed or harvesting crops. This, therefore, is at least one element of originality in the life of Isaac. Isaac stands on the borderline between nomadic life and settled life. The bountiful harvest reaped was due, we are informed, to the blessing of the Lord.

"And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew till he became very great: for he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants; and the Philistines envied

him" (26:13,14). We know that Abraham was a rich man (13:2), but evidently Isaac's material wealth far surpassed that of his father. We may note in passing that the Bible never represents material wealth as an evil in itself. It is not sinful to possess wealth that has been honestly gained. What is sinful is rather (a) acquisition of wealth by dishonest means, and (b) godless and selfish use of wealth.

The possession of wealth, however, may create problems, and in Isaac's case it created a problem in that the Philistines came to envy his great prosperity. This envious attitude on the part of the Philistines, moreover, led to lawless action on their part: they filled in the wells which the servants of Abraham had dug. In a country where water supply is so critically important, this was a very provocative act. Moreover, this was an act motivated by pure spite. To cut off Isaac's water supply would certainly not benefit the

Philistines in any way. If the Philistines had merely claimed the wells as their own and refused Isaac's servants access to them, their action, though still lawless, could be regarded as motivated by need for water. But once the wells were filled in with earth they would be of use to no one — neither to Isaac nor to the Philistines.

Finally the Philistines add insult to injury and tell Isaac "Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we" (26:16). As Leupold remarks, this command was a combination of an ungracious attitude with flattery. Isaac is a man who seeks peace and pursues it. He therefore peaceably withdraws from the immediate locality and moves his establishment farther up the valley (southeast of Gerar). If the statement of the Philistines was true, that Isaac was much more powerful than they, he could have forced the issue and insisted on his rights. He prefers, instead, to avoid strife by not insisting upon his lawful rights.

In the new location, Isaac patiently undertakes the re-digging of some of the old wells originally dug by Abraham, which the Philistines had filled in with earth. These wells are presumably not the same ones as those nearer Gerar, which were mentioned in verse 15. The narrative seems to imply that Isaac abandoned some of the old wells, moved to a new location, and then proceeded to re-dig other old wells to ensure a water supply. We should realize that Isaac's large flocks and herds would range over a large tract of country and a great many wells were probably involved. Isaac re-names the re-opened wells, using the original names given to them by Abraham, thus establishing his rightful claim to them.

The new digging operations occasioned further trouble with the Philistines, however. Digging in the valley, Isaac's servants find a well of springing water, that is, running water. Obviously this new well belonged to Isaac, as his servants had dug it. Yet the Philistines claim it as theirs. So the well was named Esek, which means contention.

Again Isaac shows his great-hearted forbearance by abandoning the new (and valuable) well rather than let it be an occasion of strife. Another location is decided on; another well is dug; and again the Philistines claim it. Did they think Isaac was soft, or did they think he was really afraid of them? The arrogant and aggressive never understand the true motive of those who love peace and are willing to sacrifice for it. They regard the man of forbearance as an easy mark, to

be further imposed upon. Isaac calls the new well Sitnah (hostility), abandons it to the Philistines, and tries in another location.

"And he moved from thence" (26:22a). This presumably means that Isaac moved his entire establishment to a more distant location — a matter involving a good deal of work and trouble. Another well is dug, "and for that they strove not." The reason for this absence of strife is not stated. Perhaps it was the mere distance from Gerar; perhaps the Philistines were finally shamed into a measure of human decency. Isaac calls this last well Rehoboth, which means "Sufficient room." He states: "Now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" (26:22b). The statement about fruitfulness probably refers to numerical increase of the family (note verse 4).

Questions:

1. What new activity is ascribed to Isaac in 26:12?
2. What was the rate of increase obtained by Isaac?
3. To what is this productivity attributed by the record?
4. What was the economic status of Isaac at this time?
5. What is the Bible's attitude toward the possession of wealth?
6. What problem arose from Isaac's great wealth?
7. What lawless action was perpetrated by the Philistines?
8. What motive led the Philistines to act as they did?
9. How did the Philistines add insult to injury?
10. Why did Isaac not insist upon his legal rights?
11. How did Isaac notify the public of his lawful claim to the newly re-dug wells?
12. What is the meaning of the words Esek, Sitnah and Rehoboth?
13. What may have been the reason or reasons why the Philistines did not strive for the possession of the last well?

LESSON 113

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Next, Isaac went up to Beersheba. This place,

which formed the traditional southern limit of Palestine, is said to be actually of lower altitude than Gerar. It seems that "the general expression for approaching any part of Palestine from the southwest is to 'go up' " (Leupold).

"And the Lord appeared unto him the same night" (26:24a). This is the second and last time that the Lord is said to have appeared to Isaac (the first time was in 26:2). Just what the mode of this appearance was, we are not informed. We may be sure that a very deep impression was produced upon Isaac.

The covenant relationship is confirmed: "I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake" (26:24). We should note here the divine initiative and the unconditional character of this covenant promise. It is not an agreement between God and Isaac, by which God will do certain things if Isaac does certain things; rather, it is an absolute, unconditional statement of fact ("I am the God of Abraham thy father . . . I am with thee") and of promise ("I will bless thee, and multiply thy seed"). This is to be done "for my servant Abraham's sake," that is, because of God's gracious promise and oath to Abraham. The Biblical idea of a covenant between God and man is often obscured at the present day by speaking of this relationship as an "agreement" or a "compact" without at the same time bringing out clearly that the initiative is with God, all the power is of God, and all the terms are specified by God. Man is the recipient of the covenant relationship; God and man are never regarded as equals or negotiating parties. It is particularly important in our day to emphasize the sovereignty of God in the covenant relationship, because the overwhelming tendency of the day is to emphasize man — his decisions, activities, powers — rather than God.

Isaac responds to God's appearing to him, by building an altar at the place, and solemnly worshipping the Lord there ("called upon the name of the Lord") (26:25). The offering of sacrifice on the altar is not specifically mentioned, but is implied. An altar had no other use than to offer sacrifices on it. The modern metaphorical use of the term "altar", as for example in such expressions as "the family altar" (meaning the practice of family worship in the home) is unknown in the Bible. An altar in Scripture is a literal object on which literal sacrifices were offered. Only in the New Testament Epistles (Hebrews 13:10) is the concept of "an altar" spiritualized to refer to the benefits purchased by Christ's death on the cross. Something can be said for a return to the old term "family worship" in place of the more recently popular expression "family altar."

Isaac shows his devotion to the Lord by pitching his tent at or near the spot where the Lord appeared to him. Again his servants dig a well, this one being near the altar and Isaac's tent.

The next development is the establishment of a covenant between Isaac and the Philistines. The initiative in this was taken by Abimelech and his officers (26:26). It is possible that **Phicol** was a

standard Philistine title for the commander of the army. Isaac seems surprised that they approach him, and remarks that their action is inconsistent. They hate him, and have driven him away; yet they come seeking to establish a pact of friendship with him. It is quite understandable that Isaac should rebuke them in this manner. They well deserved it after the way they had treated Isaac.

The Philistine leaders then state their reason, which is that it is obvious that Isaac and his establishment are being specially blessed by the Lord. This being the case, they consider it advisable to be on good terms with him. Accordingly, they propose a pact in the form of a covenant ratified with an oath. Isaac is asked to pledge himself to do the Philistines no hurt. They add in support of this plea, "as we have done thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace." In view of the high-handed action of the Philistines in the disputes over the wells, this is a remarkable claim, to say the least. Leupold suggests that Abimelech and Phicol may have been indeed innocent of the matter about the wells. This, however, cannot excuse them, for the covenant which is sought is not to be between Isaac and these men as individuals, but between him representing his clan and them representing their nation. In this self-righteous claim of the Philistine leaders we have a specimen of the easy-going falsification of facts to which diplomatic negotiators are peculiarly liable. Someone has remarked that an ambassador is a man sent abroad to tell lies for his country. While this is of course an exaggeration, yet diplomatic negotiations have often been characterized by distortion and suppression of the truth.

Isaac no doubt realizes that the claim of Abimelech and Phicol ("we have done unto thee nothing but good") cannot be entirely sincere. However, argument over the matter would be useless, so the peace-loving Isaac does not dispute their claim, but agrees to their request for a covenant.

"And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. And they rose up betimes in the morning, and swore one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace" (26:30,31). According to the usual custom of the day in such matters, Isaac prepares a feast for his guests. Early the following morning the oaths are sworn by the two parties, after which Isaac lets them depart from him in peace. We see here in Isaac's readiness to do all in his power for the sake of peace. After the way the Philistines had treated him, he might have refused to have any dealings with them. But instead of this, he overlooks past wrongs and seeks a stable peace for the future.

It is worthy of note that the Philistines believe that Isaac will regard an oath as binding and

will keep his oath. Otherwise it would not have been worth while seeking an oath-bound covenant with him. Their dislike of Isaac did not keep them from recognizing that his religion involved a high ethical standard.

The pact between Isaac and the Philistines is to be regarded as a civil bond only and did not involve any compromise on Isaac's part with the religion of the Philistines, nor any religious fellowship between the two parties. Whether the Philistine leaders swore by the name of Jehovah or by the name of their own gods is not stated. At all events there is no evidence that Isaac raised any questions about this point.

Questions:

1. What place was the traditional southern limit of Palestine?
2. What experience did Isaac have at this place?
3. What is meant by "the divine initiative of the covenant promise"?
4. What is meant by the "unconditional character" of the covenant promise?
5. How does the common use of the terms "agreement" and "compact" tend to obscure the Biblical idea of a covenant between God and man?

6. What was Isaac's response to God's appearing to him?

7. What is an altar?

8. What should be thought about the common use of the term "family altar" to mean the practice of family worship?

9. What inconsistency did the Philistine leaders manifest in approaching Isaac?

10. Why did the Philistines consider it advisable to be on good terms with Isaac?

11. What claim did the Philistine leaders make concerning their past treatment of Isaac?

12. Why can this claim not be regarded as entirely sincere?

13. What request did the Philistines make of Isaac?

14. What was Isaac's response to their request?

15. What does Isaac's response show concerning his character?

16. What was the nature of the bond between Isaac and the Philistines?

LESSON 114

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

"And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day" (26:32, 33). The happy outcome of the search for water, on the very same day that the covenant had been sworn between Isaac and the Philistines, was of course not the result of chance, but the product of divine providence. This was a special blessing from God to Isaac who had certainly gone "the second mile" in seeking a peaceable existence. Isaac called the new well "Shebah". This word means "seven" or "an oath." Beer-sheba properly means "well of seven." There was apparently some connection between the idea of "seven" and the idea of "an oath." Note Gen. 21:30-32, where Abraham called the same place Beer-sheba ("well of the seven") because Abimelech had accepted seven ewe lambs from Abraham as a witness that Abraham had dug the well. Isaac in his time renamed the place, using the name given it by his father Abraham many years previously.

At this point Esau is mentioned. At the age of forty years he married two Hittite women, namely Judith the daughter of Beerli, and Basemath the daughter of Elon. Moses states that these Hittite wives of Esau "were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah" (26:34, 35). This double marriage with women of alien race and pagan religion indicates Esau's lack of concern for spiritual things. This is quite in keeping with Esau's attitude in despising his birthright. Esau has a godly background but he is interested in the things of the world, not in the things of God. While presumably claiming to be a believer in Jehovah, Esau is one of those people who do not intend to let their religion get in their way. He is a specimen of those who profess to serve God, but actually conform their lives to the world's standards.

What was it about Esau's Hittite wives that caused grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah? Among other things, Esau's polygamy may have grieved his parents. Apart from that, it was doubtless the corrupt pagan religious and moral standards of these women. There is no reason to suppose that these Hittite women became believers in Jehovah, nor that Esau was inclined to seek their conversion to the Lord. Mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers are forbidden

in the Word of God. Apart from the fact that they are wrong because forbidden by God, such marriages are open to the most serious objection because of the well-known fact that the almost invariable result is that the believer is influenced by the standards of the unbeliever, rather than *vice versa*.

Chapter 27 opens with Isaac in advanced age, his eyesight failing — if indeed he was not already totally blind. The patriarch's age at this point is computed as 137 years (cf. 25:26; 31:38; 41:46; 47:9). At this same time Jacob was about 77 years old, and Esau of course was of the same age. The common idea that Jacob at the time of his going to Laban was a mere youth in his teens is therefore contrary to the facts.

Isaac evidently feels that his death is approaching. It is possible that he was influenced by the fact that his half-brother Ishmael had died at the age of 137 years (25:17). As a matter of fact, Isaac lived 43 more years, and died at the age of 180 years (35:28, 29). But the patriarch of course did not know that he still had 43 years to live. Some commentators have supposed that Isaac had been sick and that this led him to suppose that his death was near.

Believing that he would soon die (27:2) Isaac calls for his son Esau, who seems to have been his favorite. Esau is commanded to take his bow and arrows and shoot a deer, that he may prepare venison such as Isaac loved. Isaac will eat the venison and bless Esau before he dies.

This raises the problem how Isaac could propose to give the blessing to Esau, knowing as he did that God had chosen Jacob (25:23). True, Isaac's action is overruled by God, and Jacob gets the blessing, but still we cannot understand how as godly a man as Isaac could disregard so clear

a revelation of God's purpose as 25:23. Leupold's comment is perhaps the best explanation possible: "He that knows the duplicity and treachery of the human heart will not find it difficult to understand how a man will circumvent a word of God, no matter how clear it be, if his heart is really set on what is at variance with that word" (Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, II, p. 736).

Questions:

1. What happy event occurred the same day that Isaac made a covenant with Abimelech?
2. What is the lesson taught by this event?
3. What is the meaning of Shebah? Of Beer-sheba?
4. Whom did Esau marry at the age of forty years?
5. What was the effect of Esau's marriage on Isaac and Rebekah?
6. What does Esau's marriage show concerning his character and standards?
7. What objections can be urged against mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers?
8. How old was Isaac at the opening of Chapter 27?
9. How old was Jacob at this same time?
10. What was Isaac's physical condition at the time?
11. What may have led him to think he would die soon?
12. How can we explain Isaac's preferential treatment of Esau when he knew the divine revelation of 25:23?

LESSON 115

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The History of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Isaac's request for venison reminds us that conditions have changed vastly in Palestine since the days of the Patriarchs. There is little or no forest in Palestine today except the rank jungle at the bottom of the Jordan Valley. In Patriarchal times, however, a large part of the country was still wooded. The watershed ridge and the western slope were heavily forested (Unger, *Archeology and the Old Testament*, p. 113).

It seems to have been a custom of those times that pious men should pronounce a formal blessing upon their sons before their death. In the case of ordinary godly people, such blessing would be the expression of pious wishes, or perhaps we

could regard them as equivalent to a prayer. But the blessing which Isaac proposed to pronounce upon his son involves more than this. It involves a supernatural factor and is really a prophecy. We may say that it is not merely a wish or a prayer for the blessing, but a conferring of the blessing. God would honor it and it would come true in due time. That the blessing was regarded as being supernaturally effective is proved by Isaac's statement in 27:33 ("I have blessed him. Yea, and he shall be blessed").

The question has been asked, Why did Isaac want to partake of specially prepared venison before pronouncing the patriarchal blessing? Some have suggested that he needed this to get bodily strength to pronounce a good blessing. Others have supposed that it was needed for a psychological reason, to get Isaac in the proper mood for the occasion. Leupold rejects both of these

ideas, holding that the probable reason was that a festive meal would impart solemnity to the occasion.

The expression "that my soul may bless thee" requires some explanation. While the word "soul" is often used without any distinctive meaning, being simply the equivalent of "I" or "me," still in the present case more seems to be meant than merely "that I may bless thee." The use of the word "soul" here seems to imply that Isaac's inner or deepest personality would participate in imparting the blessing on his son.

Esau, as instructed, has gone off to the hills to hunt deer. Meantime, Rebekah becomes active. She was eavesdropping when Isaac gave his instructions to Esau. Immediately she forms a scheming plot to gain the blessing for Jacob, her favorite son, instead of Esau. The story of how Rebekah conspired with Jacob to deceive Isaac is too well known to require long discussion. Goat meat is to be prepared as imitation venison; Jacob is to be fitted out with goat-skin to make him resemble his hairy brother Esau; Jacob is to impersonate Esau and gain the blessing by deceiving his blind father as to his identity.

As to the cleverness of this scheme there can be no question. Its cleverness is shown by the fact that it worked. The ethics of Rebekah's clever plan are however open to serious question. Calvin in his Commentary on Genesis is very outspoken as to the wrongness of Rebekah's action: "And surely the stratagem of Rebekah was not without fault; for although she could not guide her husband by salutary counsel, yet it was not a legitimate method of acting, to circumvent him by such deceit. For, as a lie is in itself culpable, she sinned more grievously still in this, that she desired to sport in a sacred matter with such wiles. She knew that the decree by which Jacob had been elected and adopted was immutable; why then does she not patiently wait till God shall

confirm it in fact, and shall show that what he had once pronounced from heaven is certain? Therefore, she darkens the celestial oracle by her lie, and abolishes, as far as she was able, the grace promised to her son." Calvin goes on to say that Rebekah's motive was a good one, even though her method was wrong. She was actuated by faith in the revealed promise of God.

Jacob, instructed by his mother, cooperates in her plan. The imitation venison is prepared; the rough goat skins are placed upon Jacob's smooth hands and neck. Thus prepared and coached by his mother, he enters his blind father's presence intent upon obtaining the patriarchal blessing by deceit.

Questions:

1. How much of Palestine was forested in patriarchal times?
2. How much of Palestine is forested at the present day?
3. What custom is reflected in Isaac's desire to bless his son?
4. How did the blessing pronounced by Isaac differ from the blessing any godly father might invoke upon his son?
5. What may have been Isaac's reason for wishing to partake of venison before blessing Esau?
6. What is implied by the use of the word "soul" in the expression "that my soul may bless thee"?
7. What was Rebekah's scheme for getting the patriarchal blessing for Jacob?
8. What can be said about the ethics of Rebekah's scheme?
9. What was Calvin's view of Rebekah's actions?

LESSON 116

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The History of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

When Rebekah's scheme was first proposed to her son Jacob, he raised an objection: "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing" (27:12). It should be noted here that Jacob is not objecting to the use of deceit on the ground that it is wrong, but because of the probability of getting caught. He does not shrink from sin, but only from the consequences of sin. This shows us how far short Jacob fell at this time from God's

standard of moral uprightness. He is not worried about the sin of deceiving his father, but only about the difficulty of doing so successfully.

As for his mother Rebekah, her aim was clearly to obtain the covenant blessing for her son Jacob. That Jacob was destined to have this blessing was already a certainty, from the divine revelation and promise of 25:23. But Rebekah feels that she must do something to help make the promise come true, and she does not hesitate to use means which are sinful to accomplish her purpose. Rebekah in this situation is therefore doing evil that good may come. This was overruled by God and all worked out toward the accomplishment of the real divine plan. But certainly this history, with its use of unethical means, should serve to remind us that God's election is

not based upon man's character and conduct but upon the sovereign grace of God. God did not choose these people because they were morally upright; on the contrary, they finally became upright because God had chosen them.

The fact that all this history was the working out of the purpose of God, of course in no way excuses the human sin that was involved. God makes the wrath of man to praise Him, it is true, but man is guilty nonetheless. Nor can unethical methods, such as the use of deceit, be excused because they are used with the intention of accomplishing a good purpose.

In addition to the goat skin disguise, Jacob was also dressed in Esau's clothes (27:15). These were "goodly garments", that is, they were Esau's better clothes, which he would wear on special occasions. Thus Rebekah overlooks nothing that might help to deceive her husband.

The imitation venison is ready at last, and Jacob, fully disguised, takes the meat, with bread, to his father Isaac. In the next few minutes Jacob tells one lie after another (verses 19, 20, 24). Particularly outrageous is Jacob's lie in answer to the question how he had killed a deer so quickly (verse 20): "Because the Lord thy God brought it to me." Leupold calls this "almost the most flagrant instance of abuse of the divine name recorded anywhere in the Scriptures." Jacob attributes to God's providence what in reality was only his own deceit.

Although Isaac is somewhat suspicious, especially because "the voice is Jacob's voice" (27:22), he finally decides that the weight of the evidence shows that it is Esau that he is dealing with. Accordingly, he eats the venison and drinks

the wine which Jacob has brought, and then proceeds to pronounce the patriarchal blessing upon him.

"And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him. . ." (27:26, 27). This is the first occurrence in the Bible of the kiss as a token of love. Jacob does not hesitate to use this token of love as a part of his program of deceit. We recall the treachery of Joab (2 Sam. 20:9, 10) and the base act of Judas in betraying our Lord with a kiss (Luke 22:47, 48).

Questions:

1. What objection did Jacob raise to his mother's scheme?
2. What was Jacob seeking to avoid?
3. Why is it wrong to do evil that good may come?
4. What does this story, with its use of unethical means, show concerning God's election?
5. Why is not sin excusable on the ground that it accomplishes God's purpose in the end?
6. What disguise did Jacob use in addition to goat skin on his hands and neck?
7. How many lies did Jacob tell after entering his father's presence?
8. Why is Jacob's lie recorded in 27:20 particularly flagrant?
9. What was shameful in Jacob's kissing his father?
10. What parallels exist in the Bible to Jacob's misuse of the kiss?

LESSON 117

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 ham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The History of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

The blessing which Isaac pronounced upon Jacob is recorded in 27:27-29. The language used is poetical, as shown both by poetic Hebrew words and by the parallel structure. While Hebrew poetry is devoid of rhyme and does not have metre as we think of it, it is marked by parallelism, that is, by expressing the same thought over again in different words. Note the parallels which occur in these three verses:

"God give thee of the dew of heaven — and the fatness of the earth."

"Let people serve thee — and nations bow down to thee."

"Be lord over thy brethren — and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee."

"Cursed be every one that curseth thee — and blessed be he that blesseth thee."

Sometimes the second member of a parallelism expresses the same thought as the first member, sometimes a similar but slightly different thought, and sometimes a contrasting thought.

Isaac has caught the smell of fragrant herbs from Esau's clothes which Jacob is wearing. He uses this thought to suggest the blessings which will come to Jacob from the Lord: "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed" (27:27). Naturally the good smell of earth and fields calls to mind the kindness of God. The blessings mentioned by Isaac are partly natural, and partly social or political. Fertile soil, abundant harvests — these are the natural blessings. The social and political are expressed in verse 29. Jacob (whom Isaac supposes to be Esau) is to be lord over his brethren. Besides this, those who curse him shall be

cursed, and those who bless him shall be blessed.

Isaac's blessing pronounced upon Jacob is remarkable for what it leaves out as well as for what it contains. To understand this we must keep in mind the fact that Isaac thinks he is blessing Esau. The missing element is the redemptive or Messianic promise. In Gen. 12:3 the Lord says to Abraham, "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: **and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.**" This last promise, of course, implies that the Saviour of the world shall be born from the seed of Abraham. Later it was revealed to Abraham that this Messianic or redemptive promise should be transmitted to the future through Isaac: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (21:12b). Still later, divine revelation granted to Rebekah had made it clear that the Messianic promise is to be transmitted through Jacob, not through Esau (Gen. 25:23; Mal. 1:2, 3; Rom. 9:11-13). Isaac of course knew that the future of God's redemptive program was tied to Jacob, not Esau. He naturally does not dare disregard the revelation of Gen. 25:23. If he had known that he was blessing Jacob, it would have been another matter. But as matters stood, Isaac thinks he is pronouncing a blessing upon Esau. Esau is his favorite and he wants to give him the best possible blessing, short of actually contradicting the revealed purpose of God. This may explain why the Messianic promise of 12:3b is not found at the close of 27:29. In 28:4, where Isaac knows that he is dealing with Jacob not Esau, he does not hesitate to invoke "the blessing of Abraham" upon Jacob. This "blessing of Abraham" is of course the special covenant blessing which included the Messianic promise.

LESSON 118

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Isaac has barely finished blessing Jacob (whom he supposes to be Esau), and Jacob has barely withdrawn from his father's tent, when the real Esau appears (27:30), having prepared real venison for his father to enjoy. Isaac is naturally surprised, and when the new arrival emphatically asserts that he is Esau, "Isaac trembled very exceedingly" (27:33). If he had previously had some suspicions, they are now confirmed by a rude and sudden shock. In his intense emotional shock, he asks "Who?" But it could not have taken more than a moment for Isaac to realize that there could be only one answer to his question "Who?" Jacob is the only person in the world who could have impersonated Esau and obtained his father's blessing by trickery. So before the end of verse 33 it is clear that Isaac realizes that he has been deceived by

It was a fine blessing that Jacob received, even though it did not include the "blessing of Abraham" and even though it was marred by the unethical manner in which Jacob and Rebekah had acted in connection with it. All of this would be overruled by God for the accomplishment of His redemptive purpose. And by the grace of God Jacob would eventually become honest and upright in his character and conduct. As Augustine said, the grace of God does not find men fit for salvation, but makes them so.

Questions:

1. How is the poetical character of the blessing which Isaac pronounced on Jacob shown?
2. How does Hebrew poetry differ from English poetry?
3. What is meant by "parallelism" in Hebrew poetry?
4. What instances of parallelism can be seen in the blessing?
5. What did the odor of Esau's clothing, being worn by Jacob, call to Isaac's mind?
6. In the blessing pronounced upon Jacob, what two elements can be distinguished?
7. What element is conspicuously absent from the blessing which Isaac pronounced upon Jacob?
8. Why would Isaac hesitate to pronounce the Messianic or redemptive blessing upon Esau?
9. What was included in the "blessing of Abraham"?

Jacob. At the same time it would quickly dawn on his mind that God's purpose was operative in what had happened. He had known for a long time that the divine redemptive promise would be for Jacob not for Esau. Now Isaac realizes that he has blessed Jacob in spite of himself — his own plan of blessing Esau has only resulted in the plan of God being fulfilled. So he concludes, "Yea, and he shall be blessed" (27:33b).

Esau, realizing that Jacob has obtained the blessing by deceit, makes a desperate attempt to get the blessing after all. He cries with "a great and exceeding bitter cry" (27:34). In the New Testament we are told that Esau "found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:17). This verse is more accurately translated in the American Revised Version (1901) as follows: "For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for a change of mind in his father, though he sought it diligently with tears." The word "repentance" here means "change of mind" and the reference is to

Isaac, not to Esau. Esau could not get Isaac to change his mind, though he implored his father with tears. The same New Testament passage declares that Esau was a profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. This makes it clear that there was a necessary connection between the birthright and the blessing. When Esau sold the one, he lost his right to claim the other. His readiness to part with the birthright marks him as a profane person — a person who regards sacred things as common.

As a matter of fact, therefore, Esau has no ground to stand on in his weeping plea to his father. He voluntarily renounced the birthright, and with it the claim to the blessing, in exchange for a common meal. His air of injured innocence on discovering what Jacob has done is the frustration of a man whose own deeds have caught up with him, rather than a genuine sense of outrage at real injustice.

For the deceit and conspiracy had not all been practiced by Jacob and Rebekah. The fact is that Esau and Isaac have been having a sort of conspiracy of their own, with the intention of gaining the blessing for Esau in spite of the divine revelation of 25:23 and in spite of Esau's own sale of the birthright to Jacob. "Isaac and Esau, though not admitting that it was so, were conspiring to deflect to Esau a blessing both knew he had forfeited, in fact, was never destined to have" (Leupold). For it is almost incredible that Isaac could have been ignorant of the sale of the birthright.

In view of the facts, Esau really has no basis for his charge in verse 36: "Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing." This casual reference to the birthright, without explanation, indicates that Isaac already knew about it. But Esau's charge that Jacob "took away" the birthright was false, and is contrary to the inspired statements of Scripture on the matter. The truth was, Esau had voluntarily sold the birthright to Jacob. Scripture tells us that Esau

despised his birthright (Gen. 25:34). Therefore, even though he may have regretted the sale of the birthright, he is wrong in charging Jacob with taking it away. And the "taking away" of the blessing was subordinate to the bargain about the birthright, as Hebrews 12 implies.

In Esau's attitude, therefore, we see the common tendency of sinful man to justify himself and blame others when things go wrong. Instead of admitting any guilt himself, Esau roundly accuses Jacob of wrongdoing. It is an old pattern, going clear back to that early day when Adam tried to place the blame for his disobedience to God on Eve.

Questions:

1. What was Isaac's reaction when the real Esau came into his presence?
2. What did Isaac realize concerning God's working, when he found that he had blessed Jacob instead of Esau?
3. What was Esau's reaction to the discovery that Jacob had obtained the blessing before him?
4. What does the New Testament tell us about Esau's conduct on this occasion?
5. What is the correct translation of "found no place of repentance"?
6. What is meant by the statement that Esau was a profane person?
7. Why is it true that Esau had no ground to stand on in his tearful plea to his father?
8. What must be the true explanation of Esau's air of injured innocence?
9. Besides the conspiracy of Rebekah and Jacob, what conspiracy had been going on?
10. Why was Esau's charge that Jacob "took away" the birthright a false charge?
11. What common pattern of sinful man is exhibited by Esau on this occasion?

LESSON 119

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Isaac's mind cannot be changed, just because the purpose of God cannot be changed. Isaac "trembled very exceedingly" when he suddenly realized how the mysterious working of God's providence had frustrated his own desires and accomplished God's desires.

Esau, however, does not drop the matter. He still seeks a blessing: "Hast thou not reserved a

blessing for me?" (27:36). While realizing that the special blessing he had wanted is gone and cannot be regained, he hopes to get at least something out of the situation. Isaac replies, enumerating the good things which have been conferred upon Jacob (27:37). With further weeping Esau implores his father to give him also a blessing. Leupold comments that here Esau's attitude seems to be superstitious; he is overvaluing the blessing, as though everything in life depended on it alone. Esau did not appreciate spiritual things, and as for worldly success, his life turned out to be quite successful without the blessing

which Jacob had gained. Still, Esau is bitterly disappointed. No doubt during the hunting trip while out hunting deer he had felt quite optimistic about his prospects for gaining the paternal blessing and so outwitting Jacob after all. But now all his hopes have been frustrated, and he feels very sorry for himself.

Finally, Isaac pronounces a blessing on Esau also. But it is a second-rate blessing (27:39,40); in fact, it is more a prophecy than a blessing. We are to regard this, as in the case of the blessing on Jacob, as uttered under prophetic inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What God had planned and foreordained, He also announced beforehand through these prophetic utterances on the part of the patriarch Isaac. The remarkable manner in which both utterances have been fulfilled down through the centuries of history is sufficient to show us that there is here something much deeper than a mere expression and some pious wishes of Isaac.

Esau's dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. The "of" which occurs twice in verse 39 may be translated "away from" (so American Revised Version margin). This transaction "away from" is probably correct and makes Isaac's utterance much easier to understand. The meaning would then be: "Behold, thy dwelling shall be away from the fatness of the earth, and away from the dew of heaven from above". That is, the homeland of Esau and his descendants is to be the desert, not the fertile land of Canaan. As a matter of fact it turned out that way. Esau's descendants were the Edomites who are represented today by some of the Arabs.

"And by thy sword shalt thou live" (27:40a) — this is a prophecy of a life of conflict and strife. And in spite of the power of Esau's sword, he shall serve his brother (the meaning, of course, is that Esau's descendants shall serve Jacob's descendants). This came to pass, for from the time of King David the land of Edom was subject to Israel. Eventually, about 126 B. C., the Jews completely conquered the Edomites (or Idumeans) and compelled them to receive circumcision. The notorious Herod family, some of whose members are prominent in the New Testament, were Edomites or Idumeans who had become Jews.

"And it shall come to pass when thou shalt

have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck" (27:40b). Here Esau is promised that eventually his descendants shall become free from the dominion of the descendants of Jacob. If we inquire when this was fulfilled, the year 63 B. C., when the Jews became subject to Rome, may be mentioned. After that date the Jews were not truly independent but were under the power of Rome. In 70 A. D. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans and the Jewish state completely liquidated. In the 7th century after Christ the new religion of Mohammedanism or Islam appeared, and the Arab peoples increasingly dominated the life of the Near East. So it is clear that Esau has indeed thrown off Jacob's yoke.

Questions:

1. What may have been the cause of Isaac's violent trembling?
2. What new plea does Esau make to his father?
3. What was Isaac's answer to his son's tearful plea?
4. Is it correct to say that Esau overvalued the blessing?
5. How can we explain Esau's sudden disappointment?
6. What is the character of the blessing which Isaac finally pronounces upon Esau?
7. How can we know that these blessings were uttered by prophetic inspiration and were not merely human wishes?
8. How should the statements of verse 39 about Esau's dwelling be translated?
9. How has the prophecy of verse 39 been historically fulfilled?
10. What is meant by the statement that Esau would live by his sword?
11. What is meant by the prediction that Esau would serve his brother?
12. How was this prediction fulfilled in later history?
13. How has the prediction of Esau breaking Jacob's yoke off his neck been historically fulfilled?

LESSON 120

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

"And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father had blessed him: and

Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob" (27:41). In Esau's attitude toward his brother Jacob we have further evidence that he was indeed "a profane person." That Esau was displeased by the way things had turned out is understandable, but that he should give way to

bitter hatred and plan to murder his brother shows that he was not actuated by fear of God. Thinking that Isaac's death cannot be very far in the future, Esau proposes to bide his time. He will not break the old father's heart by killing Jacob during Isaac's lifetime. But once Isaac is dead, Esau proposes to murder Jacob. Our Lord Jesus Christ said "he that hateth his brother is a murderer." Esau first hated his brother, then planned to murder him. As a matter of fact, this murderous intention was never carried out, but that does not lessen Esau's guilt for his hatred and evil intention.

Esau evidently did not keep this plan of murdering Jacob to himself, for someone reported Esau's words to Rebekah. Possibly Esau relieved his feelings somewhat by talking to others and telling what he intended to do to his deceitful, supplanting brother. Herein we see Esau's foolishness. If he had kept quiet he might have been able to kill Jacob, although of course it was many years before Isaac died. A man who is planning a murder should be more careful about talking about it in advance of the deed. But Esau talked, and Rebekah learned of his intentions, and she in turn informed Jacob: "Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee" (27:42). This is a grim kind of "comfort" but no doubt it is psychologically true to life. Rebekah warns Jacob, in order to frustrate Esau's design. She tells Jacob to flee to her brother Laban in Mesopotamia, and "tarry with him a few days" until Esau's murderous anger could cool off. Then Rebekah would send for Jacob to come home again.

From Jacob's point of view this was undoubtedly a wise plan. However the "few days" mentioned by Rebekah turned out to be twenty years or more. As a matter of fact, Jacob and his mother never saw each other again after his departure to Mesopotamia, so far as can be known from the record.

"Why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?" (27:45b). If Esau should succeed in killing Jacob, it would be highly probable that an "avenger of blood" would soon kill Esau, and thus Rebekah would lose both of her sons.

Rebekah's plan has been disclosed to Jacob, who apparently agreed to it without question. Now the matter must be presented to Isaac in such a way as to win his approval. We may assume that Isaac was somewhat provoked by Jacob's recent conduct in obtaining the blessing by deceit. Even though Isaac well knew that this was really the plan of God, still he would probably feel some resentment against the son who had taken such a shameless advantage of his aged, blind father. Therefore Rebekah presents the matter to Isaac in as favorable a light as possible.

It would not do, of course, to tell Isaac the

real reason why she wanted Jacob to leave home. So Rebekah very subtly mentions another reason entirely. She says: "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" (27:46). Rebekah's statement about the Hittite women no doubt reflects her bad impression of Esau's Hittite wives mentioned at the end of chapter 26. Even though Rebekah had good reason for her attitude toward the "daughters of Heth," still her use of this as a reason for sending Jacob to Mesopotamia, without telling her real reason to Isaac, involves an element of insincerity and lack of frankness. There is evidently something less than perfect sympathy and understanding between Isaac and Rebekah. She gives a reason which would have been a sufficient reason, but as a matter of fact it was not her real reason.

Did Isaac know that Esau was planning to kill Jacob? It is possible that he did, either at this time or later; however there is no evidence that he knew. If he had known, he could perhaps have done something to restrain Esau. At any rate, Isaac readily agrees to Rebekah's proposal, which indeed appeared very pious and praiseworthy. Accordingly, Jacob is summoned to his father's tent and there told to avoid marriage with the Canaanite women, but instead to journey to Padanaram to the house of his grandfather Bethuel, to obtain a wife from the daughters of Laban his mother's brother.

"And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham" (28:3,4). The term here translated "God Almighty" is *El Shaddai* (cf. 17:1; 35:11; 48:3; Ex. 6:3). This divine name stresses the sovereignty and power of God. Salvation and all blessings depend ultimately upon the fact that God is almighty. Without the almighty power of God there could be no Christianity. Note here how God is regarded as the source of all good and the one who takes the initiative and carries out the redemptive purpose. God is the Agent of redemption; man is only the recipient of redemption. So everything is ascribed to God. It would be an anachronism to call Isaac a Calvinist, yet Calvinism is precisely that system which ascribes all our salvation and good solely to the power and grace of God. The Reformed or Calvinistic theology is deeply rooted in the Biblical conception of God, which is so clearly exemplified by such passages as the one we are considering.

Questions:

1. What was Esau's attitude toward Jacob

when he found that Jacob had succeeded in obtaining the blessing?

2. What does Esau's attitude show concerning his real character?

3. Was Esau really a murderer?

4. How did Rebekah know what Esau was planning to do?

5. What course of action does Rebekah enjoin upon Jacob?

6. How did Rebekah gain Isaac's consent for Jacob's journey?

7. What may be said about the ethics of Rebekah's way of gaining Isaac's consent?

8. What is the Hebrew term for God which is translated as "God Almighty" in verse 3?

9. What does this divine name emphasize concerning God?

10. What is the relation of the idea of God represented by this name to the Biblical doctrine of salvation?

LESSON 121

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

The blessing now given to Jacob on the occasion of his departure to go to Mesopotamia is "the blessing of Abraham" (28:4). Therefore it includes the specifically Messianic element. Isaac is now no longer seeking to give the main blessing to Esau contrary to the plan of God. He now willingly and freely invokes the Messianic blessing on Jacob. This promise includes a numerous posterity and the possession of the land of Canaan. By implication it includes what God had promised in addition to Abraham, namely that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed—that is, that the redemption of the world from sin would finally come through one descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Thus blessed by his father Jacob leaves home for Padan-aram where his uncle Laban lived.

The next few verses tell about the further profaneness of Esau (28:6-9). The more we see of Esau the clearer it becomes that there is a radical spiritual difference between him and those who truly know the Lord. He is a sample of those with a covenant background and environment who turn to the ways of the world and commit sin without conscientious scruples.

Esau must have known, of course, that Jacob was being sent away to a foreign country to get a wife. He must have known, also, that his grandfather Abraham would not allow a marriage with a Canaanite woman to be arranged for Isaac. He doubtless also knew that Isaac had commanded Jacob not to marry a Canaanite woman (28:1), for it is recorded that he observed Jacob's obedience to this command of his father (verses 6, 7). Besides all this, Esau has become aware that "the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father" (verse 8), although he himself had already married two of them (26:34, 35). We might suppose that Esau would have realized long before what was objectionable about the women of

Canaan. But Esau is spiritually dull and stupid; he is spiritually obtuse. His covenant standing means nothing to him; he cannot see any reason why the people of God should be different from the world.

Finally realizing that his Hittite wives were not pleasing to his parents, Esau tries to remedy the situation, but not in a way that would do any real good. He takes a third wife, this time not from the Hittites, but from the stock of Ishmael. Had Esau been in the least spiritually alert and sensitive he would have realized that this was no real remedy for the wrongness of his marriage to Hittite women. Perhaps a woman of the Ishmaelite stock might be better than the Hittites or other Canaanites, but Esau's action was still not really in line with God's requirements. As Leupold points out, Esau allows the previous evil to continue "and merely adds something that may be half right" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 770).

"And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran" (28:10). The last clause may be translated "and came to Haran." The verse exemplifies something that is common in the Old Testament, namely the use of a topic sentence which briefly states the whole matter, after which the details are given in following sentences.

"And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night" (28:11). The common notion that this was Jacob's first stopping place after leaving home is without foundation. This "certain place" was the locality originally called Luz, and later named Bethel. It was a good 70 miles or more from Beer-sheba. Obviously Jacob could not have travelled that far in a single day. The record does not state that he was travelling on foot, nor on the other hand does it mention his riding a donkey or other beast. Even if mounted, however, he could not cover the 70 mile distance in one day. Moreover, there was no need for urgent haste. Esau's plan was not to murder Jacob at once, but only after the death of Isaac. So we may conclude that the night at Bethel, where Jacob had his vision of the ladder, was

perhaps his third or fourth night away from home.

Questions:

1. What was included in the blessing invoked on Jacob on the occasion of his departure from home?

2. What was Esau's reaction to Jacob's departure to obtain a wife in Mesopotamia?

3. What does this reveal concerning Esau's character?

4. From what people does Esau take his third wife?

5. How should Esau's third marriage be regarded, in the light of God's standards?

6. What literary device common in the Old Testament is exemplified by 28:10?

7. How may the last clause of verse 10 be translated?

8. How far was the "certain place" mentioned in verse 11 from Beer-sheba?

9. How long may this have been after Jacob's departure from home?

LESSON 122

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Jacob has reached a "certain place" (which we later learn was called Luz, later called Bethel), and because the sun had set, he stops there all night. No doubt Jacob was accustomed to a shepherd's outdoor life and would not hesitate to sleep under the stars with a stone for a headrest. It is said that shepherds in Palestine and Syria often do the same at the present day.

During that night Jacob dreams a dream of a ladder set up on the earth, the top of which reaches heaven, and the angels of God are seen ascending and descending on it. This is the first known divine revelation granted to Jacob, but by no means the last. The ladder seen in the dream was alluded to by our Lord in his statement to Nathanael (John 1:51). In view of this statement of our Lord, we may say that the ladder seen by Jacob represents Christ, the Mediator between God and man, who bridges the gap between heaven and earth.

What Jacob saw in his dream was accompanied by what he heard. "And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. . . ." (28:13). God reveals Himself to Jacob, not simply as God, but as Jehovah, the God of Abraham and Isaac — the God, therefore, of the gracious covenant promises.

These gracious promises are now repeated and confirmed to Jacob. What was implied in the "blessing of Abraham" invoked upon the departing Jacob by Isaac, is now specifically promised to Jacob by God Himself. As in the case of Abraham, three great promises are included: (1) the promise of inheritance of the land; (2) the promise of a very numerous posterity; and (3) the promise that in Jacob and his seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. We have already considered the meaning of these promises in a previous lesson on the history of Abraham.

To these great covenant promises there is now added another which specifically promises divine guidance and protection to Jacob: "And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (28:15).

We should note the sovereign, gracious, unconditional character of these promises made to Jacob. God takes the initiative and undertakes to bring all these things to pass. The promises are not made contingent upon Jacob's faithfulness; rather, they proceed from God's faithfulness. This divine initiative and monergism (it all starts with God and all the power is of God) is the very heart of what is known as Calvinism or the Reformed Faith. Calvin did not invent this theology; neither did Augustine or the Apostle Paul. It is deeply imbedded in the Scriptures, and in the Old Testament no less than in the New. Calvinism does not depend upon a special interpretation of a few selected texts; it is the very warp and woof of the Bible, it is woven into its very texture and built into its very structure.

It has been held by some commentators that Jacob must have repented of his misdeeds and wrong attitudes before this revelation of God could have been granted to him. If he had repented already, there is no mention of it in the passage. The only thing that could in anyway suggest it is the fact that he obeyed his father and mother in leaving home. But this does not necessarily imply any spiritual change on Jacob's part. To leave home was the sensible thing to do, in view of the fact that Esau was planning to kill him. Whether Jacob was at this point truly repentant and truly in a right subjective relationship to God, we cannot say. But at any rate we are safe in saying that his receiving a revelation from God does not imply that he was already repentant. It can with equal plausibility be argued that Jacob's repentance was the result of his having been granted this revelation.

Questions:

1. Why would it not be a great hardship for Jacob to sleep under the stars with a stone for a head-rest?
2. What did Jacob see in his dream?
3. What statement of Christ contains an allusion to Jacob's dream?
4. What may the ladder have symbolized?
5. How did God introduce Himself to Jacob?

6. What three great promises were confirmed to Jacob?
7. What special additional promise was given to him?
8. What is meant by the divine initiative and monergism?
9. What is meant by saying that the promises made to Jacob were sovereign, gracious and unconditional?
10. What can be said about the question of whether Jacob had repented of his sins before he received this revelation from God?

LESSON 123**III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.****4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.**

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (28:16, 17). Jacob's reaction to the divine revelation is a reverential awe. Jacob's statement, "the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not," must not be taken as implying that Jacob thought of God as limited to a particular locality. The Hebrew patriarchs knew more about God than modern critical scholars are willing to concede to them. Jacob must have had some knowledge of the spirituality and omnipresence of God. God is everywhere, He fills all things (this is sometimes called the cosmic presence of God). But God does not manifest Himself everywhere as the Lord, Jehovah, the covenant God of grace and redemption and revelation. Jacob's statement, "the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not" means "This is a place where God manifests Himself as Jehovah; I had not realized that before."

"How dreadful is this place!" Jacob is filled with awe and wonder. This sense of awe and wonder seems to be largely lacking from the popular religion of our own day. Many people — sometimes even ministers in their public prayers — seem overly familiar in their approaches to God. Whereas the Bible speaks constantly of the fear of God, people today prefer to speak of religion as "a personal relationship to God" or "accepting Christ" — modes of expression which tend to obscure the divine majesty, and to regard God and man as more or less equal partners in a project.

"This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (28:17b). It was "the house of God" and "the gate of heaven" because in that spot God had supernaturally revealed

Himself as Jehovah, the God of redemption. And surely such a spot would be regarded as holy ground. For God might reveal Himself there again; or at any rate, it would be a suitable spot for worshipping God and offering sacrifices to Him.

In the morning, Jacob set up the stone that he had used for a head-rest as a marker to identify the spot. He poured oil on the top of it, as a sign that it was marked as sacred and special. Possibly the oil may be regarded as a sort of token sacrifice (cf. 35:14), though this is not certain.

Jacob named the place Bethel, which means "House of God" ("Beth" means "house" and "El" means "God"). Moses adds that the name of the city was originally Luz. Presumably Jacob had slept out in the open country. The city mentioned, if it had already been built, must have been located somewhere not far away; or it is possible that it was built by the Canaanites between the time of Jacob and the time of Moses, and called Luz by the Canaanites, though the site was called Bethel by Jacob (and, of course, by the later Israelites).

Next we read of Jacob's vow. This is part of his response to the divine revelation with its gracious promises. Since God has promised him safety, protection and everything needful, so that he is assured of returning home to his father's house in peace, Jacob confesses "then shall the Lord be my God." Spurgeon once preached a remarkable sermon upon the brief phrase "My God" which occurs many times in the Scriptures. To possess God as "my God" in the true sense is to have the sum total of all good — forgiveness, salvation, eternal life, all are included in this covenant relationship to the living God. God has granted gracious promises to Jacob. Jacob responds by declaring that Jehovah shall be his God.

This confession of Jehovah as "his God" will be outwardly manifested in two ways. First, the stone which has been set up shall remain as a

marker of a spot dedicated to the worship of Jehovah; and secondly, of all that God gives Jacob, he will surely give the tenth part back to God.

The "if" in verse 20 should be understood in the sense of "since" or "because" — "inasmuch as". Jacob is not bargaining with God and trying to obtain blessings on a commercial basis. The blessings have already been promised him upon an absolutely unconditional and gracious basis, which Jacob doubtless understood. In verses 20-22 Jacob is not bargaining with God; he is responding to God's gracious promises. God will take care of Jacob; therefore the Lord shall be Jacob's God and this will not be a mere profession, formal and empty, but it is to be manifested in Jacob's daily life.

This is the second reference to the tithe in the Bible, the first being in the history of Abraham (14:20). Nothing is said as to the disposition of Jacob's tithes. Possibly they were to be used to maintain Bethel as a sacred place unto the Lord. Obviously in that day when religion was constituted upon a patriarchal basis and there was neither temple nor tabernacle, priesthood nor ministry, home missions nor foreign missions, Jacob's tithes could not be expended for objects similar to those for which the tithes of God's people are expended today. This is one of the matters concerning which the Bible does not satis-

fy our curiosity. It tells us what we need to know, not all that we would like to know.

Questions:

1. What was Jacob's reaction to the divine revelation that had been granted him?
2. What did Jacob mean by his statement, "The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not"?
3. What evidences are there that the sense of awe and wonder at the greatness of God is lacking in present-day popular religion?
4. What did Jacob mean by saying that the place where he had had his dream was the house of God and the gate of heaven?
5. How did Jacob mark the spot?
6. What may have been the meaning of pouring oil on the stone?
7. What is the meaning of the name "Bethel"?
8. What vow did Jacob make in response to God's promises?
9. How was Jacob's allegiance to God to be manifested in his daily life?
10. What may have been the use to which Jacob's tithes were put?

(To be continued)

Blue Banner Question Box

Readers are invited to submit Biblical, doctrinal and practical questions for answer in this department. Names will not be published with questions, but anonymous communications will be disregarded.

Question:

What does the Christian Church consider more important, the abstract beliefs of religion or the actual practice of good morals?

Answer:

The Christian Church does not hold and teach **abstract** beliefs. The Church creeds are concrete and specific. This is true of the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and also of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the other creeds of the Reformation period. Neither are they taught abstractly, i.e., as a body of truth to be believed without a practical application of such to one's life. They are confessed and proclaimed so as to set a standard for Christian life and conduct. The faith and the life of the Christians are complementary. There is such a vital relationship between one's belief and one's life that I cannot see how anyone can place faith and life over against one another, or say that one is **more**

important than the other. It is true that what one believes has a marked influence on one's manner of life, and hence it is very important that one's beliefs be based upon God's Word. A Biblical creed is absolutely necessary for salvation, but a creed, no matter how orthodox, in itself is not sufficient. It must fructify in a Christian life. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, teaching them to **observe** all things whatsoever I have commanded you." "If ye love me, **keep** my commandments."

— Robert Park

Question:

What is your view of the words, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks"? I have heard it preached that Saul was pricked by his conscience while persecuting the church, but if that is the case, how then are such portions of Scripture as: Acts 26:9; Acts 23:1; Philippians 3:6, to be understood?

Answer:

It is my opinion that the expression does refer to Paul being troubled in conscience. This is the opinion of a number of commentators whose works I have studied on this experience of Paul. In fact I do not see how it can be explained to mean anything else. While Paul was very zealous in persecuting his fellow Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, he was touched by their spirit and noble lives, especially the testimony and the heroic death of Stephen in which he had such a prominent part. It practically accounts for his sudden about face after he meets Jesus on the road to Damascus. Such a state of heart is possible even though one tries to do his best to wipe out such convictions. And while Paul was troubled in conscience he was strenuously striving to be very zealous in the service of God.

In Paul's speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1) — "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" — he is stating a principle by which he lived as a conscientious Jew. That word he used — "lived" — is a Greek term used to describe the life of a citizen as a citizen in the Greek commonwealth. Paul tried to live such a life in the commonwealth of God. He looked upon his fellow Jews who believed on Jesus as the Messiah and Lord as blasphemers and according to Jewish law worthy of death. After his conversion he saw the law of God in a far different light and lived according to that enlightenment.

In Paul's speech before Agrippa (Acts 26:9) — "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" — he admits that, though he was conscientious in his attack upon the followers of Jesus, he was mistaken, and when Jesus revealed Himself to him he saw his terrible mistake. This statement does not at all nullify the fact that while in that conscientious attack upon believers he had thoughts within that disquieted his mind and, at times, made him question the rightness of his procedure.

In Paul's letter to the Philippians (Phil. 3:6) he is warning the Christians of Philippi not to be led away into error by a misapplication of teachings about the law. There was a time when he put confidence in the flesh, in an outward obedience to the law, and could well boast, if there were any efficacy in such a life. It is in this connection that he says, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." He would have the Philippians beware of such righteousness for even though he had lived outwardly according to the law a "blameless" life, now he finds that "what things were gain for me, those I counted loss for Christ." Paul, more than any other New Testament writer, uses the word "conscience." It is found twenty-one times in his letters. It is a re-

lection, I believe, of the period of a troubled conscience that he himself had when during all his persecuting zeal and self-righteous living he was not at peace in his own conscience.

— Robert Park

Question:

Is belief in "theistic evolution" or "creative evolution" consistent with acceptance of the doctrinal standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church?

Answer:

Belief in "theistic evolution" or "creative evolution" is not consistent with the doctrines of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. A false theory or interpretation of God's work of creation cannot be corrected or nullified by labeling it with a label of the truth. Those who claim to be "theistic" or "creative" evolutionists hold virtually to the same basic ideas and claims as the Darwinian evolutionists. I shall give several excerpts from a recent book by Ralph Sadler Meadowcroft, pastor of an Episcopalian congregation in Charleston, South Carolina and from all evidences a "theistic" evolutionist. In his book, "Postlude to Skepticism," on page 11 he writes: "The liberal calls for the right of increasing knowledge. According to him, the first sentence of Genesis is true, 'In the beginning God made,' but the explanation which then follows is the ancient Babylonian myth, the best explanation of the creation process known by the Hebrews at that time of writing. If, however, a modern theologian were writing the account he would use the same opening words, 'In the beginning God made,' but would follow that sentence with a contemporary scientific explanation of sun-spots, star-dust and heat, while man would emerge not out of dust and breathe, but as the climax of a tediously long evolution. Yet the liberal would not demand that his explanations become sacrosanct. On the contrary, he anticipates that three thousand years hence men may have other explanations of creation that our knowledge will then seem as important as we consider the Garden myth to be."

Now another excerpt from the same on page 125: "For many centuries the Genesis myth of human creation was accepted as a correct account. Actually the only religious fact in the first three chapters of the Scriptures is contained in the first phrase, 'In the beginning God,' for so far as religious truth goes, it does not matter how creation occurred. Yet many religious people rose up in great indignation when Darwin's theories gained popular attention; and among religious groups it is still averred that if evolution is accepted as a factual account of human origin, the whole structure of belief will come tumbling down, which is palpably ridiculous."

Now one more quotation to reveal the mind of

the "theistic" evolutionist, and this quotation is on the origin of sin (page 141):

"The origin of sin is not traceable to an event in human history, but rather is born out of the conflicting tensions (Darwin's survival of the fittest) which compose the life of mankind. To account for man's depravity by the mythical fall of Adam, by which Adam's descendants inherited the same fallen nature, is to make the first man in a sense responsible for all the human evil which has occurred through history. In so doing, men in history cease to be equally responsible with Adam for the sins they commit. Such a conclusion must also mean that man is less truly human than his original parent. . . . If, however, the fall of Adam is understood as a representative condition which occurs inevitably in the life of every individual, the responsibility and the fullness of human nature are alike the property of all men."

These excerpts may well represent the teaching of those who call themselves "theistic" evolutionists.

Now let us quote several statements from the **Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America** to show what our Church believes concerning the creation of man and the fall and depravity of man. On page 11: "After God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness and true holiness, after His own image; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it: and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change. Besides this law written in their hearts they received a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures." On pages 130-1 are answers to several questions in the Shorter Catechism. "Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God." Gen. 3:6, 7, 8, 13. "The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit." Gen. 3:6, 12. "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression." Gen. 3:16, 17. Rom. 5:12. 1 Cor. 15:21, 23.

No one can consistently hold these two opposite beliefs concerning creation, the origin of sin, and the consequences of sin. One could go on and show that there is just as great an inconsistency in relationship to all the great doctrines of the Faith.

— Robert Park

Question:

What should be our attitude toward the present-day faith healing movement? Can a Christian be sure of divine healing if he has real faith?

Answer:

There are two questions here. The history of the Christian Church from the Apostolic Age until today does not reveal any such movements as at present is rife in the world, especially, I believe, in America. The great evangelists from Whitefield and Wesley down to Billy Graham have carried on great campaigns without any claims to be able by the help of God or the direct action of God to heal the sick. There are a large number of free-lance evangelists who seem to be unattached to any denomination who put forth great claims to be able to be used of God to heal. We have one such evangelist now in Beaver Falls who is carrying on in an old theatre which he has placarded with appeals for Christians of all churches to come and see the wonderful works of God in healing. I heard him make the same plea over the radio and make the claim that God was working wonders in our midst. I have known of several cases where the healer claimed to have been able to heal, but in not too long a space of time the sick died of the disease of which they had claimed to have been healed.

I think it best to heed the Scripture in this matter of healing. In the Acts we have the record of many being healed and the lame made to walk. The three named in this work are Peter, Philip the Evangelist, and Paul. These miracles gave attestation to the people of their day that their testimony concerning the fact of the resurrection of Jesus was true, and many came to believe. Peter or Paul never made any advance claims nor advertised that they would hold a meeting for healing the sick or perform any miracles. Furthermore, neither of them in all their writings say anything about faith healing or ever offer any assurance that God through them would be able to heal. James makes one statement which is his advice to his fellow Christians who might be sick: "Is there any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church: and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." This is a far cry from the present bombast of so-called "faith healers." The Lord may use them to heal, but I think it well to keep aloof from them.

The advancement in present-day medicine and the care and service the sick and wounded receive in hospitals by trained nurses and skillful physicians and surgeons remove very many from needing to follow James' injunction. I believe God expects us to use all legitimate means available for the care of the sick, asking His blessing upon those who are responsible for wise and

scientific treatment. I think in addition it is right and a duty, where the human factor is unable to help, to rest solely upon God and seek His power if it is in accord with His will that the life be spared. I believe that prayer was made for

James the apostle just as well as for Peter while in the hands of a Herod, but James was beheaded and Peter was miraculously spared for many years of service.

— Robert Park

Keeping Our Vows to God

“And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers”.

2 Chron. 34:32b.

Josiah was king of Judah 639-608 B.C., on the verge of the Babylonian Captivity. During his reign there occurred the last religious revival before the captivity. At the age of 16, having been king 8 years, Josiah undertook the religious reformation of his kingdom. When a king and his people set their heart on consistently living according to God's will, God met them with help and blessing, and prospered their efforts. There was a spirit of zeal, unanimity and spontaneous eagerness in their service of God. This was nothing mechanical or artificially worked up. It was real, it came from their hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit.

FALSE RELIGION CLEARED AWAY

Read 2 Chron. 34:3-7. The idolatrous religion was ancient, customary and deeply embedded in the life of the people. Only a king and people united in honestly turning to God could eliminate it. It is very difficult to change that which has the sanction of antiquity, custom, long usage and popularity. Here in Josiah's reform we see the victory of principle over popularity — something much needed today. When we get a revival like that, there will be sweeping changes in religious life, customs and worship. The unscriptural worship of centuries will be swept away with a return to the reign of Scriptural principles.

GOD'S HOUSE WAS REPAIRED

For long years this has been neglected, but a people with a mind to return to God soon put the temple in repair again. The workmen wrought faithfully. It was not necessary to audit their accounts for they worked conscientiously. A similar revival in our own day would not only take

care of the physical repair of church buildings, but would provide for the proper support, in proportion to our real ability, of the whole program of the Church and the Kingdom of God.

God's work requires not merely money, but money willingly given by a people who have set their heart on the true progress and welfare of God's Church and Kingdom.

ATTENTION GIVEN TO THE WORD OF GOD

2 Chron. 34:14-28. For years the Word of God had been lost and neglected. The roll of the Book found was perhaps one lost or hidden during Manasseh's reign, or one placed in a cornerstone when the temple was built by Solomon. At any rate, when found it produced a tremendous effect. Those people really took Scripture seriously. To them the Word of God was not a mere ornament or formality. It made a profound impression on king and people. This would be true in a similar revival today. It may be questioned whether the present revival movement in America is producing a real return to Scripture. The attitude toward Scripture seems still to be a formal and conventional one in many cases.

In Josiah's day, covenant vows were solemnly taken by king and people (2 Chron. 34:29-33). Divinely appointed worship, long neglected in whole or in part, was once more observed in an adequate and Scriptural manner (35:1, 2 17-19). In this revival, conscientious devotion to God overcame (1) popular false worship and practices; (2) gross ignorance of God's will; (3) long continued neglect of divinely appointed worship.

The revival America needs is along the same lines. How can we help? Not by doing something dramatic or spectacular, but by doing what Josiah is recorded as doing in 2 Chron. 34:2, 3. If we will be faithful and consistent in keeping our covenant vows to God, He will work in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.

— J. G. Vos

Linger Not

By Horatius Bonar

The time is short!
If thou would'st work for God it must be now;
If thou would'st win the garland for thy brow,
Redeem the time!

Shake off earth's sloth!
Go forth with staff in hand while yet 'tis day;
Set out with girded loins upon the way;
Up! Linger not!

Fold not thy hands!
What has the pilgrim of the cross and crown
To do with luxury or couch of down?
O Pilgrim, on!

With His reward
He comes; He tarries not; His day is near;
When men least look for Him will He be here.
Prepare for Him!

Let not the flood
Sweep the firm feet from the eternal rock;
Face calmly, solemnly, the billow's shock,
Nor fear the storm.

Withstand the foe!
Die daily, that thou may'st forever live;
Be faithful unto death: thy Lord will give
The crown of life.

Go in Peace

By C. G. Rossetti

Can peach renew lost bloom,
Or violet lost perfume,
Or sullied snow turn white as overnight?
Man cannot compass it, yet never fear:
The leper Naaman
Shows what God will and can.
God who worked there is working here;
Wherefore let shame, not gloom, betinge thy
brow.
God who worked then is working now.

Announcement

You can share in the wide witness of *Blue Banner Faith and Life* to Bible truth by contributing to the expense of publishing the magazine. Less than half of the amount required is obtained from subscriptions and sales of back issues. For the balance we are dependent on contributions. Numbered receipts are sent promptly for all contributions. Financial reports are submitted to the Board of Publication of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America quarterly.

Sets of back issues for the years 1952 and 1955 are available at \$1.00 for each year, postpaid. The supply of back issues of all other years is exhausted. Pressboard binders which will conveniently preserve two years' issues are available at 75 cents each, postpaid. Subscriptions for 1956 are \$1.50 for single subscriptions and \$1.00 for each subscription in clubs of 5 or more to be mailed to one address. All subscriptions must begin with a January-March issue and run to the

end of a calendar year. We regret that we cannot do the extra clerical work involved in having subscriptions start and stop at different times through the year. When subscriptions are received during the year, the back issues beginning with the January-March issue of that year will be sent.

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The Church of Jesus Christ may never traffic in the truth. The least compromise of Gospel principle is treason against the King of heaven. . . . The truth of the Lord Jesus, which cost His blood in its purchase and the blood of martyrs in its defence, should be maintained to the very last shred, with the tenacity of unconquerable faith.

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The Glass

"Now we see through a glass, darkly" — 1 Cor.
13:12

By M. W. Dougherty

The glass is dim!
'Tis frosted o'er
By chilling unbelief
That lurks continually
In little niches of my heart.
In times of trial it clouds the glass
Through which I look for comfort,
And for Him.

The glass is dim!
It is befogged by doubt,
The close companion of my unbelief.
It scurries back and forth
Upon the glass with great uncertainty;
With dimness less intense
Than lack of faith, it none the less
Obscures my view of yonder home
That's made by Him.

The glass is dim!
By grief of loss;
We fear to face the path
That I must walk, bereft
Of fellowship and words.
Though dimmed by tearful streaks,
It hinders, as I try to find the hand
Held out by Him.

The glass is dim!
All this I know,
And Oh! the turmoil of the soul
It brings. But this
I also know, there is a time
When what I faintly see
With hindered view, will all be clear,
Made so by Him.

The glass is dim!
But by the flame of faith
The frost is cleared.
A gentle voice gives courage,
And my tears of grief
Are gently wiped away
With tenderness. He grasps my hand,
I walk with Him.

The Coming Creed

By Horatius Bonar

The creeds have gone, so speaks the age,
The era of the sects is past.
Forward! In spite of saint or sage,
True freedom has begun at last.

The Christ of God is now no more;
The Christ of man now sits supreme;
The cross is part of mystic lore,
The resurrection morn a dream.

The age's progress fears no God,
No righteous law, no Judge's throne;
Man bounds along his new-found road,
And calls the universe his own.

Not faith in God, but faith in man
Is pilot now, and sail, and oar;
The creeds are shrivelled, cold, and wan;
The Christ that has been is no more.

Old truth, which once struck deep in hearts,
Fights hard for life, but fights in vain;
Old error into vigor starts,
And fable comes to life again.

Old mischief now becomes earth's creed;
The falsehood lives, the truth has died;
Man leans upon a broken reed,
And falls in helplessness of pride.

He spurns the hands that would have led,
The lips that would have spoken love;
The Book that would his soul have fed,
And taught the wisdom from above.

The ever-standing cross, to him,
Is but a Hebrew relic vain;
The wondrous birth at Bethlehem
A fiction of the wandering brain.

He wants no Saviour and no light;
No teacher but himself he needs;
He knows not of a human night,
Save from the darkness of the creeds.

Eternal Light, hide not Thy face:
Eternal Truth, direct our way;
Eternal Love, shine forth in grace;
Reveal our darkness and THY day.

"The veracity of God, and not the reasonableness of any doctrine, is the ground of our faith. It is the work of the gospel to cast down reasonings against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ."

Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, IV.4

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Roadblocks Limiting Church Effectiveness

By J. G. Vos

II. THE ROADBLOCK OF SECULARISM, OR REGARDING GOD AS INCIDENTAL

Secularism is Characteristic of Present-Day American Culture

The word "secular" comes from the Latin for "age." It is defined as "of or pertaining to things not religious, sacred or spiritual; temporal; worldly." Secularism, then, is that view of life which regards life as non-religious. According to the secular philosophy of life, human life as a whole is non-religious, but within this totality of human life there may be one sector or compartment which is called "religion" and which concerns man's relation to God. Secularism confines religion to this one section of human life, while the rest—by far the major portion—of human life is regarded as unrelated to religion, and unaffected by it. According to secularism, God is relevant only for a small fraction of human life. With regard to all the rest, God does not matter. It is held that God has no meaning for the ordinary, everyday life of man.

Religion Regarded as Incidental

Secularism is the internal dry rot of the churches. It is the tacit assumption that religion is only a minor incident in human life, that religion concerns but a small fraction of human life and activity. Secularism is characteristic of present-day American and European culture. Our modern western culture has come to regard itself as self-sufficient and able to get along on its own; it no longer feels any great need of God. This attitude toward religion is exemplified by **Time Magazine**, where "Religion" is treated as one department of life, and is sandwiched in between other departments such as "Cinema" and "Sport."

God Regarded as a Luxury

Needless to say, this secular philosophy of life is very different from the belief of our forefathers. It is not only different from the belief of **Christian** people of a few generations ago; it is even different from the belief of a large part of the population a few generations ago. The cultural pattern has been changed from one that regarded God as relevant to one that regards God as irrelevant. The cultural pattern of western civilization has been changed from a **theistic** pattern to a **secular** pattern. God is now regarded as a luxury, rather than as a necessity. For the most part, people think they can get along without God pretty well.

They do not give Him a thought most of the time.

Of course, if people get in bad enough trouble and everything else fails, they will still perhaps turn to God as a sort of last resort. People on board an ocean liner may spend their time eating and drinking, dancing and playing cards; but if the ship hits a mine and is about to sink, many of them will presently attempt to pray. A culture which has omitted God finds God useful in emergencies as a last resort.

God Limited to a Fraction of Man's Life

And secularism is willing to concede to God His relevance in one small department of life, namely, religious feelings and worship. That, according to secularism, is God's domain. He belongs there, and He had better stay where He belongs. Even secularism cannot deny that there is such a thing as religion and that man is a religious animal. There must be some recognition of a Higher Power or God. So the spere of religion is marked off as a special area and there God is recognized.

Those who have no use for God in their daily lives, who never in their life dreamed of living for the glory of God, or making the Kingdom of God the goal and aim of their life, still feel that they need God occasionally to forgive their sins. So they retain God as a dispenser of forgiveness. According to their philosophy, that is what God is for—to forgive people's sins. God is not to make any demands on people's lives, but He is to be ready to forgive their sins when asked to do so. For the rest, God is politely bowed to the sidelines and regarded as no longer necessary. Man feels that he can stand on his own feet and does not need God.

If we inquire as to the roots of this modern secular culture we will, I think, find that it goes deeper than we might at first suppose. It cannot be explained simply on the basis of people's laziness, selfishness and desire to have their own way. It has philosophical roots. We might say that modern secular culture has grown from the twin roots of modern science and modern philosophy.

Science Gives Man a Sense of Power

To speak of science first, modern science and technology has made man feel very powerful and

important. Regarding everything as controlled solely by natural law—with no thought of any divine providence back of natural law—modern man no longer sees the hand of God in the world of nature.

Man who can build great hydro-electric plants, who can fly faster than the speed of sound, who can split the atom with devastating results—why should such a being need God? Modern science has undertaken to explain everything without God, and this has tremendously bolstered modern man's confidence in himself. His ego is tremendously inflated. He feels that man can do anything. Even flights to the moon are regarded as within the realm of possibility.

Only occasionally does something happen to remind modern man of his real helplessness and dependence on God — such as a tornado or an earthquake. Accordingly, such events are legally designated as "acts of God," while the ordinary conduct and course of life is regarded as independent of God. In short, modern science and technology, with its great success in dealing with material things and physical forces, has given modern man "the big head." He is inflated with vainglorious human pride, a state of mind utterly contrary to humble faith in God.

Modern Philosophy Omits God

The other root of modern secular culture is modern philosophy. We may regard modern philosophy as beginning with Immanuel Kant. Since Kant philosophy has veered farther and farther away from faith in God and from regarding God as relevant for human life as a whole. The result is that over against the theistic philosophy of the Bible we have today a secular philosophy which recognizes no need, place or use for God (except in the narrow area of religious feelings and worship.) Or if modern philosophy does indeed use the word "God" at all, it is not speaking of the God of the Bible and of historic Christianity, but of a pantheistic "God" who is really only an aspect of the universe, a projection of the human mind.

Modern American Pragmatism is the outcome of the modern development of philosophy. Pragmatism holds that anything is true if it "works." Pragmatism, of course, has really no place for God. He is left outside of this system.

We live in an age when the "grass roots" culture is affected and determined by the "experts" as never before. Many people today who have never taken a course in philosophy or opened a book on philosophy are nevertheless deeply influenced by the trends of the philosophy of the day. This is evidenced with special clearness in our educational system, which has been deeply influenced by the pragmatist teachings of John Dewey and others. So the views of the philoso-

phers and "experts" percolate right down to the kindergarten and first grade of our public schools.

Secularism Surrounds us Today

This secular philosophy is all around us. It is everywhere; it is pervasive. Sometimes it is explicitly stated, but much more often it is assumed, it is taken for granted. It is the unvoiced major premise lurking in the back of men's minds. You see it everywhere. You do not have to search for it. You cannot walk around in the America of 1956 without bumping into it. It is in the **Reader's Digest**, the **Ladies' Home Journal**, the **Woman's Home Companion**, **Time Magazine**, **Life**, your daily newspaper, the radio, the television, your parent-teacher association, the United Nations, and—last but not least—in the government of the United States of America and in our state and local governments down to the local township. All along the line man feels able to get along all right without God. It is not so much that man is opposed to God as that he just omits God. God is not regarded as bad; He is just regarded as superfluous and unnecessary.

One thing that makes it attractive to be a foreign missionary is that on the foreign field you meet the forces of evil and of Satan head-on in open conflict. A man is either a Christian or a non-Christian, and it is not hard to decide which he is. Society is out and out pagan; The Christian Church is a little nucleus of a different type of society — a society in which God is central. But in America it is different. Here it is hard to tell where a man stands. He may be a member or even an officer of a church, and yet he may regard God as irrelevant for nine-tenths of his life.

Secularism Taken For Granted

This secular view of life is taken for granted; it is an assumption in the back of people's minds. They are hardly conscious of it, but it is there. If people would come out and say it plainly, it would be much easier to cope with it. But only the blatant atheist comes out and calls a spade a spade. The rest profess to believe in God while in nine-tenths of their life they ignore and disregard Him.

This is what we are up against in America today. This is what evangelism is up against. This is what Christian education is up against. This is what the Church is up against. And this is what the individual Christian is up against—a society and a culture that regards God as without meaning for most of human life.

Secularism has Deeply Infiltrated the Churches in Present-Day America

It is inevitable that Christian people will be affected by their environment. When Christian people live in a secular environment such as that

of present-day America, they cannot but be profoundly influenced by it. The American church has absorbed the secular view of life from the secularism of modern culture.

Christian people are still human. They read the **Reader's Digest** and other popular magazines, and unconsciously they absorb the point of view from which these magazines are edited. They see motion pictures, they listen to the radio, they view television programs, they hold membership in community organizations of one sort or another. It is inevitable that Christian people will be influenced by all these contacts.

A Subtle, Gradual Influence

The trouble is that the influence of secularism is slow, gentle and gradual. If it had come as a sudden revolution from the theistic (God-centered) view of life held by previous generations, perhaps Christian people might have sensed the danger and reacted to it. But the influence of secularism is so gentle, so slow, so gradual and yet so pervasive and continuous, that Christian people have absorbed it without noticing any real change of viewpoint.

When you go to a different community, away from home, you may notice that the drinking water tastes different from what you are accustomed to. You notice the difference because the change is sudden, abrupt. But the drinking water of your own home city probably does not taste exactly the same at all times. It has seasonal variations in taste and chemical content. But you do not notice these changes because they come very gradually.

So it has come to pass that modern secularism has infiltrated the churches. It is not so much that the churches preach and teach secularism, as that they take it for granted and they tolerate it. It is assumed as legitimate; it is not challenged, it is not analyzed, it is not criticized. But this shift from a theistic view of life to a secular view of life, though it has come gradually, represents a major change from the attitude of our forefathers. **They** did not believe in religion as one of a number of co-ordinate interests in life. **They** did not place God on a reservation and expect Him to stay there. They regarded God as the real aim and purpose of human life. The Bible regards man as existing for God; modern culture regards God as existing for man and at man's disposal. And modern culture does not want God to get in its way.

Many Churches Have Been Affected

This notion of religion as an incidental concern — one human interest among many others — is characteristic of many churches of the present day. They tolerate it, they have made their peace with it, they have compromised with it, they

are deeply affected by it, they do not think of challenging it.

No church has completely escaped the infection of this deadly virus — not the purest church, not the strictest, not the most faithful. Show me a church whose members do not read newspapers or magazines nor listen to radio programs, and whose children do not attend the public schools, and I will grant that such a church may be comparatively uninfluenced by secularism. But there is no such church. The existing churches have all been influenced — some more, some less; some very passively, others with a decided reaction against secularism. But influenced they have been and it cannot be denied.

This infiltration of secularism is certainly one of the major causes of the churches' present frustration and helplessness. It is one of the major elements of the churches' present weakness and lack of influence. Therefore it is important that we understand this present-day phenomenon, for if we do not understand its real nature we cannot hope to cope with it.

The Plight of Faithful Churches

Secularism affects the membership of pure and faithful churches which recognize it for what it is and are trying to combat it. It affects the membership of competing churches, which tolerate it without challenge. And it affects the public we are attempting to reach with the Gospel of Christ. Every evangelistic effort is up against the fact of secularism. In the minds of all these people, with rare exceptions, there lurks the perverse assumption that religion is a mere fractional incident in human life, or even that God is a mere means to man's happiness and welfare.

A pure and faithful church is surrounded by competing churches which are dominated by the philosophy of secularism. These churches are constantly trying to gain members at the expense of the smaller, purer denominations which they disdainfully call "splinter groups." It is passing strange that the advocates of ecumenical peace and harmony and brotherly love have, apparently, no qualms of conscience whatever about shamelessly stealing members from smaller and weaker denominations. "All's fair in love and war" seems to be their practical attitude, whatever their verbal professions of unity and harmony may be. Consequently every pure and faithful church of the present day is really "up against it." It is being preyed upon; its members are being enticed away from it, often by very worldly forms of bait.

Why should a person belong to a church that makes sweeping demands concerning his daily life, his social life, his business life, when he can easily, at any time, join a large, popular and respectable church which makes no demands whatever upon him except that of formal membership and pro-

fession? Yielding to such reasoning as this, perhaps without full consciousness of its implications, member after member leaves the pure and faithful church of his forefathers and joins one of the large, "tolerant" churches of the community.

Secularism Nullifies Christian Profession

The secularistic assumption lies in the back of people's minds even while they are standing up in church to make a public profession of their faith in Christ and their obedience to Him. They publicly profess allegiance and obedience to Christ as their Lord, but too often in the back of their minds there lurks that tacit assumption, that subtle, subconscious mental reservation — Christ is to be the Lord of their **religious** life only, not of their life as a whole. This secularistic assumption is the unvoiced major premise of the transaction in the minds of such people. It cancels the meaning of any profession, it nullifies all vows, it contradicts every Christian testimony.

Why is it that church members often attend church only sporadically when they happen to feel like it or find it convenient? It is the assumption of secularism in the back of their minds. Why is it that a church with 100 members will have a prayer meeting attended by perhaps a dozen or two? It is for the same reason. Why is it that it is so hard to get people to practice consistent Christian stewardship? Why is it that people will spend money lavishly on luxuries and will, too often, dole it out with a miserly hand for the extension of God's Kingdom? The answer is secularism.

Why is it that people will publicly take solemn vows, and then break them the following Sabbath? Why will people promise to keep the Sabbath holy and then a few days or weeks later attend a big family reunion picnic on the Lord's Day, or start a vacation trip on the Sabbath morning, or just stay home from church and loaf? Secularism, again.

Why People Change Churches Easily

Why is it that people so easily change from one church to another, with no investigation or study of the denomination they are joining? Why the steady unremitting drift from the pure and faithful churches to the broad, popular and inclusive ones? It is because of secularism. In such people's minds is the assumption that religion is just a special interest to be confined to a reservation. In their minds is the assumption that religion must not be allowed to interfere in any way with their own plans, ambitions, convenience, activities, preferences, or projects. They want God, but they do not want God to interfere with their lives.

A person may accept any terms of communion, any vows, any confession of faith, any covenant,

but if the assumption of secularism lurks in his mind, it means exactly nothing. Secularism is like a chlorine bleach. It takes the real color out of everything.

Biblical Religion is the Antithesis of Modern Secularism.

"In the beginning God . . ." These opening words of Holy Writ give us the keynote of the Bible's philosophy of life: **In the beginning God.** Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. In Him we live and move and have our being. With Him is the fountain of life, and in His light shall we see light. According to Scripture, God is relevant for human life at every point. And, moreover, God himself is the great purpose of human life. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever"; that is not a quotation from the Bible but the thought is Biblical and can be supported from Scripture.

Religion the Real Purpose of Life

"Aiming to live for the glory of God as our chief end . . ."—thus starts our Young People's Pledge. That form of statement, taken from the **Covenant of 1871**, is based, not on secularism, but on the Biblical view of human life.

According to the Biblical view, life is for religion, not religion for life. We do not have a religion because it enriches our life; on the contrary, we are alive because it serves the purpose of religion for us to be alive. Everything else in life is to serve the ends of our religion—that is the Christian view of life.

God is the great fact and end of life. The meaning of everything depends on God. Without God life is blank and meaningless and ends in a whirlpool of blind chance or fate. Without God, life is a series of ciphers with no real number placed before them. If we do not start with faith in the God of the Bible, there is nothing in the universe that can have a real meaning to us. Life has meaning only because back of life is God, the infinite God whose sovereign counsel determines all created being. Facts have a meaning only because back of them there is the infinitely wise counsel of the sovereign God who has determined, from all eternity, what their meaning shall be.

Modern Thought is Man-Centered

Modern secular thought and life, on the other hand, are dominated by a radically different faith. Modern thought starts with man, and assumes that man is sufficient unto himself. Modern thought brings in God—not the God of the Bible, but a so-called "God" of its own making—later, when, as and where needed, if needed at all. Modern thought regards God as a convenience, or at best as a support or sanction for the moral life of man. It does not regard God as the source and end of all things. This is because modern thought is real-

ly based, not on the revelation given in the Bible, but on the speculations of human philosophy, and especially on the man-centered view of things which is derived from the German philosopher Immanuel Kant.

We Must Frankly Reject Secularism

If we are going to adhere to the Biblical view of life, we will have to challenge secularism and reject it root and branch. No halfway measures can be effective. We will have to recognize that we are a different and separated people, and that only in God's light can we really see light. By God's grace, let us dare to look the modern world in the face and declare that we accept and adhere to the Biblical, God-centered view of the world and of human life, with all our heart and with all our soul.

By thus adhering to the Biblical view of life we will immediately make ourselves the objects of ridicule and reproach. We will be called "narrow," "intolerant," "behind the times," "obscurantist," "stuck hopelessly in the backwaters of fundamentalism," and so forth. We need not fear this reproach, for it is really the reproach of Christ. So long as we are able to give a reason for the faith that is in us, we should hold up our heads and witness for the God of the Bible without compromise or apology.

What can be Done to Counteract Secularism

No real Christian has any right to be a defeatist. As long as God lives and His promises hold true, we must have faith and face the bleak outlook with courage.

The first thing that can be done about secularism is to recognize it for what it really is and call it by its right name. The church has no business playing a game of make-believe and pretending that everything is all right when everything certainly is not all right. Secularism should be plainly, boldly, courageously nailed down and challenged. Not only should the false view of secularism be pointed out, but the Biblical view of human life should be placed sharply in antithesis to it. It is no use to beat around the bush; it is no use to pretend that there is no deep gulf between Biblical Christianity and modern American culture. It is time to awake to the fact that there is a yawning chasm between the two

American secular culture will take over the church if it can. It has already taken over a good many of the churches, which now submit passively to the demands of a man-centered culture and never challenge this or react against it.

Calvinism can Challenge Secularism

Secularism can be successfully challenged only on the basis of **real Biblical Christianity**, sometimes called Calvinism or the Reformed Faith. Only a

totalitarianism can really cope with secularism. Consistent Biblical Christianity—the Reformed Faith or Calvinism—is that totalitarianism. All mediating and halfway systems have the seeds of disintegration in them and are bound to fail. Calvinism contains steel and granite, and will survive.

Over against the assumption of modern secular culture that God is to be placed on a reservation, we must place the full truth of the Bible, that man's life and everything in it exists for God's glory. This is the very antithesis of secularism.

No message which aims only at the salvation of souls can counteract secularism. We must aim at the salvation of people's **lives** and at the absolute consecration of those lives to the glory of God. In short, we must put God and God's glory first in all our preaching and witnessing. Even man's salvation is subordinate to the glory of God. To combat secularism, we must give God His rightful place all along the line. No narrower message can do it.

As to practical procedures to be adopted in combating secularism, I can claim no special success above others, but I shall present some ideas for whatever they may be worth. Perhaps they may help to remove this roadblock of secularism which is throttling the effectiveness of the church.

Real Christian Education Needed

First, the crying need of the hour is the need for real Christian education. The Dutch Calvinistic churches, in Holland and in America, have pioneered in this, and they have profited immensely by it. Yes, I believe in the Bible in the public schools, and I believe in "released time," and I believe in Vacation Bible Schools, and I believe in Sabbath Schools. But add them all together and they will still not solve this problem of Christian education. What is needed is not a secular system of education with some Christian features added on, but an educational system which puts God first and honors God all along the line—not merely the Bible and religion tacked onto the rest, but the entire curriculum and program unified by the Bible view of life and the God of the Bible.

Schools and teaching inspired by the philosophy of John Dewey do not become Christian by having some Bible reading, or even some Bible lessons, added on to the rest. That is at best a makeshift, a palliative. What we need is real Christian education from A to Z. It has been tried in Holland and the Christian people there are reaping tremendous benefits from it. It has been tried in America, and it is the real backbone of the churches that do it. True, it costs terrifically. It calls for heroic sacrifices. But they are people of heroic convictions and they willingly make the sacrifices in order that their covenant children may be educated in God-centered schools. And

they reap the benefits. This is worth looking into, and we should be big enough to lay aside all jealousies and prejudices and look into it with an open mind.

Maintain High Membership Standards

In the second place, I believe we should have a much higher standard in receiving members from the world, and in the case of our own youth being admitted as communicant members. This, of course, is easy to say but hard to do. Probably our **formal** requirements are high enough. It is the practical part that needs to be raised higher. We are so eager to gain a few members that we tend to hesitate, perhaps, to talk as plainly with them as we should.

I think we should get down to brass tacks in this matter of receiving members. We should ask people pointedly, do they intend to attend church faithfully, or only when they feel like it? Are they really going to practice Christian stewardship, or do they intend to rob God? Will they really keep the Sabbath holy, or are they just saying that to fool the preacher and the elders? When it comes to an issue between the interests of the Kingdom of God and their own private plans and ambitions, will they really put the Kingdom of God first? To be concrete, will they be willing to sacrifice financial gain in order to keep themselves and their family where they can attend and support the church they conscientiously believe in?

It will take courage to adopt such a program as that. I am not sure I have the courage to try it myself. The trouble is, it is extremely difficult to **start** something like that, because the people you are talking to know perfectly well that there are members already in the church who do not make any attempt to live according to such a high standard.

In receiving members from the world, and in admitting our covenant children to communicant membership, the authority of the pastor and the session is terribly weakened by the fact that everyone knows that there are members of long standing who have made exactly the same profession

and taken exactly the same vows, yet are breaking them, and nothing is done about it.

I have heard women in China threaten their children by telling them they will cut their ears off. The impression produced on the children is exactly zero. They have been told hundreds of times that their ears will be cut off, but they know very well that nobody's ears are going to be cut off, so they go on doing as they please. And in the same way, secularism has a free course in the churches and among the members, and all the vows and professions that are taken do not make any difference. I do not say, of course, that none are sincere, but I do say that too many have a secularistic major premise hanging on a hook in the back of their mind. They take the vows, but they intend to break the Sabbath, rob God, stay home from church, and so on, if they feel like it. They feel that God has no right to meddle with their private lives.

Scriptural Church Discipline Needed

Therefore, I feel, the third thing necessary to combat the inroads of secularism is a return to the exercise of Scriptural church discipline. Church discipline has almost vanished from the life of the churches today. If a man runs away with someone else's wife, I suppose something will be done about it. But in the ordinary and very common cases of flagrantly broken vows and professions, nothing whatever is done about it and everyone knows that nothing will be done about it. But church discipline is a subject in itself, and I propose to leave that for the next lecture.

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(To be continued)

Sketches of the Covenanters

By J. C. McFeeters

Chapter XIX

Division in the Covenanted Ranks — A. D. 1648.

The 1638 Covenant produced gratifying results in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. She was revived, enlarged, strengthened, consolidated, and fortified beyond precedent. Ten years of marvelous prosperity followed, and yet she had no easy

road to travel. She was still beset by dangers; enemies were plotting her overthrow; wars were convulsing the country; the external conditions were extremely adverse; yet she grew, waxed mighty, and became irresistible in the work of the Gospel. The Church honored the Lord in His holy Covenant, and He honored her with growth,

success, and victory in the presence of her foes. He was a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst thereof. These were years of phenomenal power and splendor unto the Covenanted Church.

Then followed the gloaming. The evening of that prosperous day grew very dark; the darkness increased for forty years; ten thousand midnights seemed to have condensed their horrid blackness upon Scotland and her prostrated Church. At length the storm of fire and blood exhausted itself, but not till a whole generation had wasted away in the anguish of that protracted persecution. The steps that led to the Church's prostration and decimation, we may trace with profit; but as it is crimsoned with the blood of the brave, and marked with many a martyr's grave, the eye will oft be moist and the heart sick.

While the Church stood to her Covenant, she was like an impregnable fortress, or an invincible army. While she held the truth tenaciously in her General Assembly, presbyteries, and sessions, and applied it effectively, she spread forth her roots like Lebanon. But when doubt and fear, plans and policy, compromise and temporizing entered into her councils, her gold became dim and her sword pewter. The Lord went not with her armies into the battle, and they fainted and fell on the field. A brief review is necessary to understand the situation.

The Solemn League and Covenant, in 1643, gave the Covenanted Church of Scotland a mighty impetus in the right direction, but its effect for good was brief. The League united the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland; and the Covenant placed them under obligations to one another and to God. These kingdoms were thereby exalted beyond measure in privilege. The sacred bond had been prepared by the Joint Commission that represented England and Scotland, the initial step having been taken by the English Parliament. The king and the parliament were then at strife. The dominating spirit of Charles, which harassed Scotland had provoked hostility in England; the strength of that kingdom was nearly equally divided between the two parties. The people of England, who aspired after liberty and felt the throb of nobler manhood in their pulse, had asked Scotland to combine forces against the oppressor. The outcome was the Solemn League and Covenant which united their armies for the conflict.

This sacred bond was adopted by the General Assembly of Scotland, the English Parliament, and the Westminster Assembly of divines. Afterward it received a prodigious number of signatures by the people in public and private life, and became quite popular. These kingdoms were thereby placed under solemn obligation conjointly to conserve the Reformed religion in Scotland, to re-

form the religion of England and Ireland, and to root out all systems of evil in Church and State.

Scotland was far in advance of the other two kingdoms in enlightenment and liberty. The Covenanted Church had exalted the Lord Jesus as her Head, and He had exalted her as the light, life, and glory of Scotland. The vine had spread its branches from sea to sea. The two sisters were far behind. She undertook to lift them up; the burden was too heavy; they dragged her down. She was unequally yoked, and the yoke pushed her astray. Doubtless there were reasons that justified the course she had taken, but that course led her into a "waste and howling wilderness."

Scotland sent her army to help the English Reformers in their fight for liberty. The soldiers coming from Covenanted homes, marched, as was their custom, under the banner emblazoned with the inspiring words:

FOR CHRIST'S CROWN AND COVENANT

They were led by General Leslie. Victory followed victory until King Charles, overwhelmed with defeat, rode into Leslie's camp in disguise and surrendered as his prisoner.

What now shall be done with the royal captive? This was the question which called for the wisdom of both nations. The Covenanters urged him to subscribe the Covenant and return to his throne. He refused. They pleaded, promising that their flag would lead the forces of Scotland in his support. He yet refused. They prayed and entreated him with tears to accept the Covenant and continue his reign. He would not. What could they then do, but deliver him up to the English army, whose battles they were fighting?

General Leslie led his command back to Scotland. It was disbanded, for the land again had rest. The suspense, however, concerning the king was painful. The Scottish heart yet loved Charles. Though he was false, cruel, treacherous, and tyrannical, the Covenanters were still devoted to him as their own king. They prayed, took counsel, sent delegates, did everything in their power to have him restored. All they asked was his adherence to the Covenant, their national Constitution of government. Let him subscribe to this, and Scotland's bravest sons will rally around him; the Blue Banner will wave over him in bold defiance of every foe. But he would not yield.

The king was now a prisoner in England. While he lay at Carisbrooke Castle, the Earl of Lauderdale, a Covenanter of some eminence, accompanied by the Earl of Lanark, was stealthily admitted into his presence. These men succeeded in making a compromise. Lauderdale and Lanark agreed to raise an army to bring the king back. The king in turn agreed to confirm Presbyterianism for three years: the permanent form of Church

Government to be then determined by an assembly of divines, assisted by twenty commissioners to be appointed by the king. This private treaty is known in history as "The Engagement." It contained the elements of a base and disastrous surrender of principle. Presbyterianism on probation! Built upon the rock of truth, it lasts while the rock endures. Presbyterianism to be succeeded by an uncertainty? How could the Church entrust the government of God's house to the king's commissioners?

When "The Engagement" became public, the Covenanted Church was plunged into a debate that wrought havoc. The peaceful sea was struck with a storm; the angry waves lashed every shore. The compromise failed, but the Church was infected, weakened, rent in twain, and for forty years was unable to stand in the presence of her enemies. Henceforward there were two parties; those who held to the Covenant, in its clearness, fulness, pungent energy, and logical deductions; and those who trimmed, modified, and compromised divine truth, for the sake of numerical strength and temporal advantage. One party was governed by principle; the other by expediency. The entering wedge was followed by other wedges, until the Glorious Church of Scotland was chopped and split, and thrown about into endless disorder,

"As wood which men do cut and cleave
Lies scattered on the ground."

The Church of Jesus Christ may never traffic in the truth. The least compromise of Gospel principle is treason against the King of heaven. The terms offered to the world, while in rebellion against Christ, should be those embodied in General Grant's famous demand — "Unconditional Surrender." Anything less than this is treachery. The truth of the Lord Jesus, which cost His blood in its purchase and the blood of martyrs in its defence, should be maintained to the very last shred, with the tenacity of unconquerable faith. Unfaithfulness in the least degree may result in greatest disaster. Once a ship was cast upon the rocks, and the lives of the passengers were jeopardized simply because the compass varied, it was said, a millioneth part of an inch. It requires "hair-splitting" to measure a millioneth part of an inch, and in certain cases it is worth while.

Points for the Class

1. What reaction followed the ten prosperous years after the Covenant of 1638?
2. Trace the cause of the great distress that befell the Church.
3. Why did Scotland aid England with her army?
4. What were the results of the war?

5. How did the Covenanters treat their captive king?

6. What was the agreement known as "The Engagement?"

7. How did it divide the Covenanted Church?

8. What dangers arise from the surrender of truth?

Chapter XX

Crowning the Prince. — A. D. 1651.

The reign of Charles I. came to an unkindly end. The war between him and the English Parliament resulted in his utter defeat. He delivered himself up as a prisoner, and "because he mercy minded not but persecuted still," mercy refused to spread her white wings over his guilty soul. He was tried for treason by the British Parliament and sentenced to death. The trial continued one week, during which the recital of his misrule and cruel deeds must have intensely harrowed his soul. He yielded up his life by laying his head upon the block to receive the executioner's axe. One stroke did the fatal work.

The death of the king was not with the consent of the Covenanters: to them it was a poignant grief. With all his faults they loved him still as their king. Had he accepted the Solemn League and Covenant when a prisoner in their hands, they would have been at his service to restore his power and kingdom. They still hoped for his reformation, entreated him to take the Covenant, and pointed him to a triumphal entry into Edinburgh. They pleaded with the English Parliament to spare his life, and sent commissioners to prevent his execution. Through his obstinacy they failed. But that obstinacy he accounted kingly dignity and inviolable honor. The Covenanters upon hearing of his tragic death hastened to proclaim his eldest son king in his stead, granting him the throne on condition of accepting the Solemn League and Covenant, and ruling the kingdom according to its terms. He was a young man of nineteen years; "a prince of a comely presence; of a sweet, but melancholy aspect. His face was regular, handsome, and justly proportioned; and, being of a middle stature, he was capable of enduring the greatest fatigue."

Charles II. while emerging from his teens faced a golden future. The providence of God spread before him prospects of greatness, honor, and success, which the most exalted on earth might have envied. His heart in his highest aspirations had not yet dreamed of the moral grandeur and kingly possibilities, that were granted him when the Covenanters called him to rule their kingdom. Even Solomon, accepting a crown at the same age, was not more highly favored. Scot-

land at this time was exalted into close relation with heaven; the National Covenant had lifted the kingdom into alliance with God; the people had been emancipated from darkness, Papacy, and Prelacy; the Gospel of Jesus Christ had overspread the land with light. The Covenanted Church had flourished marvelously during the last decade, notwithstanding the storms that swept her borders; her branches veiled the mountains, and her fruit overhung the valleys; every parish was adorned with a schoolhouse, and the cities with colleges. What sublime possibilities for a king at the head of such a nation! Oh, that the young prince might have a dream in the slumbers of the night and see God! Oh, for a vision, a prayer, and a gift, that will fit him for the glory-crested heights of privilege and power to which he has been advanced! Charles II. failed, and fell from these heavens like Lucifer.

The young king was crowned by the Covenanters January 1, 1651. The Crown of Scotland, sparkling with precious stones deeply set in purest gold, was his splendid New Year's gift. But the gift was more than a crown of gold and precious stones; it was a symbol of the nation's power, wealth, people, Covenant, honor, and high relation to God, entrusted to his keeping.

The coronation took place in the dead of winter. The country was gowned like a bride in white. But the white on this occasion was not the emblem of purity; rather was it the pallor of icy death. The rigorous storms seemed to prophesy of trouble; the very winds were rehearsing a dirge to be plaintively sung over mountains and moors in the coming years.

A large assembly of Covenanters met in Scone for the crowning of the new king. There was much enthusiasm, yet beneath it all there flowed a deep undercurrent of doubt and fear. Rev. Robert Douglas preached the coronation sermon. The king listened to deep, penetrating words from the Book of God. The Solemn League and Covenant was read. He gave his assent to it with an overflow of vehemence. Archibald Campbell, the Marquis of Argyle, a prominent Covenanter and statesman, then took the crown in both hands, and, lifting it above the prince with great solemnity, placed it upon his head, accompanying the act with an appropriate exhortation. While the oath of office was being administered, the prince kneeled in apparent humility, and lifted up his right hand in a solemn appeal to God. At this point he uttered the awful vow in the presence of the people: "By the Eternal and Almighty God, who liveth and reigneth forever, I shall observe and keep all that is contained in this oath." He also said: "I will have no enemies, but the enemies of the Covenant — no friends, but the friends of the Covenant." Thus King Charles II. became a radical Covenanter by profession and

protestation in the most solemn manner. Time proved his guilty duplicity.

The English Parliament, after the execution of Charles I., had passed an act making it treason to proclaim this prince king. The Covenanters, having thus elevated Charles to the throne, must now settle accounts with England on the battlefield.

Oliver Cromwell invaded Scotland with a strong force, determined to unseat Charles. The Covenanters rallied in defence of their king. Alexander Leslie was once more in command. The two armies were soon facing each other, but hesitated to strike. Both armies were made up of soldiers of the cross; both had fought for the Solemn League and Covenant; prayer ascended habitually from both camps; the singing of Psalms aroused the heroic spirit in each. What wonder if they feared the shock of battle! At length Leslie moved down from his advantageous position, and Cromwell ordered an attack. The Covenanters were put to flight with terrible slaughter.

Had the sweet singer of Israel been on the field after the clash of arms, doubtless he would have repeated his wail: "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" The Covenanters defeated! How! Why! Ah, there was an Achan in the camp. The king was already perfidious in the Covenant. His perfidy had blighted the nation, and smitten the army. Hitherto God had led the armies of the Covenanters; they had won easy victories, and sometimes bloodless triumphs. But now the Lord turns His back upon the banner unfurled for His Crown and Covenant.

The dread disaster sent a wail through all Scotland. The grief was great and the penitential searchings deep. The pious and prayerful inquired of the Lord to know the cause of His wrath and the way of deliverance. The eyes of many were opened to see the shadow of greater calamities approaching. Argyle, Johnston, Rutherford, Gillespie, and others of kindred spirit, saw in the last battle the stroke of the Lord for the sins of the nation. The wrath of God, like a bolt of lightning, had struck that field and thousands lay dead. Greater retributions were coming; repentance alone could save the country.

The king attempted to rally his shattered forces. He raised his standard at Stirling. His army was small; he wanted more men. Hitherto the army had been recruited from the homes of Covenanters; the rank and file were the resolute sons of the Covenant. The Scottish Parliament in by-gone years had made a law called the "Act of Classes", by which only those who had taken the Covenant were eligible to office in the government, or position in the army. The statesmanship of the Scottish fathers was profound; their military wisdom was from above. Civil government is God's gift to man. Why entrust it to other than

His people? The military power is to guard this trust. Why commit the guardianship to any but the loyal servants of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The king had the Act of Classes repealed that he might increase his army. He multiplied his regiments, but forgot "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." Three hundred may be better than thirty thousand. He accepted battle once more with Cromwell, suffered a terrible defeat, escaped from the country and remained an exile nine years. All honor to Gen. Leslie, and other faithful officers, who refused to serve after the ranks had been filled with men who feared not God nor regarded His Covenant!

Can we here find a lesson to lay upon our hearts? Covenanting with God is, possibly, the highest privilege on earth; Covenant-breaking is, possibly, the most dangerous sin. What can be worse? The Covenant-breaker destroys much good; brings wrath upon himself, and defeat, sorrow, and distress upon those whom he represents.

Points for the Class

1. How was the reign of King Charles I. ended?
2. What was the effort on the part of the Covenanters to secure a successor?
3. What were the prospects of the young prince?
4. What brought ruin upon him?
5. Why were the Covenanters now compelled to meet the English in battle?
6. With what results?
7. What was the "Act of Classes"?
8. Why was it repealed?
9. What was the effect?
10. What heinousness lies in Covenant-breaking?

(To be continued)

Psalm Thirteen

What Means The Hiding of His Face?

By the Rev. Frank D. Frazer

The wicked are still strutting about on every side in insolent contempt of God, and delighting to vent their malice by persecuting godly men. The vilest forms of sin are uncondemned, and gaining popularity. It seems as if God has forgotten; that He has hid His face from it all. Surely He does not see what is going on. The wicked are emboldened to say, "Everyone that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jehovah, and He delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of justice?" (Mal. 2:17b). And, on the other hand,

I. The Righteous Man is Troubled. (vs. 1, 2).

"How long? O Jehovah, wilt Thou forget me completely?"

"How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?"

**"How long shall I take counsel in my soul, —
Sorrow being in my heart all the day?"**

"How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?"

How long? is not here a question of doubt or complaint, but it is a cry of trouble, of anguish of soul, in bewilderment because of the limitations of human knowledge and understanding, and with a trembling desire to know, within God's will, the reason, **Why?** "Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness, **wherefore** lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he?" It is a cry that has been re-

peated by the people of God throughout the ages of human history, "How long? O Jehovah, wilt Thou be angry forever?" "O Jehovah of hosts, how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem?" "Jehovah, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?" To Isaiah's question, "Lord, how long?" the answer was given, "Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate," — only the stump of a tree remaining which shall be "for a holy seed." That is, until the temporal judgments of God have completed their part in His plan, then the fulfillment of His promises shall also be completed. This human cry on earth is continued even in heaven by those who, as martyrs for Jesus, had been faithful unto death. "How long, O Master, the Holy One and True, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood? . . . And there was given them, to each one, a white robe; and it was said to them that they should rest for a little while" — until their brethren in tribulation should also be delivered as they were, for, "not one of them shall perish."

To save sinners from their sin is difficult, complicated, entangled. The way was found only by infinite wisdom, patience, love, at infinite cost. "Seek Jehovah, and ye shall live." (Amos 5:4-9). "Seek ye Jehovah while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God,

for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways." (Is. 55:6-9.)

"As for God, His way is perfect." There is only one way, therefore there are no short cuts. The hiding of His face is part of His perfect plan. "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself." He says, "Seek ye My face." But, if His face were not hidden at times and places, from individuals and peoples, would any man need to "seek" His face? "If you seek Him, He will be found of you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you." "With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful; with the perfect Thou wilt show Thyself perfect; with the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; but with the perverse Thou wilt show Thyself froward."

God's judgments of wrath are as certain as His promises of grace. But, in His longsuffering mercy, His judgments are restrained until the appointed day of wrath. If the wicked are allowed to continue, and their wickedness to prosper, God is using them for His own gracious purposes. For one thing, that they may have further opportunity to repent; that everyone whom God has chosen may be turned to seek His face. For another, that the righteous may have the conditions necessary to their growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unrighteous under punishment to the day of judgment." Temptations, afflictions, and chastisements with the rod of the wicked, put to the test and purify the integrity and fidelity of the righteous, and provide the atmosphere in which faith is brought to full development. In these temptations and punishments of the present, God sometimes hides His face; sometimes reveals it with startling effect. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work." (Jas. 1:2-4.)

Against all true and faithful evangelism there are "many adversaries," who make urgent the need, and when God opens the door for the preaching, they can do nothing to thwart His purpose. Remember Elymas, the false prophet, who tried to turn the governor of Cyprus from the faith that Paul preached. He was suddenly punished with blindness, which event helped to give the governor such a realization of God's presence and power, that he believed the gospel to be what it is, the Word of God.

The hiding of God's face keeps man from seeing God, but it does not keep God from seeing all men in whatever condition they may be. It gives men a foretaste and warning of what final separation from God must mean. This Psalm has its

place in the present group of judgment Psalms, revealing the just judgments of God upon all who attempt to crush the truth and destroy the righteous from the earth, or forget God's hatred of sin.

The hiding of God's face leaves a man in darkness and deep distress. "How long shall I take counsel in my soul?" — seeking a reason for my trouble and some way of escape, "sorrow being in my heart all the day." Whatever may have been David's experiences that fitted him to write this Psalm, those of David's Son were immeasurably more fearful and painful because He knew the sin that is in man. The reason for the hiding of God's face is SIN to be found in every place deprived of His light. His sufferings were spiritual in the depths of His pure and holy soul; almost nothing is recorded of His physical sufferings. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death" said Jesus in Gethsemane. And on the cross in the darkness, there was wrung from Him that most profound and agonized expression of His real humanity, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" He knew and we know the reason was that He carried our sin in His own body.

The record adds at least three other occasions in which Jesus was sorely troubled: "He had indignation in His spirit and was troubled" at the grave of Lazarus, when He saw the hypocrisy and unbelief of the weeping Jews. Again, when the Greeks came asking to see Jesus, He realized afresh that to gain the harvest of the nations, He like the grain of wheat, must die. The great crisis loomed before His human nature with indescribable terror. "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" Then, as Godet punctuates, (Shall I say) "Father, save me from this hour? But for this came I to this hour." (No! I will say) "Father, glorify thy name." Instantly answer came in thunder tones out of heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." And, when the time had come for Him to reveal one of the twelve as the traitor, "Jesus was troubled in the spirit, and testified and said, as He gave Judas another appealing opportunity to repent of his perfidy, "Verily, verily, I say to you, one of you shall betray me."

"How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord Jehovah, wherefore hast Thou brought this people over Jordan to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us? . . . What shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies?" "Get thee up, wherefore liest thou thus on thy face? Israel hath sinned; yea, they have transgressed my covenant which I commanded them."

"What doest thou here Elijah?" "I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only am left; and they seek my life to take it away." "Go, return

on thy way." — the way assigned thee; do as I bid thee. "Turn us again, O God of hosts, cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

II. He Took His Trouble in Prayer to God. (vs. 3, 4.)

"Consider; give me answer, O Jehovah, my God.

"Enlighten mine eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death;

"Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed over him;

"(Lest) mine adversaries exult when I am shaken."

He pleads on covenant ground, "O Jehovah my God." For, being in covenant with God, he has a right to the promises. "The secret of Jehovah is for them that fear Him, and His covenant to make them understand." (Ps. 25:11.) "Enlighten mine eyes, lest I fall asleep. Enable me to see and understand what is taking place, lest I fail to act my part to the praise of the glory of Thy grace. Lest mine enemy boast of victory when I fall, and all mine adversaries triumph when I am shaken. Thou art my God, and I am one of Thy people. Their victory over me would be a victory against God, against Thy covenant, and against Thy people. "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." Three times He prayed, then "**Thou hast answered me.**" (Ps. 22:21.) The answer came full, satisfying and strengthening. "And when He rose from His prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and said to them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Immediately, He Himself faced the mob of murderers without a quiver, and went with them the rest of the way of obedience to God, unto death, even the death of the cross: and on to glory.

"If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent taking away of justice and righteousness in a province, marvel not at the matter; for One higher than the highest regardeth; and there are higher than they." (Eccles. 5:8.) Things are not always what they seem to human perception. "The dark shadow warriors on the wall by the fire-light, vanish in the light of the sun." "And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear." "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him and honor him."

III. Now He is Singing Praises to God for His Wonderful Grace. (vs. 5,6)

"**But I, even I had put my trust in Thy loving-kindness; (Now) my heart rejoices in Thy salvation. I am singing to Jehovah because He hath dealt bountifully with me.**"

"Saith Jehovah thy Redeemer, For a brief moment did I forsake thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on thee." "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. . . So brutish was I, and ignorant; I was like a beast before Thee." I had almost forgotten the Rock on which my feet had been set, and the safety in which I had been kept. But God never forgets, and now, "I will declare Thy name to my brethren: in the midst of the assembly I will praise Thee . . . For He hath not despised the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from him, but when he cried unto Him, He heard."

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened to you: but inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's suffering, rejoice, that at the revelation of His glory, you also may rejoice with exceeding joy."

Reviews of Religious Books

The favorable reviewing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Within the limits of the editorial policy of Blue Banner Faith and Life each reviewer is solely responsible for the opinions expressed in his reviews. Please purchase books from your book dealer or direct from the publishers; do not send orders to the manager of this magazine.

MISSION ON MAIN STREET, by Helga Bender Henry. W. A. Wilde Co., 131 Clarendon Street, Boston 16, Mass. 1955, pp. 200. \$2.00.

This book by Mrs. Henry is, as Dr. Wilbur M. Smith writes in the Preface, "the result of months of careful research in the histories of Los Angeles,

and in the files of the Union Rescue Mission. . . and the narrative is most carefully balanced — the dark periods and the disturbing experiences which the mission suffered from time to time are set down with the same thoroughness as the brighter days of the truly great achievements of the insti-

tution." It is a thrilling story of more than 60 years of Christian service.

The function of the Mission can perhaps be best expressed in the 'creed' of one of its most dynamic presidents, Joseph Berkley: "No law but love, and no Christ but the Son of God: I believe in soup, soap and salvation. . ." "The Union Rescue Mission organization," he declared, "is a company of fishermen, fishing in the great pool of humanity, seeking to help the helpless and save the lost." No less significant is the quotation of Rev. John B. Nield's definition of a rescue mission. "It is a soul saving place; a place where human wreckage is salvaged through the making over of lives by the Gospel's power. It is an oasis in a desert of despair; a haven of hope for the homeless and heavy-hearted; the salvage department of the church; the church at work downtown every night of the year. . . By the grace of God, it is able not only to put a new suit on a man, but much more important, to put a new man in the suit."

In this story, so simply and yet so compellingly told, we have the answer to those who have made the criticism that an evangelical Christianity has been so concerned with saving the souls of men that it has had no thought for their bodily needs; here, too, is the antidote for those whose faith would sometimes doubt the power of the grace of God. Here is a record of answered prayer, of spiritual and physical transformation, of consecrated Christian witness and service in a field where the difficulties seem insuperable, that can only stir the heart to thanksgiving and to the declaration: "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

— Hugh J. Blair

CHRISTIANITY IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE, by George T. Purves, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1955, pp. xx, 343. \$3.00.

This is a most admirable book, first printed more than fifty years ago. The Preface to the 1955 edition describes the author, Dr. George T. Purves, Professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis in Princeton Theological Seminary from 1892-1900, as "a conscientious scholar, a skillful exegete, careful in his judgments and conclusions, zealous for truth. He had a remarkable gift of clarity, orderliness and (when appropriate) conciseness of expression. He could condense the results of scholarly investigations in a non-technical but thoroughly accurate fashion, profitable for laymen as well as for ministers and scholars." This book abundantly confirms such an estimate of his ability and work.

Beginning with the Rise of Christianity in Jerusalem, Dr. Purves shows how the Christian faith had within it elements which made inevitable a break with the Judaism in which it was nurtured, and that it was destined to become a universal and complete message to mankind; and

the reader passes easily and naturally to the second section in which the Early Expansion of Christianity as depicted in Acts is vividly outlined. The chapters on the Apostle Paul and on the development of the church's organization from the organization and worship of the synagogue are particularly valuable.

The third section of the book, Judaic Christianity, traverses less familiar ground and shows a great deal of original thought, throwing valuable light on the situation lying behind the Council of Jerusalem, the Epistle of James and the Epistle to the Hebrews — a most stimulating study, showing that Judaic Christianity was destined ultimately to perish in giving birth to a universal faith.

The remaining sections, Expansion of Christianity under Paul, and Progress of Christianity to the Apostolic Age, trace the further history of Christianity in the Apostolic Age by most adequate and excellent summaries of the New Testament Epistles, set in the environment of new situations and in some cases of heretical teachings.

Dr. Purves shows himself a scholar who is well aware of the problems of New Testament interpretation, but his clarity of exposition makes his book clearly intelligible and eminently readable. Sometimes it may be that limitations of space compel him to discard without discussion views which deserve further exploration, and occasionally to appear to state his conclusions more dogmatically than the evidence warrants. For example, he gives the destination of the Epistle to the Hebrews as Jerusalem, though many scholars feel that the reference in ii. 3 implies that the readers had not been hearers of the Lord. As a rule, however, he does discuss alternative possibilities, however briefly, and then makes up his mind clearly and decisively. He shows a full knowledge of the work of other scholars, but is never afraid to take his own line in matters that are open to debate. Though the 'southern' theory of the destination of the epistle to the Galatians has steadily grown in favor since Ramsay strenuously affirmed it, Dr. Purves finds much to incline him to adhere to the 'northern' theory.

This reviewer found the reading of the book an intensely stimulating and rewarding experience and commends it heartily to all students of the New Testament.

One very minor source of purely personal irritation is the superfluous numbering of paragraphs as well as pages. This may be of some value for classroom study, but since paragraph numbers are seldom referred to in the text, and the references in the excellent index are to pages and not to paragraphs, it could well have been dispensed with. But that is no real criticism of what is an excellent book.

— Hugh J. Blair

LEADERS OF ISRAEL: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HEBREW PEOPLE, by George L. Robinson. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1955, pp. x, 246. \$2.75.

Someone has said that when a new book is published he proceeds to read an old one. The Baker Book House are by no means so cynical about the value of recent writings, but they realize the need for keeping constantly available writings of an earlier day which have proved their usefulness. This book, therefore, is a reprint of a work first published in 1906, when its author was Professor of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Chicago.

Beginning with Thomas Carlyle's dictum that "the history of the world is composed of the biographies of its great men," Professor Robinson gives a concise and adequate account of the history of the people from the earliest times to the downfall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

The book fulfils in an effective way the purpose with which it was written. It might be described as a most useful *vade mecum* for Bible students, for, as the author stresses in the preface to the first edition, it must be read with the Bible in hand. Useful summaries and revisions, diagrams and maps, and practical questions for discussion and devotional use make it particularly serviceable for Bible study, either by individuals or groups.

The book should, however, be used with care, for, while the author in his preface to the 1955 edition declares his conviction that the critical views of Wellhausen, Robertson Smith, etc., "are not standing the test," and that "faith is not engendered or strengthened through radical dissection," there are times when he is prepared to go further with such critics than the present reviewer considers wise. Thus, for example, he quotes with approval, (p. 42), Driver's statement that "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are, in outline, historically true, but their characters are idealized and their biographies in many respects colored by the feelings and associations of a later age." The questions of the authorship of the Pentateuch and of Isaiah 40-66, are dismissed as more or less irrelevant; speaking of Isaiah 40-66, Professor Robinson says, "One cares little about the origin of these prophecies, however, when he has once felt their power."

The questions for discussion and devotional study are for the most part helpful, though there are happier links with modern events than the question asked on p. 184 in connection with Jeremiah's writings, "What famous modern historian lost all his valuable MSS?"

Presumably Professor Robinson was limited by his own declared plan of study when he came to the New Testament period and described Jesus, (p. 238), as "the Greatest of Israel's Leaders:" one

would have liked some indication of Christ's uniqueness as Savior and Lord.

But, while noting some weaknesses in this book, the reviewer would commend it as a most useful companion to Bible study, and would suggest that anyone who works through it with Bible in hand will have a clear and ordered picture of the fascinating history of Israel, acquired with the help and guidance of one who was obviously a teacher *par excellence*.

— Hugh J. Blair

THE EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE OF THE LAW, by E. F. Kevan. The Tyndale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London, W. C. 1, England. 1956, pp. 28, paper cover. 1s. 6d. In U.S.A.: The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1444 N. Astor, Chicago 10, Ill.

This monograph was the 1955 Tyndale Biblical Theological Lecture delivered before the Tyndale (Graduate) Fellowship for Biblical Research, by the principal of London Bible College.

Principal Kevan reflects much of Reformed thought past and present on the subject of the law and its relation to the Christian. His thesis is that the law of God is the expression of the personality of God written on the conscience of man, and especially revealed (particularly through Moses) "to grapple with wrong doing and to direct the moral life of man" (p. 12). "The Law (as given to Israel) is to be regarded as a rule of life for those who have been brought into saving relations with God" (p. 13) i.e. a relation of grace and faith (p. 16). "Any change in relation to Law that occurs in Christianity is not in the Law but in the believer. Law is the same all the time: it still condemns and it still commands. To say that Christian conduct is now governed by holy principles is a convenient expression if it is the motives of the Christian life to which attention is to be drawn, but it is incorrect to employ it as if it meant any withdrawal or modification of the law. The believer's joyous use of the Law is consistent with the highest ideas of ethics, but it does not change Law into 'not-law'." (p. 25). He concludes with a brief discussion of the three reasons for the giving of the Law as stated in the Formula of Concord, 1576: (1) that a certain external discipline might be preserved and wild and intractable men might be restrained; (2) that by the Law men might be brought to an acknowledgement of their sins; and (3) that regenerate men, to all of whom, nevertheless, much of the flesh still cleaves, for that very reason may have some certain rule after which they may and ought to shape their life." All this is practical and stimulating.

There is, unhappily, a confused and confusing adverse criticism of Covenant Theology. The author says he agrees with the main positions of Covenant Theology, but that he finds it hard to accept "the concept of the Law as a 'covenant of

works' " (p. 14.) He says he cannot find a covenant of works' in the original relation between God and man. He sees Adam as already possessing life, not in need of receiving it through obedience. Covenant Theology does not conceive of Adam as receiving life for perfect obedience, but as being confirmed in the eternal possession of it for himself and his posterity through perfect obedience.

There is an exegesis of "another law" (Rom. 7:23) and "the law of sin" (v. 25) as being identical with the "holy, just and good" commandment of verse 12 in which the inner man delights (v. 22). These are explained to be expressive of a difference of function of law in the unsaved and the saved man: "In the experience which the grace of God brings to the believer, the Law of God as 'the law of sin and death' gives way to the Law of God as 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus': the one is displaced by the other." Though Paul does call the Law of God 'the law of sin and death' (8:2. See Hodge's commentary), it is quite contrary to the context of chapter 7 to identify 'the law of sin' and 'another law' with the 'holy, just and good' commandment. For they are distinctly placed in contrast, not as functions of law, but as of diverse origin. They are descriptive of the battle going on between the flesh and the Spirit as stated in Gal. 5:17. The folly of this exegesis as summarized in the quotation above will also be seen when one proceeds to verse three of the eighth chapter. It leaves it without meaning.

The Monograph Series are very profitable publications. Though unable always to agree fully with every writer, one will find them a valuable means of keeping informed on serious evangelical and reformed thought of the day, especially in Britain.

— E. C. Copeland

REDEMPTION — ACCOMPLISHED AND APPLIED, by John Murray. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich., 1955, pp. 236, \$3.00.

The charge has occasionally been laid against theologians that they tend to substitute "dead doctrines" for the living Christ, and offer men a creed in place of a Savior. While this charge may be true of certain kinds of theological teaching, and characteristic of a decadent church, the fact remains that truly Biblical doctrine and theology point constantly in one direction — to a personal, glorified Redeemer. Here we have an excellent demonstration of this truth, in a stimulating study on the Accomplishment of Redemption, and its application to the believer. Its author is professor of systematic theology in Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia. Professor Murray declares that "the essence of saving faith is to bring the sinner lost and dead in trespasses and sins into direct personal contact with the Savior himself, contact

which is nothing less than that of self-commitment to him in all the glory of his person and perfection of his work, as he is freely and fully offered in the Gospel. . . . The specific character of faith is that it looks away from itself and finds its whole interest and object in Christ. He is the absorbing preoccupation of faith." (p. 139)

As the title suggests, this book is divided into two parts. Part I — "Redemption Accomplished" — deals first with the necessity of the atonement, and then with its nature, perfection, and extent. Part II — "Redemption Applied" — includes chapters on effectual calling, regeneration, faith and repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, union with Christ, and glorification. The many Scriptural passages which are referred to throughout these studies have been skillfully exegeted, and reflect an honest and thorough handling of the Word. Professor Murray's system of outlining contributes a great deal to the clarity of his writings.

This book very clearly presents the Reformed view of God's plan of redemption, and shows it to be solidly founded upon the Scriptures. In insisting that regeneration must come before faith, and not as a result of faith, the author points out simply that as sinners we are dead in trespasses and sins. Faith is a whole-souled act of loving trust and self-commitment, of which we are incapable until renewed by the Holy Spirit. Christ testified to this fact when he said that no one could come unto Him except it were given unto him of the Father and except the Father draw him. (John 6:44, 65)

At the same time, Professor Murray emphasizes the place of human responsibility and activity in the application or redemption. He correlates regeneration to faith by saying that regeneration is the act of God and of God alone; but faith is not the act of God. It is by God's grace that a person is able to believe but faith is an activity on the part of the person. "In salvation God does not deal with us as machines; he deals with us as persons and therefore salvation brings the whole range of our activity within its scope." (p. 133) The fact that regeneration is the prerequisite of faith does not in any way relieve us of the responsibility to believe nor does it eliminate the priceless privilege that is ours as Christ and his claims are pressed upon us. In a similar vein, it is pointed out in the study on sanctification that while we must realize our complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit we must not forget that our activity is enlisted to the fullest extent in the process of sanctification. And again, in discussing the perseverance of the saints, the author makes some objection to the expression, "eternal security of the believer" and much prefers to speak of perseverance, because it means the engagement of our persons in the most intense and concentrated devotion to those means which God has ordained for the achievement of his saving purpose.

It is a pleasure to recommend this book as one which reveals most forcibly the warmth and the full emphasis of the Reformed Faith, as it glories in the redemption purchased by Christ.

— John M. McMillan

THE EVANGELICAL LIBRARY BULLETIN, Spring 1956; ADDRESSES at the Annual Meeting of The Evangelical Library, 1955. The Evangelical Library, 78a Chiltern St., London, W.1, England. No price stated.

These two booklets remind us of the splendid work being done by The Evangelical Library of London, England. The Bulletin, though brief, as usual contains a high quality of material. This issue includes an account of the life of the Puritan Richard Sibbes. The other booklet contains two addresses delivered at the annual meeting (1955) of The Evangelical Library. One of these is by the President, Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones; the other is by the Founder, Mr. Geoffrey Williams. Both bring out the great usefulness of The Evangelical Library and the high character of work being done by this institution.

Early in 1955 fire broke out in the Library's premises and destroyed or damaged some books, but in the Providence of God it was extinguished before extensive damage had been done. It is reported that many of the burnt books have now been replaced. The Library now has over eighty branches in Britain and overseas. It lends out sound Christian books by mail. It is clear that the Library is very discriminating as to the type of books placed on its shelves, limiting these to sound, orthodox works which will build up Christian faith rather than break it down. This splendid work is surely worthy of our commendation and support.

— J. G. Vos

SHOULD CHRISTIANS CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF CHRIST? by Joseph P. Duggan. The Society for Scriptural Faith and Worship, 1 East Clearfield Road, Havertown, Pa. 8-page folder, pocket size. 30c per dozen; \$2.00 per 100.

This tract on the question of the religious observance of Christmas takes a point of view which is extremely unpopular at the present day. The author, however, is not seeking popularity; he has a higher ideal, namely, conformity to the will of God revealed in the Scriptures. Taking the high and historically Reformed view that in the worship of God, all elements that are not commanded in the Word are automatically forbidden and to be excluded, the author clearly shows that the observance of Christmas is nowhere appointed in Scripture as a part of the worship of God. He shows that pious intentions do not justify a practice in worship; what is required is an objective warrant from the Word of God.

The pagan associations of Christmas are brought out in a manner that seems to this reviewer quite unanswerable. The last two paragraphs read as follows:

"Let no one reply that the celebration of Christ's birth engenders piety and devotion. True piety is only that which flows from the Word into our hearts. A piety which stems from our own invention, preserved by tradition, is nothing but a strong delusion.

"It is time that Protestants, who condemn the Roman Church for compromising with paganism, set their own house in order."

This booklet is heartily recommended to our readers.

— J. G. Vos

CHILDREN OF BELIEVING PARENTS, by John L. Fairly. Presbyterian Book Store, Box 1176, Richmond 9, Va. 6-page folder, pocket size. \$3.00 per 100.

This is a very good tract, from a Southern Presbyterian source, on the birthright church membership of children of Christian parents. The error of the common manner of speaking of children of Christian homes "joining the church" is very effectively exposed. The fact of children's birthright church membership, and its Scriptural basis, are clearly and convincingly set forth. Over against the individualistic tendency which is so strong at the present day, the tract sets forth clearly the covenantal conception of the family and the church, as well as the bearing of this on baptism. The implications of this view for Christian parents are also stressed. In our day when it seems almost hopeless to try to get professed believers in the Reformed Faith to think of their children as church members from birth, and to stop using the misleading expression "joining the church" of those who were baptized in infancy, this tract is a very significant piece of literature. It would be an excellent tract to place in quantities in church tract racks. Pastors should give a copy to every family with children, and especially to parents when their infants are baptized.

— J. G. Vos

THE TEXT, CANON, AND PRINCIPAL VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE, by Elmer E. Flack, Bruce M. Metzger, and others. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan. 1956, pp. 63. \$1.50.

This little volume contains a group of articles selected from the Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge. It is well printed in double columns, encyclopedia style. A great amount of important information is made readily available in these 63 pages.

Among the articles on the text of the Bible is one on the Dead Sea Scrolls by Dr. Millar Burrows of Yale University. This gives the main facts

concerning the discovery of the scrolls and their contents, together with an opinion as to their probable date and an appraisal of their significance.

While the contents of the book show great learning, they are not consistently orthodox in viewpoint. For example, the article on The Canon of Scripture (Old Testament) by Elmer E. Flack, states that the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) "apparently . . . was complete by the time of Nehemiah (432 B. C.) . . .". While of course this is literally true, it seems to indicate that the author does not believe that the Pentateuch was written by Moses about a thousand years before the time of Nehemiah. The same author speaks of "late sections in some prophecies" (p. 23) and affirms the existence of "the Second Isaiah" (p. 23).

The material on versions of the Bible is interesting and informative, but far from complete. For example, the Septuagint is the only ancient Greek version of the Old Testament mentioned;

the important versions of Onkelos, Theodotion, Symmachus and others are omitted.

The article on Annotated Bibles, by Howard Tillman Kuist, lists the extremely dispensational **Scofield Reference Bible** and **Pilgrim Edition of the Holy Bible**, and the modernistic **Interpreter's Bible** and **Westminster Study Edition of the Holy Bible**, without any warning concerning the doctrinal unsoundness of these works. The descriptions of these and other annotated Bibles are purely formal and mechanical, and furnish no guidance as to the doctrinal position of the works being described. This fact reduces the article to comparative worthlessness, for the important thing about an annotated Bible is not the type of marginal references and paragraphing, but the doctrinal viewpoint which it represents.

This volume is recommended for those who have sufficient knowledge and discernment to be able to weigh its statements and reject what is unsound.

— J. G. Vos

Books Received

The announcement of the books listed below should not be construed as a recommendation. A review of those found in this list which we regard as having value for our readers will be given in a later issue.

Publications of Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich.

THE SELF-DISCLOSURE OF JESUS, by Geerhardus Vos. 1954, pp. 311. \$4.00.

MAN OF SORROWS, by Herman Hoeksema. 1956, pp. 129. \$2.00.

ANCHOR OF HOPE, by Preston J. Stegenga. 1954, pp. 271. \$3.50.

PHILOSOPHY OF REVELATION, by Herman Bavinck. 1953, pp. x, 349. \$3.50.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE, by Bernard Ramm. 1954, pp. 368. \$4.00.

THE GOSPEL OF THE SPIRIT, by Samuel E. Peirce. 1955, pp. 104. \$1.50.

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS AND TO PHILEMON, by J. J. Mueller. 1955, pp. 200. \$3.50.

BY GRACE ALONE, by Herman Kuiper. 1955, pp. 165. \$2.50.

THE PARABOLIC TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE, by G. H. Lang. 1955, pp. 400. \$3.50.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR FOR GOD'S SAKE, by Herman Hoeksema. 1955, pp. 195. \$2.50.

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD, by W. H. Griffith Thomas. 1955, pp. xv, 303. \$3.00.

HOLY FIELDS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY LAND, by J. Howard Kitchen. 1955, pp. 160. \$2.50.

WITH JESUS ON THE NAVAJO ROAD, by Jacob and Christina Bolt. 1956, pp. 120. \$2.00.

THE TEACHING OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS, by Geerhardus Vos. 1956, pp. 124. \$2.00.

Publications of Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich.

DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS OF JOHN CALVIN, ed. by Charles E. Edwards. 1954, pp. 120, pocket size. \$1.00.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS, by Robert Johnstone. 1875, reprinted 1955, pp. xii, 490. \$3.95.

PROPHECY AND HISTORY IN RELATION TO THE MESSIAH, by Alfred Edersheim. 1901, reprinted 1955, pp. xxiv, 391. \$3.75.

THE CHURCH IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE, by William M. Ramsay. 1954, pp. 510. \$4.20.

I AND II THESSALONIANS, by William Hendriksen. 1955, pp. 214. \$4.50.

THE SECRET OF THE LORD, by William M. Clow. 1955, p. 353. \$2.95.

SEVEN WORDS OF LOVE, by G. Hall Todd. 1955, pp. 71. \$1.50.

THESE ALSO SUFFER, by William Goulooze. 1955, pp. 86. \$1.75.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, by David Thomas. 1955, pp. 493. \$3.95.

GLORY AWAITS ME, by William Goulooze. 1956, pp. 112. \$2.00.

Publications of Sovereign Grace Book Club, 413 S. E. First St., Evansville, Indiana.

EXPOSITION OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, by Robert Haldane, Vol. II (Chap. 4-7), pp. 310. \$2.00. Vol. III, pp. 160, \$2.00.

THE SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST, by Richard Baxter. Photo reprint of 1840 edition, pp. 176. No price stated.

PRAYER, by John Bunyan; THE RETURN OF PRAYERS, by Thomas Goodwin. 1955, pp. 60, paper cover. \$1.00.

KEEPING THE HEART, by John Flavel. 1955, pp. 96, paper cover. 75 cents.

Publications of The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 147 North 10th St., Philadelphia 7, Pa.

VOICES FROM HEAVEN AND HELL, by J. Marcellus Kik. 1955, pp. 192. \$2.50.

CHRISTIANITY AND EXISTENTIALISM, by J. M. Spier. 1953, pp. 140. \$3.00.

CHRISTIANITY AND IDEALISM, by C. Van Til. 1955, pp. 139, paper cover. \$1.80.

CALVIN AND AUGUSTINE, by Benjamin B. Warfield. 1956, pp. 507. \$4.95.

JESUS OF YESTERDAY AND TODAY, by Samuel G. Craig. 1956, pp. 186. \$2.75.

WHAT PRESBYTERIANS BELIEVE: AN EXPOSITION OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSIO, by Gordon H. Clark. 1956, pp. 130, paper cover. \$2.00.

Publications of W. A. Wilde Co., 131 Clarendon St., Boston 16, Mass.

THE LIVING BIBLE CHAPTER BY CHAPTER, by Amos R. Wells. 1955, pp. 343. \$2.00.

THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A YEAR, by Amos R. Wells. 1955, pp. 127. \$1.50.

PROTESTANT BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION, by Bernard Ramm. 1950, pp. 197. \$2.50.

Publications of the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Belvidere Road, Phillipsburg, N. J.

BIBLE DOCTRINE: UNIT ONE, BOOKS ONE AND TWO, by Dorothy Partington. 1955, two volumes, total about 325 pages, paper covers, plastic binding. Pupil's Workbook, \$1.25. Teacher's Manual, \$1.50.

THE FREE OFFER OF THE GOSPEL, by John Murray and Ned B. Stonehouse. 1955, pp. 27, pocket size, paper cover. 25 cents.

CONFESSING CHRIST, by Calvin K. Cummings. 1955, pp. 62, paper cover. 35 cents.

DO YOU BELIEVE, by Edward J. Young. 1954, pp. 37, paper cover. 25 cents.

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN? by Lawrence R. Eyres. 1954, pp. 38, paper cover. 25 cents.

A MESSAGE TO THOUGHTFUL INQUIRERS, by Henry W. Coray. 1954, paper cover. 15 cents.

ARE YOU A BIBLICAL BAPTIST? by George W. Marston. 1955, pp. 27, paper cover. 15 cents.

THE ORDAINED LAMPSTAND, by Edwards E. Elliott. 1955, pp. 11, pocket size, paper cover. 10 cents.

Publications of other Firms

THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST, by Arthur W. Pink. Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, Pa. 1955, pp. 313. \$3.95.

SCHEEBEN'S DOCTRINE OF DIVINE ADOPTION, by Edwin H. Palmer. J. H. Kok, N. V., Kampen, Netherlands. 1953, pp. xi, 202, paper cover. Florins 5.90.

TAUGHT OF THE LORD: HELPS FOR JUNIOR LEADERS, by Anna P. McKelvy. 1954, pp. 60. 8½ x 11 inches, plastic binding, paper cover. Order from Chester R. Fox, 209 Ninth Street, Pittsburgh 22, Pa. \$1.25.

THE REFORMED PULPIT (SYMPOSIUM), VOLUME I. Society for Reformed Publications, 1519 East Fulton St., Grand Rapids, Mich. 1955, pp. 145. \$2.00.

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN BAPTISM? by M. Eugene Oesterhaven. Society for Reformed Publications, 1519 E. Fulton St., Grand Rapids, Mich. 1956, pp. 59, paper cover. 50 cents.

NEW TESTAMENT MANUAL FOR HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY, by W. C. Rarick and C. R. Maxam. The Standard Publishing Co., Cincinnati, Ohio. 1927, pp. 61, paper cover. 40 cents.

CLOSER TO CHRIST VIA THE QUIET HOUR, by Caroline K. Sapsford. Inter-County Leader Publishers, Frederic, Wisconsin. 1952, pp. 81, paper cover. 75 cents.

CHRIST'S BRETHREN, by Cecil J. Lowry. The Tabernacle Book Room, 425 10th St., Oakland, Calif. 1950, pp. 60, paper cover. 50 cents.

WHITHER ISRAELI? MOSAIC RESTORATIONISM EXAMINED, by Cecil J. Lowry. The Tabernacle Book Room, 425 10th St., Oakland, Calif. 1955, pp. 69, paper cover. 50 cents.

THE KING JAMES VERSION DEFENDED! A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE NEW TESTA-

MENT MANUSCRIPTS, by Edward F. Hills. The Christian Research Press, 5011 Hickman Road, Des Moines, Iowa. 1956, pp. 158, paper cover. \$1.00.

LUKE THE PHYSICIAN, by William M. Ramsay. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1956 reprint of 1908 printing, pp. 418. \$4.50.

Reminder to Book Reviewers

We have failed to receive reviews of a considerable number of books from various persons who promised to write them. Some of these books have already been in the hands of the reviewers for many months. It would be much appreciated if the brethren concerned would make a special effort to complete the reviews and send them in soon. The deadline for the October-December

issue is September 1; for the January-March 1957 issue it is December 1, 1956. It is desirable to get the large backlog of "Books Received" cleared up soon if possible. We wish to express hearty appreciation to all who have helped by reviewing books in the past and to all who have kindly promised to review books in the foregoing list.

— Editor

Financial Help Needed

As stated in every issue, *Blue Banner Faith and Life* is partly dependent on voluntary contributions to meet necessary expenses of publication. At present (June 13) we are about \$550.00 short of the amount needed to complete publication for 1956 without a deficit. The Board of Publication of the Reformed Presbyterian Church has authorized an appeal for contributions to meet this need. If you have found *Blue Banner Faith and Life* helpful, will you help the magazine to meet expenses? All contributions are welcome, no matter

how small. Numbered receipts are sent promptly to all donors. If more than the needed amount is received, the surplus will be used for publication in 1957. If less than the needed amount is received, a second appeal will be published in the October-December issue stating the status of the matter at that time. Please make remittances payable to *Blue Banner Faith and Life* and mail them to 3408 7th Avenue, Beaver Falls, Pa.

— J. G. Vos, Manager

Church Discipline

By the Rev. William Heynen

Note: The following article on a very important subject was originally published in the September, 1952 issue of *Reformed Review* (New York City). It is reproduced here by permission, for which thanks are hereby expressed. The term **consistory**, which occurs repeatedly in the article, is equivalent to the term **session** as used in Presbyterian Churches of Scottish origin. It refers to the governing body in a congregation of the Church, in which the minister and elders exercise the authority committed to them by the Lord Jesus Christ. — Ed.

The following article had its genesis as a sermon preached to the Third Christian Reformed Church of Paterson in March of 1952. The sermon was preached on the basis of Matthew 18:15-18; and Lord's Day XXI, Question 85, of the Heidelberg Catechism. It has been recast somewhat for the sake of this wider publication, but if it

still carries a bit of the atmosphere of a sermon, it is due to the discipline of a pastor-preacher under which the writer lives and moves so constantly and with humble gratitude.

Church discipline is a matter of concern not just for the officers of the Church, but for every member of the Church. Whenever anyone makes public profession of faith in the Reformed Churches, he solemnly pledges before God and His Church that if he should become delinquent either in doctrine or in life he will submit to the admonition and the discipline of the Church. As such already the discipline of the Church becomes a very real thing for every Church member. But even beyond that Church discipline is something in which every member of the Church plays an active part; at least he should if he is a faithful member of the Church. For that very reason (the participation of the entire congregation in Church

discipline) it becomes very essential that every confessing Christian also have a very clear understanding of what Church discipline is and what its faithful exercise implies.

Three aspects of this important subject demand our attention at this time: **Its Necessity, Its Object, and Its Responsibility.**

ITS NECESSITY

We can say without fear of contradiction that the Bible teaches the necessity and the urgency of Christian discipline — or Church discipline. Permit me to refer to a few of the many passages which could be cited: Matthew 18:17, John 20:23; Matthew 18:17. In these passages the Church is given the keys of the kingdom, including the key of Church discipline. Paul, in writing to Titus (Titus 3.10, 11) also very strongly exhorts Titus that he should make use of those keys, and in writing to the Corinthians (I Cor. 5) he again stresses that those who were evil doers and those who refused to repent should be put out of the Church. In II Thessalonians, the third chapter, we read, "And if any man obeyeth not our word, note that man that you have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed." And so at the outset may I say very emphatically that the Scripture abundantly teaches and urges the necessity of Church discipline.

Permit me to take this just a step farther, however. Just what are the objectives or purposes of Church discipline? Just why should we exercise Church discipline? I am sure that when we examine these just a little bit more closely the urgency of discipline will become even more clear.

John Calvin, our great Reformed church father, outlines the objectives of Church discipline as being these three: that the name of God may not be blasphemed, to safeguard the Church, and to bring sinners to shame and to repentance. One of our great Dutch theologians, Dr. F. L. Rutgers, reverses the order in his presentation, and I would like to do that also.

The first objective — the main objective I would even dare say — the basic objective — the very thrust of Church discipline, of Christian discipline is to bring sinners to repentance. This is always the purpose and the goal of Church discipline. All too frequently this is misunderstood. There are many people who are under the impression that the goal of Church discipline is to get rid of someone. That isn't true at all! The purpose of Church discipline is not to get rid of people but to keep them. The purpose of Church discipline is not to put people out of the Church but to bring them to repentance and to God. Our whole system of Church discipline is geared to and set up in that direction and to that purpose.

This is true of discipline no matter where it

is carried on. We don't discipline our children in the home because we want to get rid of them, but because we want to keep them as loyal, obedient children. In the school the child is not disciplined with the idea of putting him out, but he is disciplined with the idea of making a good scholar out of him. And so in the Church, a person is not disciplined with the idea of removing him, but with the idea of making a loyal and a faithful and a consistent Church member of him as a true child of God and a loyal follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Church discipline, therefore, in its basic thrust has a very gracious and a very saving purpose. It is part of the saving ministry of the Church; it is part of the helping ministry of the Church.

The Roman Emperor, Theodosius the Great, went to Thessalonica during one of his wars, and on a whim killed thousands of innocent citizens with no reason whatsoever. He returned to the city of Milan and the next Sabbath morning was going to go to Church. At the door of the Church Bishop Ambrose met the Emperor and he barred his way to the church. After some discussion the Emperor confessed his sins in tears and was accepted into the church. That's the purpose of Church discipline — to bring sinners to repentance. And isn't that just exactly what the Church is here for — to bring sinners to repentance? Isn't that the burden of the ministry of the Church? Aren't we told that there is joy among the angels in heaven over one sinner that repenteth? Therefore, we must exercise Church discipline.

The second objective of Church discipline is the welfare of the Church. As Calvin put it, "Lest those who are disobedient and wayward lead others to sin and to destruction." Anyone who wants to take a very honest and frank look at the history of the Church, and especially the history of the American Church, will have to concede that a sacrifice of the exercise and principles of Church discipline has invariably been one of the initial steps to the downfall of the Church. Many illustrations could be cited to verify that point. A faithful exercise of Church discipline stimulates loyalty and faithfulness to the Church. It puts us on guard against sin and the devil, and it charges us with very solemn and very holy obligations to our fellow Church members.

A faithful exercise of Church discipline, moreover, unites the Church in a prayerful struggle against everything that stands over against the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus, speaking to John on the Island of Patmos, gives His message to the seven Churches in Asia Minor, we find some very interesting things. In several cases we find that Jesus says, "I have this against you." And invariably it was that they were permitting within the Church certain practices and teachings which should not be permitted. All of the condemnations and judgments which Jesus pro-

nounced upon the churches of Asia Minor could be summed up in one concept. "You are not faithfully exercising discipline. That's what I have against you." If the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ is to rest upon the Church, if His favor is to smile upon us, and if the Church is to prosper, discipline must be faithfully exercised. On the other hand, the surest way to sell out the Church to the evil one is to grow weak on this business of Church discipline.

And thirdly, the glory of God demands it — "that the name of God be not profaned." People often speak in a very ridiculous way about Church discipline. The Church is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It belongs to Him, and He is the head of the Church. It is not just a group of people. It is not a democratic organization where the majority rules. The Church is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the only way you can be a member of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in that true spiritual sense is to be united to Christ in a living and in a consistent life of faith and obedience. That being the case, Church discipline becomes a matter of loyalty to Christ, not loyalty first of all to the consistory or to the minister, or to the rest of the Church members. That's where the emphasis must be placed. Jesus, in Revelation, says, "Repent, therefore, or I will come to thee quickly and war against thee with the sword of my mouth." Let's never forget that Jesus sets His standards high and that He demands absolute loyalty and that Christ had no time for those who said, "Lord, Lord," but were not willing to pay the price of being Christians. If we do not intend to live a Christian life, and if we not intend to be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ, then for Christ's sake we should not be hypocrites. If we as churches are not willing to bow to the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, then let's not call ourselves the Church of Christ. The calling of the Church is to exalt the name of our Saviour, and by that very token the calling of the Church is to fight against everything that degrades His name. It is in this framework that Church discipline becomes not a matter of choice, not a matter of something that we may do, but something which is demanded of the Church — something which we may not neglect.

ITS OBJECTS

Who become objects of Church discipline? In our Heidelberg Catechism, and I think that is justified by Scripture, a distinction is made between two classes of people who fall under Church discipline: those who hold and teach un-Christian doctrines, and those who are ungodly in walk.

First of all, then, those who are wayward in doctrine. That may sound a bit strange to some people in this day of doctrinal indifference. Today people say, "I can believe what I please — nobody can tell me what I have to believe." Well, if you

are a member of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, you can't believe what you please. Paul says that even though an angel from heaven should come and preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed. To Timothy he writes about Hymenaeus and Philetus, who taught false doctrines, "They must be delivered unto Satan." John — oh, you know people like to talk about John as the great apostle of love — but it was John who said, "If anyone denieth that Jesus is the Christ, he is not of God." Peter stresses the great threat of false teachers, and so does Christ in Revelation. This doesn't mean that some little insignificant point of doctrine is going to become a matter of Church discipline, but when basic truths of the Christian faith are denied, the discipline of the Church must come into play.

Secondly, there are those who are ungodly in walk or in life. It is not my intention to catalogue sins which are censurable. We have the law and Christ's summary of that law. We have our Bibles in which that law is interpreted. Paul, in I Corinthians 6, gives us a long list of those who shall not inherit the kingdom. God's unchanging Word gives us the principles by which we as Christians must live. And if we depart from these principles and do not walk according to them, discipline must be exercised.

But there is something else. We never exercise formal Church discipline because of some specific sin that has been committed. That may sound strange to you. May I repeat that? We never exercise formal Church discipline because of the specific sin which has been committed. Church discipline comes into play when those who have committed a sin refuse to repent of that sin. This is very carefully expressed in the words of our Heidelberg Catechism, and in our Church Order, and in our whole procedure of Church discipline. This is basic. There may be a man who is a condemned murderer, who will spend the rest of his life in jail, but he may be a member in good and regular standing in the Church if he has sincerely repented of his sin and confessed it to God and before His Church. On the other hand, there may be a man who has done no more than say an evil word to his neighbor, but if he refuses to repent of it and confess that sin, he may ultimately be placed outside of the kingdom of Christ. It is not the nature of the sin that determines it, it is the repentance or the lack of repentance that determines it. I think that can stand a good deal of emphasis. Even the smallest sin unrepented and unconfessed is far more serious than that most gross sin humbly and sincerely confessed and repented of.

Church discipline — may I say it again, is exercised not because of the nature of the sin but because of lack of repentance of that sin, and that is abundantly evident in all of the announcements which are made in the exercise of Church discipline. It is also abundantly evident in the

form for excommunication (Christian Reformed). In the form for excommunication, the nature of the sin isn't even mentioned. A person is not disciplined because he neglects the means of grace, or because he commits adultery, or because he commits some other sin, but he is disciplined because he does not repent of that sin. Church discipline always aims to bring the sinner to repentance.

ITS RESPONSIBILITIES

Now then, finally, a word on the responsibilities. First of all the responsibilities of Church discipline rest upon the congregation as a whole. Matthew 18 must be referred to in this connection. Even before any particular offense becomes a consistory matter, it is the responsibility of every single person who calls himself a Christian to be a disciplinarian in the Church. "If your brother sin" — and by the way in the original it doesn't necessarily mean if he sins against you — "If your brother sins, go to him and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." That's my business and your business as Church members. That's the duty of every single member of the Church. To be sure we like to pass this responsibility on to someone else. We say, "Let the consistory go see him," or, "Let the minister do it." Jesus makes it so abundantly clear, however, that if you are aware of someone living in sin, it is your business to go to him and tell him his fault between thee and him and seek to gain the brother. If you don't do it — mind you — if you don't do it you become co-guilty. Thus this matter of discipline becomes a very solemn responsibility for every single confessing Christian. We become mutually responsible to each other — I to you and you to me. I might say in that connection that failure to exercise the principles of Matthew 18 is in itself a censurable sin.

Permit me to mention in passing that I can see no reason why the minister and the consistory should not be included in this exercise of Matthew 18. If a member of the Church is convinced that the minister or the consistory are in error, it would seem to be clear, on the basis of Scripture, that it is not his privilege to gather a little group of friends and start agitation in the Church. That in itself would be a censurable sin. Such a member of the Church would have one responsibility and one privilege only, and that would be to go to the consistory and tell them of their error.

Moreover, after official Church discipline once goes into action, and the first announcement is made, it definitely becomes the responsibility of the entire congregation. Already in the first announcement the congregation is urged to pray for the erring one. And as the announcements proceed the congregation is urged to exhort him, to speak to him, to seek to lead him to repentance; not to encourage him in what he has done, not to go to him and say, "It's too bad that the con-

sistory is getting so rough with you." It has not been unknown that members of the Church have gone to those who were under censure and have stirred them up against the Church, have sympathized with them, and hardened them in their sin. This is sinful! The solemn responsibility of the member of the Church, as a member of the body of Christ, is to assume the responsibility of Christian discipline. We remind you once again that the Church as a whole exercises discipline, and to undermine the official program of discipline of the Church is a definite act of disloyalty to the Church and to Christ.

Being a member of the body of Christ brings upon us solemn responsibilities. We march as the Army of the Lord Jesus Christ to war, and it demands that each one of us as soldiers must be willing to shoulder his weapons and to fight for that which is truth and that which is right. If we are not willing to do that, we have no place in the army!

And now coming to official Church discipline, just a few comments. Official Church discipline is always to be exercised in the spirit of love and of concern for souls. This doesn't omit firmness, of course, but never must it be done in a spirit of bitterness. Jesus says, "that you may gain the brother." Paul says, "That he may be somewhat spared that although his body may be condemned that his soul may yet be saved." That loving devotion to bringing souls to repentance must always be the deep motivation behind the discipline of the Church, whether that be the consistory, or by individual members. Always go to them in love, pleading with them, urging them for the sake of Christ to repent and to turn to obedience and life.

Discipline must be exercised faithfully and diligently. It's difficult work. It demands self-sacrifice. In this connection may I encourage our elders as they shoulder the burden of the solemn responsibility of Church discipline. I know that it is difficult, but for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ we must do it.

And finally, the Scripture is our only guide. We may not be arbitrary in this work. We may not discipline each other just because we don't happen to like the way somebody looks or acts. The Bible remains our standard, the Word of God remains our criterion of judgment, and with the Bible in our hands we move forward to strengthen each other in the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the most beautiful pictures we have of the Church is that of the body of Christ. Paul establishes that organic relationship between members of the Church. No member of the Church, who is loyal and faithful, can ignore the rest of the body. My hand can't ignore my eye, nor my eye my hand. And so each member of the Church is bound with a living bond to every other member of the Church and has a solemn responsibility towards him. We are one body in Christ, and as such we have mu-

tual responsibilities to each other. And it is only as we all face and accept those responsibilities sincerely, humbly, and faithfully, that the body of Christ can be united in true Christian love and fellowship.

We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

Some Noteworthy Quotations

Our faith, and all right worship of God, depend, in no small degree, upon our knowledge of the doctrine of predestination.

— Martin Luther

I do maintain that the Shorter Catechism, with its marvellous comprehensiveness and its faithfulness to Scripture, with its solemnity and its tenderness, is the truest and noblest summary of what the Bible teaches that I have ever seen.

— J. Gresham Machen

We are indebted to God for the good works we do, and not He to us.

— The Belgic Confession

The highest privilege of New Testament saints is to be partakers of the inheritance promised to Abraham.

— Charles Hodge

There is little we touch but we leave the print of our fingers behind.

— Richard Baxter

I see mustering within the ranks of the Church of God men who say they hate all creeds, meaning that they despise all truth, men who would fain be ministers amongst us and yet tread under foot all that we hold sacred, not teaching at first the fulness of their infidelity, but little by little gathering courage to vent their unbeliefs and heresies. Credophobia is maddening many. They appear to fear lest they should believe anything, and to hope that there is something good to be found in Atheism, or devil worship, — indeed in all religions except the only true one.

— Charles H. Spurgeon

Let us have comfort, for despite all that can be done by men and devils not one elect soul shall be lost, not one soul redeemed by blood shall be snatched out of the Redeemer's hand. Christ shall not lose so much as a grain of glory, neither in earth nor in heaven.

— Charles H. Spurgeon

Church membership today often means nothing more, as has well been said, than a vague admiration for the moral character of Jesus; the Church in countless communities is little more than a Rotary Club.

— J. Gresham Machen

The Bible is fitted and intended, when rightly used and improved, to be far more extensively

useful and effectual, as a rule or standard of faith and practice, than men commonly suppose or experience.

— William Cunningham

It is an evidence that we are gracious men if we can look upon the lives of others that are better than we, and love and esteem them glorious.

— Richard Sibbes

Spiritual convincing is not total in this life, but always leaves in the heart some dregs of doubting. As a ship that rides at anchor is tossed, but the anchor holds it, so it is with the soul that is convinced weakly; it is sure of the main, yet it is tossed with many doubts and fears, but the anchor is in heaven.

— Richard Sibbes

Every sin is a kind of cursing God in the heart (Job 1:5), an aim at the destruction of the being of God, not actually, but virtually; not in the intention of every sinner, but in the nature of every sin. That affection which excites a man to break His law, would excite him to annihilate His being if it were in his power. A man in every sin aims to set up his own will as his rule, and his own glory as the end of his actions, against the will and glory of God; and could a sinner attain his end, God would be destroyed. God cannot outlive His will and His glory; God cannot have another rule than His own will, nor another end than His honor.

— Stephen Charnock

The Lord Jesus Christ hath instituted Church Discipline, in order to remove scandals, and prevent their unhappy effects; and no Church can, without the faithful and spiritual application of it hope for His countenance and blessing.

— R. P. Testimony

The impartial and prudent exercise of Church Discipline is useful for vindicating the honor of Jesus Christ, maintaining the dignity of His ordinances, preserving the purity of the Church, averting the judgments of God, and for the benefit of the offender himself, that by the administration of this ordinance of Christ, through grace, he may be humbled and recovered.

— R. P. Testimony

Experience shows that the neglect of discipline is speedily followed by corruption of worship, of doctrine and of government.

— R. P. Book of Discipline

Religious Terms Defined

RATIONALISM. The doctrine that the human faculty of reason is the supreme authority for faith and life.

MYSTICISM. The belief that God and His will can be known by a direct intuition of the human soul, and that religion therefore is independent of historical facts, and both historical revelation and historical redemption are unnecessary.

REVELATION. An activity of God by which He communicates truth to men.

NATURAL REVELATION. God's communication of truth to men through the world of nature, including the human heart and conscience. Also called General Revelation.

SUPERNATURAL REVELATION. God's communication of truth to men directly, apart from His natural revelation. Also called Special Revelation.

INSPIRATION. An activity of God the Holy Spirit by which the writers of the books of the Bible were so influenced that the product of their writing is truly the Word of God.

VERBAL INSPIRATION. The doctrine that the actual written words of the Bible, in the genuine text of the original Hebrew and Greek, are themselves all truly the Word of God. Also called Plenary (Full) Inspiration.

INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE. The doctrine that the Bible is free from errors.

INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE. The doctrine that it is impossible for the Bible to contain any errors.

RULE OF FAITH AND LIFE. "The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him." (S.C. 2).

CANON OF SCRIPTURE. The list of the books which are recognized as Scripture.

ILLUMINATION. An activity of God the Holy Spirit in the mind of a human being, by which the latter is enabled to understand the true meaning of the Scriptures.

EXEGESIS. Drawing out the meaning of a text or portion of Scripture by a painstaking, accurate study of its words, context and historical setting.

ANALOGY OF SCRIPTURE. The teaching of the Bible as a whole, on any subject, considered as a key to the interpretation of a particular portion of Scripture.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM. That science which, by a methodical comparison of manuscripts and

other ancient evidence, seeks to eliminate errors which have occurred in the process of copying, and thus to determine the genuine text of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures.

GOD. "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." (S.C. 4).

ATHEISM. The denial of the existence of God.

MATERIALISM. The false doctrine that nothing exists except material substance and physical energy (a form of atheism).

POLYTHEISM. Belief in many gods.

PANTHEISM. The false system which holds that everything is divine, or that God is the soul of the universe, and that God attains personality and self-consciousness only in man.

HUMANISM. The false system which regards the human race as existing for its own sake, consider's man's chief end to be his own welfare, and looks upon God and religion as means for promoting the progress of humanity.

DEISM. The false system which holds that God created the universe and then left it to function automatically without divine providential control.

THEISM. The truth that there is a personal, almighty God, who is the Creator and Ruler of all things and is distinct from the universe.

SELF-EXISTENCE OF GOD. The truth that God exists of Himself, independently of all other beings, without a cause, without an origin, and without a purpose outside of Himself. (The same truth is sometimes expressed by saying that God is a self-contained Being).

PERSONALITY OF GOD. The truth that God is a Being possessing freedom and self-consciousness, who can call Himself "I" and whom we can call "Thou."

TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD. The truth that God is not only distinct from the universe, but also far above, behind and beyond it, and that there is absolutely nothing beyond God. (The Bible expresses this by saying that God dwells on high).

IMMANENCE OF GOD. The truth that God is everywhere in the universe, and that absolutely nothing great or small could exist without His continual presence in it.

UNITY OF GOD. The truth that there is only one living and true God.

TRINITY OF GOD. The truth that the one God exists in three Persons, the Father, the Son

and the Holy Spirit, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. The absolute, unchallengable authority of God over the entire universe, by which He orders everything for His own glory, according to the counsel of His own will.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. Those qualities of God's nature which make Him the kind of Being He is.

INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. Those attributes of God which God alone can possess, such as to be almighty, infinite, unchangeable.

COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. Those attributes of God which can be bestowed on angels and men, such as wisdom, holiness, goodness, love.

Studies in the Book of Genesis

LESSON 124

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

We have now come to chapter 29, which narrates Jacob's arrival at the home of his uncle Laban. "Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east" (29:1). This expression, "the land of the people of the east," as used here, evidently means the area between Palestine and Mesopotamia. Nothing further is said about Jacob's journey through "the land of the people of the east." In verse 2 he has already arrived at Mesopotamia where his kindred lived.

Two words in verse 2 — "behold" and "lo" — indicate that the fact stated in the verse is a remarkable one, namely that Jacob had reached the very locality where his kindred lived. Jacob has reached a well where flocks of sheep were regularly watered. "A great stone was upon the well's mouth." Discoveries in Bible lands indicate that such wells ordinarily were not springs of "living water" but rather supplies of stored-up water. The narrative explains that it was the custom to wait until all the flocks of the various shepherds were assembled, then open the well, water the sheep, and cover the well again. In verse 7 Jacob expresses surprise that they should be waiting there with sheep long before evening, thus losing time that could be spent in grazing, but he is told that the sheep cannot be watered until all have arrived. This apparently means that there was a common custom or agreement that the well was to be opened but once, for all the flocks together, and some shepherds would arrive early in the hope of being first to water their sheep; then they would have to wait there in idleness until the rest had arrived.

Jacob inquires of the shepherds as to whence they are and is told that they are of Haran. Asked whether they know Laban the son of Nahor, they reply that they do. It seems that Jacob and these

shepherds spoke the same language, or at any rate that his language and theirs were close enough that they could understand each other without difficulty. Doubtless Jacob was surprised to learn that he had arrived at his exact destination. He inquires whether Laban is well, and is told that such is the case. In addition, Jacob is told that Rachel, Laban's daughter, is soon to arrive with a flock of sheep. Very likely Jacob may have wished that the shepherds would water their sheep and move on, while they on their part wanted to be present to witness the meeting of Jacob and Rachel.

Presently Rachel arrived with her father's sheep. Jacob first looks at Rachel, then at the sheep. Rachel, of course, was his first cousin, the daughter of his mother's brother. Jacob then by his own unaided strength removes the great stone from the top of the well, and waters Rachel's flock of sheep, no doubt to the surprise of the other shepherds who would be accustomed to move the stone by the united strength of two or three men.

First Jacob kisses Rachel, then tells her who he is. We might think it would have been more proper for him to disclose his identity first, and kiss her after that, when she knew he was her cousin. Rachel must have been rather surprised at being kissed by a total stranger. The record does not indicate whether this was "love at first sight" or only Jacob's joyous surprise at meeting one of his kindred. Jacob was evidently a man of powerful emotions, for having kissed his cousin, he "lifted up his voice, and wept" (29:11). After this, Jacob tells Rachel that he is "her father's brother", that is, her father's relative or kinsman, the son of Rebekah. Rachel in turn runs — apparently leaving the flock of sheep at the well — to tell the news to her father.

We have met Laban earlier in the book of Genesis. It was in chapter 24 where he as Rebekah's brother took a leading part in the negotiations for the marriage of Rebekah to Isaac. In

the same chapter Laban's acquisitive nature was brought out, when having noted the valuable gold nose-ring and bracelets displayed by his sister, he said to Abraham's servant, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?" (24:31). As we shall soon see, Laban has not changed in character but continues true to form.

Laban runs to the well to meet Jacob, greets him according to custom, and brings him to the family home as a guest. Jacob then gives Laban a report of himself, including no doubt how he came to meet with Rachel, and perhaps also his reasons for leaving his home.

Laban treats Jacob as a welcome guest, saying "Surely thou art my bone and my flesh" (29:14), that is, a near relative who would have a special claim to hospitality. Jacob remains there as a guest in the household for one month.

Next Laban proposes a more permanent arrangement. He recognizes that Jacob will make a competent shepherd, and proposes that he, Laban, shall employ him at wages to be agreed upon. This proposal of Laban may have been in good faith, even though we know that Laban was a selfish and tricky person in his dealings with others.

The record states that Laban had two daughters, of which the elder was Leah and the younger Rachel. Leah means "wild cow," while Rachel means "ewe." Leah was "tender-eyed," Leupold in his commentary states that this does not imply any diseased condition nor even defective vision, but merely the lack of "that clear-cut brilliance and lustre that the Orientals love" (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, II, p. 793). Rachel, on the other hand, is described as "beautiful and well-favored," that is, beautiful in form and looks (Leupold). Jacob definitely prefers Rachel, and proposes to Laban that he serve him seven years for his younger daughter Rachel. We should remember that when this proposal was made, Jacob had been living in Laban's household for a month already, therefore this was not exactly a sudden proposal of marriage.

Laban agrees to Jacob's offer, saying that he

would rather have his daughter marry Jacob than some other man. The offer is therefore accepted and Jacob serves the seven years that he has promised in order to marry Rachel. "And they sowed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her" (29:20). Jacob is looking forward to marriage with his beloved Rachel, quite unsuspecting of the mean trick his uncle Laban is planning to play on him.

Questions:

1. What is meant by "the land of the people of the east"?
2. What kind of well, probably, was the well which Jacob came to?
3. Why was Jacob surprised at the gathering of the shepherds at the well long before evening?
4. What explanation of this was given him by the shepherds?
5. What did Jacob do immediately after meeting Rachel?
6. What is strange about the circumstances of Jacob's kissing Rachel?
7. Where in the Book of Genesis have we already met Laban?
8. What trait of his character was revealed there?
9. How did Laban welcome Jacob, and what hospitality was given him?
10. What arrangement does Laban propose to Jacob?
11. What is the meaning of the names Leah and Rachel?
12. What, probably, is implied by the statement that Leah was tender-eyed?
13. What agreement was made between Laban and Jacob?
14. What fact indicates Jacob's love for Rachel?

LESSON 125

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Essau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

The seven years that Jacob promised to work for his marriage to Rachel have passed. The proper thing at this point would have been for Laban to take the initiative and arrange for the marriage feast. But the true character of Laban is suggested by the fact that he neglects to do so, thereby forcing Jacob to demand that Laban keep his agreement. "And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may

go in unto her" (29:21). This is a rather short and plain-spoken demand. It may be regarded as an indication that Jacob has already sized up Laban's character and realizes that he will not do the honorable thing without some pressure.

Upon Jacob's demand, Laban prepares a marriage feast. It is to be a community affair: "And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast" (29:22). Laban's tricky character here comes more fully to light. While it was probably customary to invite the public to a marriage feast, still, as Leupold points out, this fitted in exactly with what Laban was secretly plotting. When Jacob finally finds himself mar-

ried to Leah by fraud, the fact that there were many guests present at the feast will make it difficult and embarrassing for him to reject Leah. Laban, of course, is deceitfully plotting to get his elder daughter Leah married off.

"And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her" (29:23). This was indeed a mean, dishonorable and shameful trick to play on a man. Jacob's mean deceiving of his aged father Isaac is coming home to him now in personal experience. He is learning by bitter experience how it feels to be deceived by a near relative in a supremely important personal matter.

Some have wondered how Laban could deceive Jacob successfully. It has even been suggested that Jacob must have been drunk at the time, or that Laban had intentionally gotten him drunk. This supposition is quite unnecessary, and there is nothing in the narrative to support it. While it would indeed be quite impossible to palm off the wrong woman on a bridegroom at an American wedding of the present day, things were different in Mesopotamia three thousand and more years ago. Leupold in his commentary suggests several considerations which adequately explain how Laban could successfully deceive Jacob. For example, it was already dark when Leah was brought to Jacob. Probably there was no artificial illumination in the tent. Leah would be heavily veiled, according to the prevailing custom of the day. Very likely the two sisters differed only in facial appearance, not in size or height. Presumably, too, conversations would be whispered during that night, and the bride would naturally be reticent. Also betrothed persons did not associate closely prior to marriage as is customary today. These and other considerations that can be suggested seem quite sufficient to account for the possibility of Jacob having been successfully deceived by his uncle Laban.

The guilt of this shameful deceit rested primarily upon Laban, but part of the blame must be borne by Leah. Even allowing for the weight of parental authority in those days, Leah's connivance in her father's plan cannot be excused. It was a clear-cut issue of right and wrong. It is unquestionable that Leah must have realized this. The only right course would have been to refuse to be a party to such disgraceful deception. Leah could have refused when the matter was first proposed to her by her father. Or she could have revealed her true identity to Jacob as soon as she was brought to his tent. But she did not, and thereby she became guilty along with Laban of the sin that was committed. As to Leah's motives, the record gives us no information. She may have been secretly in love with Jacob; she may have been jealous of her younger sister; she may have regarded this as her last and only chance to get a husband.

Laban at the same time gives Leah Zilpah his maid for a maidservant. Leah is treated less generously than Rebekah had been, for Rebekah on the occasion of leaving home for marriage to Isaac had received both a nurse and a group of damsels (24:59, 61). The stingy character of Laban becomes more and more evident.

The next morning, of course, Laban's outrageous deceit is discovered. We can only imagine the shock that this must have been to Jacob. After patiently working seven years for Rachel, the unwanted Leah has been palmed off on him by base trickery. The feelings of disillusionment, anger and disgust must have been mingled in Jacob's mind.

Jacob immediately takes Laban to task for his deceit. "What is this that thou hast done unto me? did I not serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me" (29:25). Jacob thus charges Laban not only with deceit, but with breaking his agreement.

Laban's reply is apparently based on the notion that "a poor excuse is better than none." He lamely states that the common custom of the community requires that the elder daughter be married before the younger. This may, of course, have been true. If so, the time for Laban to mention it would have been at the time of making the original agreement, not after Jacob has served seven years for the younger daughter. On the other hand, Laban may have been lying or at any rate distorting the truth. It is possible that there was only a certain amount of public opinion in favor of the elder daughter marrying first, rather than a hard and fast custom that amounted practically to law. If Laban is not actually lying, he may be exaggerating a good deal in his statement to Jacob about the local customs.

Questions:

1. How was the stingy and base character of Laban evidenced at the end of Jacob's seven years of service?
2. What action was Jacob forced to take to obtain his rights?
3. What preparation did Laban make for the marriage feast?
4. Why may Laban have wanted to have a large number of guests?
5. What event in Jacob's earlier life is similar to Laban's treatment of him?
6. How can we explain Laban's success in deceiving Jacob?
7. Why can Leah not be excused for her share in the deceit?
8. What may possibly have been Leah's motives?

9. What feelings must Jacob have experienced when he discovered how his uncle had deceived him?

10. What accusations did Jacob make against Laban?

11. What reply did Laban make to Jacob's charges?

12. How can it be shown that Laban's reply was insincere?

LESSON 126

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Having blamed his deceitful conduct on the customs of the country, Laban next says to Jacob: "Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years" (29:27). This statement of Laban has sometimes been misunderstood, as if the statement "Fulfil her week" was a reference to the additional seven years of service necessary if Jacob was to marry Rachel. The idea of this interpretation is that the term "week" means a period of seven years. It is, however, highly improbable that this is the correct interpretation. Much more probable is the view that "her week" refers to the week-long festivities accompanying Jacob's marriage to Leah. That is, Laban is asking Jacob to keep up appearances as if everything were all right as to his marriage with Leah, through the week-long marriage feast.

It will be realized that if Laban has gotten Jacob into a tight spot, it is also true that Jacob has Laban in a tight spot. If Jacob now backs out of his marriage to Leah on the ground that he has been imposed upon by fraud, he will be a laughingstock of the entire community. On the other hand, if Jacob backs out of the marriage to Leah, Leah herself will be a laughingstock to the community and a permanent embarrassment to her father Laban. If Jacob refuses to keep her as his wife, certainly no one else will want to marry her. Therefore neither Jacob nor Laban is in a position to act freely as he may please. Both men are under considerable pressure of circumstances. Jacob is not in a position to insist upon his strict legal rights, because if he does he will appear as a fool to the community. Laban, on the other hand, cannot venture to press Jacob too hard, for fear that Jacob may repudiate Leah regardless of the consequences. Under these circumstances Laban makes a plea and a proposal which Jacob decides to accept.

Under the circumstances, Jacob's attitude toward Laban seems remarkably meek. It is possible that this is partly caused by Jacob's guilty conscience concerning the somewhat similar deceit which he had perpetrated upon his aged father Isaac. Perhaps Jacob sees the justice of God in the fact that he, the erstwhile deceiver, is now the victim of deceit. This may have led Jacob to

expostulate only mildly to Laban concerning the latter's outrageous conduct.

Laban was probably somewhat surprised that Jacob did not become violently angry. Perhaps Laban, noting the rather meek and mild character of Jacob's reaction to the fraud, decides to be as reasonable as possible, and let Jacob have Rachel after all. However, the stingy meanness of Laban comes to light in this also. He proposes to give Rachel to Jacob, but only on condition that Jacob shall serve an additional seven years for Rachel. In view of the fact that Jacob has already served seven years for Rachel, according to agreement, and never did want Leah, and has been grievously tricked into marrying the unwanted Leah, it would seem that this latest proposal of Laban involved a remarkable amount of "cheek" or "nerve." One would think that the proper thing would have been for Laban to apologize humbly for his deceitful conduct, beg Jacob to keep Leah as a matter of grace, and immediately give him Rachel without demand for further service. But it is not in Laban to do anything out of sheer justice, let alone anything out of generosity. So, even though in a sense Jacob has him in a tight place, Laban proceeds to drive an additional hard bargain. Jacob can have Rachel, but to obtain her he must first go through the week's feast of Leah's marriage, and then he must agree to work seven more years for Rachel. Jacob, under the circumstances, agrees to this proposal.

The question has been raised as to whether Jacob married Rachel before or after the second seven years of service. It has sometimes been assumed that the marriage to Rachel did not take place until the second seven years of service had been actually rendered — in other words that Jacob really had to serve Laban for fourteen years before he could marry Rachel. The probability is that this view is incorrect, and that Rachel was given to Jacob immediately after the completion of the week's festivities of the marriage to Leah. This is Leupold's view of the matter. He states: "Then, not waiting till the second period of seven years' service was terminated, Laban at once gave Rachel to Jacob. Very likely, Laban sensed that Jacob would be adamant in insisting on his right, at least on this one point, and so Laban conceded what could not be avoided" (Exposition of Genesis, II, p. 799).

An ethical question may be raised as to the moral rightness of Jacob continuing to keep Leah

as his wife, and also as to the moral rightness of Jacob being a polygamist. In law a marriage brought about by fraud is not valid and can be annulled by a court order. Jacob had been tricked into marrying Leah by fraud. He could have rejected her as soon as the fraud was discovered without guilt. Originally the marriage between Jacob and Leah was not a true marriage because it was not based upon free consent between the parties. Later, however, it seems clear that real love, and therefore consent, came to exist between Jacob and Leah. As to the moral rightness of a polygamous marriage, it must be pronounced wrong in the sense of being out of accord with the original institution of marriage as ordained by God. However, polygamy was an evil which existed as a matter of fact in the Old Testament period, and while not sanctioned or condoned by God, it was temporarily tolerated until in the course of time it would be eliminated by the greater religious enlightenment and progress of the people of Israel. It is with this consideration in view that the conduct of Jacob should be appraised.

Questions:

1. How has Laban's request to Jacob, "Fulfil her week," often been misunderstood?
2. What is probably the true meaning of Laban's request to Jacob to "Fulfil her week"?
3. What embarrassing situation has Laban gotten Jacob into?
4. Why was Laban not in a position to act with complete freedom?
5. What may be the reason for Jacob's meekness in dealing with Laban?
6. How does the mean, stingy character of Laban come to light in his next proposal?
7. What would have been the proper thing for Laban to do under the circumstances?
8. Why did Laban probably give Rachel to Jacob at the beginning rather than the end of the second seven years of service?
9. What can be said about the moral rightness of Jacob's continuing the marriage to Leah?
10. What is the status of polygamy in the Old Testament?

LESSON 127

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

"And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week; and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also" (29:28). Jacob thus agrees to Laban's rather hard bargain, it being the best he can do under the circumstances. The week of festivities connected with Leah's marriage being completed, Jacob thereupon marries Rachel in addition. The seven years of added service presumably start from this point.

The next item in the record is the information that Laban gave his handmaid Bilhah to Rachel to be her maidservant. The name of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, means "dropping" or "a drop"; the name of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, means perhaps "bashfulness" (Davis Bible Dictionary) or "terror" (Leupold).

From this point we have an account of the increase of Jacob's family and also of the remarkable increase of his material wealth. This is the fulfilment of the Lord's promise to Jacob to be with him and to bless him. The birth of Leah's sons Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah is first recorded (29:31-35). This evidently occupied a period of several years, during all of which time Rachel remained childless.

Naturally Rachel was grieved and disappointed by this state of affairs, and she "envied her sister" (30:1). Rachel says to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." Rachel's jealousy of Leah,

and her impatient demand that she too become a mother, are understandable, but not excusable, for they involve an element of distrust of the wisdom and providence of God. The record is calculated to impress upon our minds the truth that the fulfilment of the redemptive promise depends upon the sovereignty of God, not upon human plans or desires. As a matter of fact, the Saviour of the world was to be descended from Leah, not from Rachel. And in the period of the kingdom, it was the tribe of Judah, descended from Leah, that proved comparatively faithful to God, while the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, descended from Rachel, became notoriously apostate. We must pronounce Rachel's attitude sinful. Later in the history we have an account of conduct of Rachel which was not very ethical, to say the least (31:30-35).

"And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel; and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?" (30:2). Here we see that Jacob has a truer religious faith than Rachel. Jacob believes in the Providence of God which controls what comes to pass. He is angry because Rachel looks at the matter as if it were a merely human problem and does not see the hand of God in the situation. Jacob has a practical, not merely theoretical, faith in the sovereignty of God.

Rachel next proposes an expedient similar to the union of Abraham and Hagar. That Jacob agreed to this doubtful expedient shows that his own faith, though better than that of Rachel, was really weak and inadequate. Instead of repeating

the method used in the case of Abraham and Hagar, Jacob should have remembered the attitude and conduct of his own father Isaac under similar circumstances: "Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived" (25:21). Instead of yielding to Rachel's improper proposal, Jacob should have tried prayer. It is clear that Jacob is still spiritually immature, though he has a true faith.

The course advocated by Rachel is actually adopted, and Jacob marries Bilhah, Rachel's maid-servant, with the understanding, of course, that the children that may be born shall be reckoned as Rachel's. Although it is evident that this was a common enough expedient in the ancient Near East, and involved no social stigma nor public disapproval, still from the standpoint of the divine institution and law of marriage, such practices cannot be justified. What Jacob did was doubtless "legal" in the sense that the customs and public opinion of the day sanctioned it, but it was not really right in the sight of God.

The union between Jacob and Bilhah results in the birth of two sons, Dan and Naphtali. It will be noted that Bilhah bears the sons, but Rachel rejoices over them and names them.

Next, Leah imitates the example set by Rachel, and gives her maidservant Zilpah to Jacob as his wife. From this union are born Gad and Asher. As in the case of Bilhah and Rachel, the maidservant bears the sons, but the mistress does the rejoicing and the naming of them.

LESSON 128

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

"And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said unto Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes" (30:14). The story here shows some of the evils of polygamy, with its inevitable strifes and jealousies.

The reference to the wheat harvest shows that the clan of Laban practiced agriculture and were not merely shepherds and cattlemen. Reuben was perhaps four years old at this time, "just old enough to toddle into the field after the reapers" (Leupold, II, 811). He brings home some yellow berries, called "mandrakes" in the King James version. In those days it was commonly believed that this fruit had the power of stimulating sexual desire and of increasing fertility. The mention of the incident in the Bible does

Questions:

1. Why did Jacob agree to Laban's hard bargain?
2. What may be the meaning of the names Zilpah and Bilhah?
3. What promise of God to Jacob began to be remarkably fulfilled at this point?
4. What sinful attitude was Rachel guilty of?
5. In what way was Rachel's religious faith defective?
6. In what respect did Jacob have a better faith than Rachel?
7. Why did Jacob become angry with Rachel?
8. What expedient did Rachel propose as a solution of her problem?
9. At what previous point in the history had a similar plan been adopted?
10. What fact about the life of his parents should Jacob have remembered when Rachel proposed her plan?
11. What should be said about the moral rightness of Jacob's act of marrying his wife's maid-servant?
12. What sons were born to Jacob and Bilhah? Who named them?
13. What sons were born to Jacob and Zilpah?
14. How many children did Jacob have by this time?

not imply that the Bible endorses this idea as true. It is evident, though, that Leah and Rachel held this notion; otherwise they would not have disputed so bitterly over the mandrakes. Reuben has given the mandrakes to his mother. Rachel is naturally still concerned about her own sterility, and asks Leah for some — not all — of the mandrakes. The result is a bitter outburst on Leah's part, in which she very unfairly accuses Rachel of alienating her husband's affections. "Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband. . . ?" (30:15). Rachel, wishing to preserve peace, yields to Leah. "The frank narrative of the Scriptures on this point makes us blush with shame at the indelicate bargaining of the sisters — one of the fruits of a bigamous connection" (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, II, p. 812).

Next we are informed of the birth of Leah's sons Issachar and Zebulun. That Leah, in spite of her bitter rivalry of Rachel, also had some faith in God is shown by her statements in verses 18 and 20, in which she recognizes that it is by the gift of God that she has children, and the statement of verse 17, "And God hearkened unto

Leah. . .". The statement that "God hearkened" implies that it was an answer to prayer.

After recording the birth of Zebulun, the record states that a daughter was born to Jacob and Leah, named Dinah. That Dinah was not Jacob's only daughter is known from 37:35 and 46:7, 15, which mention Jacob's "daughters", in the plural. Yet Dinah is the only one of the daughters whose name we know. Obviously she is mentioned by name to prepare for the events recorded in chapter 34. The other daughters are left unnamed, presumably because there was nothing special to record about them in the later history.

Jacob now has ten sons, besides one daughter whose name is known. The ten sons include six born of Leah, two born of Zilpah and two born of Bilhah. Rachel is still without children of her own. "And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her" (30:22). A son is born to Jacob and Rachel, and is named Joseph. Rachel's other son, Benjamin, was not born until after the return of the family to the land of Canaan (35:16-20). We should note that Rachel gives the glory to God, showing an attitude somewhat changed from her apparently haughty attitude of earlier days. The statement of 30:24, "The Lord shall add to me another son" may be better translated, "May the Lord add to me another son." It is to be regarded as a prayer rather than a prophecy.

At this point in the narrative, Jacob makes his first proposal to Laban that they part company and Jacob return to his own country. "Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee" (30:25, 26). This proposal was apparently made at the expiration of the fourteen years of service which Jacob had promised to render in return for the privilege of marrying Laban's daughters. It was not until the second seven years of service had been completed that Jacob could call the entire family his own in the strict sense. Laban is now asked to recognize that the previously existing obligation has been satisfied. Jacob claims to have rendered honest and faithful service through the whole period of fourteen years: "Thou knowest my service which I have done thee."

Laban, however, is quite unwilling to have Jacob leave. Very respectfully does he entreat Jacob to remain. He says "I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake" (30:27). The clause, "I have learned by experience" is more accurately translated "I have consulted the omens." How Laban "consulted the omens" is not explained, but the statement indicates a heathenish superstition which was certainly incompatible with the faith of Jacob. Leupold states that Laban is practically marked as an idolater. He adds that Laban would not have needed to consult any omens to discover that God

had blessed him for Jacob's sake; it was a clear fact that could easily be discerned.

Laban does not want Jacob to depart; therefore he says, "Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it" (30:28). While this sounds reasonable and even generous, the truth is that Laban is a selfish man, and he now makes what seems to be a generous offer only because this is the only way he can hope to retain Jacob's services.

Jacob replies, in verses 29, 30, recounting how faithfully he had served Laban, and reminding the latter that a time must come when he will provide for his own estate. Jacob is careful to give the credit to God: "the Lord hath blessed thee since my coming." Apparently Jacob's arrival was followed by a marked increase in Laban's material wealth. We should keep in mind, of course, that in those days, among such people, wealth consisted largely if not almost exclusively of livestock.

Jacob names his own terms. Realizing that Laban is a stingy man at heart, he says, "Thou shalt not give me any thing." Jacob does not want anything of value from Laban at the outset. No doubt he realizes that if Laban, in response to a demand, were to give him a certain number of sheep and goats immediately, he would soon change his mind and want them back, and would try to find ways to get them back. Instead, Jacob proposes a plan by which a proportion of the flocks shall be his. He will go at once through Laban's flocks, removing all those which are abnormally colored. These abnormally colored specimens are to be removed by Laban. They are to be Jacob's flock, but for the time being under the care of Laban. What would be left would be the normally colored specimens, namely white sheep and black goats. These, though belonging to Laban, would be under the care of Jacob. Any normally colored specimens (solid white sheep or solid black goats) which might be produced in the future from Jacob's flock (which would be under Laban's care) were to belong to Laban. On the other hand, any abnormally colored specimens (speckled, etc.) which might be produced from Laban's flock (which would be under Jacob's care) would rightfully belong to Jacob. The proposed arrangement implied re-sorting the flocks from time to time, perhaps twice a year, the speckled, etc., being placed under Laban's care (but belonging to Jacob), and the solid-colored being placed under Jacob's care (but belonging to Laban). Jacob claims only the abnormally colored fraction (present and future) as his hire (30:32). This is an act of faith on Jacob's part, which leaves the amount of his wages in the hand of God, for the proportion of abnormally colored specimens to be produced in the future would not be subject to human calculation or control. Laban agrees to Jacob's proposal, probably thinking it very advantageous to himself.

Questions:

1. What fact about the clan of Laban is indicated by the mention of "wheat harvest"?
2. What were the "mandrakes" mentioned in 30:14?
3. What popular belief existed concerning mandrakes? Does the Bible endorse this belief as true?
4. What statement in the record indicates that Leah had faith in God?
5. What was the name of the daughter born to Jacob and Leah?
6. How do we know that Jacob had other daughters?
7. How many sons did Jacob have at this point of the story?

8. How many of these were sons of Leah? How many of Bilhah? How many of Zilpah?
9. What son was born to Jacob and Rachel?
10. What statement of Rachel indicates that she had faith in God?
11. How long had Jacob been working for Laban when he first proposed to leave his service and return home?
12. What is the correct translation of Laban's statement, "I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake"?
13. What change had taken place in the fortunes of Laban after Jacob's arrival?
14. What plan did Jacob propose for future payment of wages to him by Laban? How does this show Jacob's faith in God?

LESSON 129**III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.****4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.**

The proposal was that Jacob go through Laban's flocks, separating the abnormally colored specimens from the rest. Laban has accepted Jacob's terms, but when it came to carrying the agreement out, Laban evidently did not fully trust Jacob to do it honestly. For in verses 34-36 Laban is the subject of the sentences, doing the actions mentioned. This means that Laban himself went through the flocks, separating the abnormally colored specimens, which he handed over to his sons to take care of. "His sons" must mean Laban's sons, not Jacob's sons. Laban with his own sons and the abnormally colored flocks next remove three days' journey from Jacob, who remains where he had been, tending the rest of Laban's flocks (the normally colored majority).

These last actions of Laban not only indicated distrust of Jacob, but were actually insulting. The meanness of Laban's character is more and more obvious. The narrative implies that Laban, if he had been in Jacob's place, would have tried to do something dishonest; consequently he assumes that Jacob will make such an attempt, and so he suspects him of it. Putting a space of three days' journey between the now separated abnormally colored flocks and the ones left under Jacob's care was a positive insult. Jacob instead of being treated as a partner in the enterprise is treated as if he were a paroled thief. Had it not been for Jacob's humble, patient faith in the Lord, he might have resented Laban's attitude so strongly that he would have left his service immediately.

Next we are told of the strange devices used by Jacob to influence the processes of genetics. This seems to be a step down on Jacob's part

from the high level of faith which he had previously occupied. Perhaps his awareness of Laban's suspicions led him to use these devices, taking matters into his own hands as it were, instead of leaving this issue simply in the hands of God.

Two questions arise in our minds as to the measures taken by Jacob (related in 30:37-42). In the first place, is it scientifically possible to influence the color of the offspring of animals by such methods? In the second place, was Jacob morally justified in doing what he did?

With regard to the first question, two things may be said. First, there seems to have been, in both ancient and modern times, a strong belief in the possibility of influencing the offspring by such methods. Leupold says: "The observations of the ancients, backed by experience of many moderns, seems to confirm the practicability of the device here described" (Exposition of Genesis, II, p. 824) The New Bible Commentary (Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan), says "A physiological principle is here employed by Jacob. This kind of device is adopted for obtaining certain colours of horses and dogs. White lambs, even now, are secured by surrounding the troughs with white objects" (p. 98). Though the writer of these notes hesitates to contradict two such excellent commentaries, he must register his dissent. The modern science of genetics knows nothing of any such influence of environment on the color of the offspring. Acquired characteristics cannot be inherited, and the color, etc., of the offspring is determined by the heredity-bearing factors known as genes which exist in the germ cells of the parents. Except for occasional changes known as "mutations" the color of the offspring is determined by the heredity transmitted by the parents, which combines according to Mendel's laws. The present writer does not believe that there is any scientific explanation for the results which Jacob

is recorded as having obtained by the methods which he employed. We do not question the reality of the results, but attribute them entirely to the overruling providence of God, not at all to the effectiveness of white rods or other such objects placed where the flocks could see them.

As to the moral rightfulness of Jacob's actions, we are compelled to question this. When Jacob made his agreement with Laban, obviously the plain meaning of the terms agreed upon was that the abnormally colored specimens born under normal circumstances were to be Jacob's. Perhaps Laban's suspicious attitude and actions led Jacob to feel that he was justified in taking matters into his own hands and attempting to influence the normal processes of nature by his white rods, etc. We must reluctantly pronounce Jacob's action to be unrighteous, even though we have already said that only by the overruling providence of God could the method be affective.

On the other hand, it may be said that God in His sovereignty chose to bless Jacob's actions, in spite of their unethical character, in order to give the advantage, in this rather unequal contest, to the man who on the whole was righteous and pleasing to God. This does not justify Jacob in his actions but it does explain how God could bless him in spite of his ethically doubtful methods.

To sum the matter up, as time passes Jacob increases greatly in wealth. His flocks are large and vigorous. He is fast catching up with his uncle Laban in wealth. "And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid-servants, and menservants, and camels, and asses" (30:43). Jacob has come a long way since the

time, some twenty years earlier, when he had arrived alone at Laban's household.

Questions:

1. What proposal did Jacob make to Laban as to his wages?
2. What change did Laban make when it came to carrying out the terms?
3. Who is the speaker in verses 34-36?
4. Whose sons are meant by "his sons" at the end of verse 35?
5. What attitude of Laban toward Jacob was indicated by Laban's conduct?
6. Why did Jacob not become angry and leave Laban at once?
7. What should be thought of Jacob's attempt to influence the processes of genetics, so far as faith in God is concerned?
8. What should be thought of Jacob's attempted method of influencing the color of sheep and goats to be born, as to the scientific possibility of doing this successfully?
9. If we hold that it is scientifically impossible to influence the offspring by such devices as Jacob used, how can we account for the fact that the desired results were actually obtained?
10. What should be thought about the moral rightfulness of Jacob's methods?
11. If we say that Jacob's actions were unethical, how can we account for the fact that God blessed his actions?
12. To what extent had Jacob's wealth increased by the end of chapter 30?

LESSON 130

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Chapter 31 brings us to Jacob's escape from his uncle Laban, followed by the settlement of the dispute between the two men. Trouble began by a statement of Laban's sons reaching the ears of Jacob. Laban's sons were saying: "Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory" (31:1). The injustice and falsity of this charge are obvious. What Jacob had, he had obtained lawfully. Laban's sons speak as if Jacob were under an obligation to work for Laban without any compensation. When a man has earned something by discharging stipulated obligations, what he has earned belongs to him, not to the employer who has hired him. We once heard a minister criticized for leaving one denomination

and joining another. The criticism was on the ground that since he had received a salary from the first denomination for several years, he really owed everything he had to that denomination and had no right to leave it to join another, for any reason whatever. This type of twisted thinking is not infrequently met with. If a minister earns his salary, it becomes his own and no longer belongs to the church which has paid it. Similarly, what Jacob possessed, he owned by reason of hard work accompanied by the blessing of God. Besides this, it is apparent that Laban himself was much richer after Jacob had been with him twenty years than he had been before that. But, as someone has wisely remarked, sin is never logical; and envy being a sin, we cannot expect it to be logical. So Laban's sons illogically and very unjustly say that Jacob has taken wealth that rightly belongs to their father.

As for Laban himself, he is a bit more cau-

tious than his sons and does not come out in the open and accuse Jacob of anything. But he says by his looks and manner what he does not say with words. "And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before" (31:2). Laban had once appeared friendly, though we may question the depth and genuineness of his friendship with Jacob. But now he eyes Jacob with suspicious eyes. Jacob cannot help noticing this fact, and is concerned about it.

Then a revelation from the Lord comes to Jacob, commanding him to return to the land of Canaan and to his kindred, and promising that the Lord will be with him (31:3). Thus the promise made by God to Jacob years before at Bethel is renewed. For a man of Jacob's faith and obedience to God, this settles the matter. He determines to leave Laban.

Jacob calls his two wives Leah and Rachel out into the fields in order to talk with them. The reason for his calling them to the fields is not stated, but probably it was for the sake of privacy. In those days the only sure way of obtaining privacy for a secret conversation was to get out into the open fields where one could see a good distance around him in all directions and be sure that there were no eavesdroppers within earshot. We recall how David arranged to meet Jonathan in an open field in order to have a strictly confidential talk with him. Jacob has to make sure of secrecy so he calls Leah and Rachel to meet him in the open. Note that Bilhah and Zilpah are not called, nor are any of the children.

Jacob tells Leah and Rachel that their father Laban is no longer favorable toward him, but he adds "The God of my father hath been with me" (31:5). This is followed by a recital of the double-dealing of Laban toward him. Jacob sums it up by saying: "Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me" (31:9). From these statements of Jacob we learn something new, namely that the original arrangement with Laban had repeatedly been changed on Laban's initiative, but all without favorable result for Laban. The statement "God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me" must not be interpreted so literally as to mean that Jacob now possessed all the flocks and Laban none at all. It only means that the relative increase of Jacob's flocks had been decidedly greater than that of Laban's.

Next Jacob tells Rachel and Leah of a dream he had had. He does not state when he had this dream. Some critics have tended to discount this dream, or attempt to explain it purely psychologically; they reason that Jacob's brooding over the matter induced the dream, and that God had nothing to do with it. But Jacob being a man of devout faith, we cannot take such a view of the matter. As truly as the dream of the ladder at

Bethel, this dream must be regarded as a real revelation from God to Jacob.

In the dream, Jacob was watching the flocks during the breeding season. The dream concerned the breeding of the animals. It was intended, not to teach Jacob how to bargain effectively with Laban the next time, but rather to reassure Jacob and remind him that the whole matter was under the providential control of God. This, incidentally, accords well with our view that none of Jacob's own devices can sufficiently explain the increase of the abnormally colored specimens in the flocks, but that the only adequate explanation is the overruling providence of God.

In the dream, Jacob is told to watch the speckled, grizzled and ring-streaked rams. The Lord adds: "I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee from out this land, and return to the land of thy kindred" (31:12, 13).

Rachel and Leah immediately and unquestioningly agree to accompany Jacob to the land of Canaan. They say: "Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money. For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do" (31:14-16).

In these words of Rachel and Leah — doubtless a condensed summary of what they actually said — there is betrayed more than a trace of bitterness toward their father Laban. Apparently Laban's stingy meanness did not please even his own daughters. The words of Rachel and Leah also indicate bitter resentment at the terms on which their father had arranged their marriage to Jacob. Even in those days there was a better way of arranging for one's daughter's marriage, and they of course realized this. They resented the fact that Laban had "sold" them in exchange for seven years of work for each. Moreover, a generous and high-minded father would have used anything received from his prospective son-in-law to provide a dowry for his daughter, instead of selfishly "devouring our money" as Rachel and Leah accuse Laban of having done. The bitterness of years of grievance come to the surface at last in the words of Rachel and Leah. They must now choose between their father and their husband, and without hesitation they choose the latter.

Questions:

1. What statement of Laban's sons reached the ears of Jacob?
2. Why was the charge of Laban's sons false and unjust?

3. Why can envy not be expected to be logical?
4. What new revelation of God came to Jacob at this point?
5. What did Jacob resolve to do?
6. Where did Jacob talk with Rachel and Leah? Why there?
7. What new information about Laban's dealings comes to light in the words of Jacob to Rachel and Leah?
8. Why can Jacob's dream not be regarded as merely psychological?
9. What did the dream indicate concerning Jacob's problems?
10. What was the reaction of Rachel and Leah to Jacob's proposal to go to the land of Canaan?
11. What bitterness against Laban is revealed by the words of Rachel and Leah?
12. What was wrong with the type of arrangements Laban had made for the marriage of his daughters?

LESSON 131

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Jacob next seizes a good opportunity to escape from Laban. He does this at a time when Laban is extremely busy with shearing his sheep. Shearing the sheep would not only keep Laban and his family busy, but would probably involve a big feast and a good deal of entertaining. It was a good time for Jacob to get away without any formal farewells. Assembling all his livestock and household goods, with his wives and children and servants, he "stole away unawares," without notifying Laban of his departure. Some may question the rightness of this act. We believe that, under the circumstances, Jacob was fully justified. As the sequel showed, Laban would never have given his consent voluntarily for Jacob and family to depart.

Along with the possessions which rightly belonged to Jacob and his family, Rachel stole "the images that were her father's". These "images" were **teraphim**, apparently a kind of local household gods. It is possible, and there seems to be some evidence to suggest this, that the possession of these household gods had something to do with the inheritance of the family name and property. Or it is possible that Rachel wanted the images simply out of her own tendency toward superstition and idolatry. As Leupold suggests, she may have been a believer in Jehovah, and yet inconsistently believed that the teraphim would bring a person good luck. The theft of the teraphim was, of course, unknown to Jacob. Perhaps Rachel did not dare to tell him what she was doing, realizing that he would not approve of it. What Jacob thought of the teraphim comes to light later (35:2-4) when we are told that Jacob buried them, with other objects, under an oak tree.

Jacob and his household make a clean getaway and succeeded in crossing the Euphrates River. From there the objective is "the mount Gilead," that is, the highlands on the east side of the Jordan River.

Three days have passed since Jacob's departure. Suddenly Laban's sheep-shearing and accompanying festivities are rudely interrupted by the news that Jacob and family are gone. Laban at once assembles a party of his relatives and starts out in pursuit. In the mountains of Gilead Laban overtakes Jacob. At this point God intervenes directly, warning Laban in a dream: "Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad" (31:24). Laban has been warned, but he does not heed the warning.

The meeting of the two men is marked by angry accusations on Laban's part. Why has Jacob stolen away without formal farewell, taking Laban's daughters as if they were prisoners of war? Why did Jacob not give Laban an opportunity to give a grand farewell party, with music and feasting and general rejoicing. Why has Jacob not even allowed Laban to kiss his daughters good-bye?

Laban was very angry, and anger, like envy, is never logical. Most of Laban's charges suggest their own answer. Jacob has not forced Laban's daughters to accompany him; they are doing it of their own free will. As for the farewell party with music and mirth, Laban was too stingy a man to spend very much on that sort of thing; instead, he would have taken measures to try to prevent Jacob's departure. As to the matter of not letting him kiss his daughters — probably he had not bothered to kiss them for the past several years, when they were living near him; why should he suddenly want to kiss them now? His treatment of them was mercenary, and showed little paternal love. But now, in his anger, he makes an issue of all these matters.

Laban goes on: "It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad" (31:29). Laban's claim that it is in his power to harm Jacob is an arrogant boast. He as much as admits that he does not dare to do anything to hurt Jacob, for he repeats the divine warning given him. We repeat, anger is never logical. If Laban had been cool and logical, he would have realized

that the warning from God which he had received, meant that Jacob was right and Laban was wrong. If God is protecting Jacob, then Laban's wild charges must be without real justification.

Finally Laban mentions the matter of the stolen idols. "Wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?" (31:30). Jacob replies, quite truthfully, that he had been afraid that Laban would not allow him to take Rachel and Leah away with him. As for the missing images, "With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee" (31:32). Jacob, as is stated in the last part of verse 32, is unaware of the fact that Rachel had stolen the images.

Jacob, of course, should never have conceded that the person guilty of stealing the images should suffer the death penalty. But Jacob was doubtless agitated at the moment. Laban undertakes a systematic search, going through Jacob's tent, Leah's tent, Bilhah's tent, Zilpah's tent — all without finding what he was looking for — and finally coming to Rachel's tent. Now Rachel proves herself to be not only a thief but also a liar. Having concealed the idols in the camel's furniture, she sits on them and falsely tells her father that she is ill and cannot rise up to honor him as he enters the tent. While she may have been ill, still her statement to her father was a lie because it was intended to deceive him into believing that the images were not in the tent.

Questions:

1. What opportunity did Jacob seize for escaping from Laban?

2. Why was sheepshearing always a specially busy time?

3. Was Jacob justified in stealing away without notice to Laban?

4. What theft was perpetrated by Rachel on the eve of departure?

5. What may have been Rachel's motive in this theft?

6. What disposition did Jacob finally make of what Rachel stole?

7. What great river did Jacob cross on his way to Canaan?

8. How far had Jacob gotten before Laban overtook him?

9. How much time had elapsed when Laban learned that Jacob was gone?

10. What warning came to Laban from God?

11. What accusations did Laban make on meeting Jacob?

12. To what extent were Laban's charges justified?

13. What empty boast did Laban make in speaking with Jacob?

14. What rash promise did Jacob make to Laban concerning the unknown person guilty of stealing Laban's images?

15. What act of Rachel showed her to be untruthful as well as dishonest?

LESSON 132

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Up to this point it has been Laban that was angry. Now, after Laban's unsuccessful search of the tents for his teraphim, Jacob becomes angry and berates Laban for his ungenerous and unfair conduct. "And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban" (31:36). For years Jacob has kept his temper under control, so far as we have any record. Now, at last, he has had more than he can take. He lets go, and the angry words pour out, one statement on top of another. We must remember, of course, that Jacob does not yet know that Laban was right about the theft of the idols; he does not yet know that his beloved Rachel had stolen them.

Angrily protesting his innocence, he charges Laban with having "hotly pursued" after him. Laban has chased after Jacob as if Jacob were an escaped criminal. Laban has searched through all

the household effects of Jacob's family, but has found nothing that belonged to him. Loudly and boldly Jacob challenges Laban to lay before their brethren whatever he has found. Of course Laban has found nothing, but this gives all the more effect to Jacob's demand that the kinsmen serve as a jury to decide matters between the two men. Laban, of course, could not reply a word to all this.

Following this, Jacob rehearses the history of his relations with Laban. He has served Laban faithfully and with the most scrupulous honesty. He, Jacob, has personally borne the loss of sheep torn of beasts; he has strictly refrained from butchering for the use of his family animals that belonged to Laban. He has served Laban twenty years, suffering hardships by day and by night — fourteen years for Laban's two daughters, and six years for livestock — during which time Laban has changed his contract "ten times".

Last of all, Jacob ascribes all his own success and prosperity to the blessing of God: "Except

the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight" (31:42). It is clear that Jacob does not believe a word of Laban's loud protestations of love and friendship. He ascribes his success solely to the providence and intervention of God.

It would seem that there really was nothing that Laban could say in reply to this speech of Jacob (31:36-42). At the end of Jacob's speech Laban does make a reply, but it is in a greatly subdued tone as compared with his previous arrogance. He makes one last claim that "These daughters are my daughters", etc., and then confesses that, as they are in fact his own daughters, of course he will not harm them: "And what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have borne"? (31:43). After all, a man does not wish to injure his own children and grandchildren.

These words of Laban in verse 43 we take to be mere bluff and bluster. He has been decisively beaten in the argument; the justice of Jacob's defence is evident to all; but in order to avoid "losing face," Laban continues his blustering claims a bit longer. Then he subsides, and proposes a peaceful settlement: "Now therefore come thou let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for witness between me and thee" (31:44). Knowing himself to be definitely in the wrong, and perhaps fearing that Jacob may at some future time seek revenge, Laban seeks a covenant between Jacob and himself. It is noteworthy that Laban evidently believes that Jacob is a man who will keep a covenant once he has made it.

Laban proposed the covenant; it was he that needed it rather than Jacob. But it was Jacob who set up a stone for a pillar, and called upon his brethren to gather stones to build up a heap. This indicates Jacob's love of peace. He is not seeking revenge against Laban; he only wants to be able to depart to his own country and kindred in peace. So Jacob takes the initiative in setting up the pillar and building the heap of rocks.

The heap of rocks built, the assembled company sat down upon it to partake of a meal. This feast was regarded as necessary to make the covenant between the two men fully binding.

"And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed" (31:47). This interesting item is included by Moses in the narrative. Laban spoke Aramaic, the language of Mesopotamia; Jacob spoke Hebrew, the language of Canaan. Jacob, of course, having lived twenty years in Mesopotamia must have been able to speak and understand the Aramaic language. But in this sacred matter of a covenant he uses the language of Canaan, the land of promise. The two names, in Aramaic and Hebrew, mean approximately the

same thing: "heap of testimony" or "heap of witness."

Leupold comments at this point on the interesting fact that the ancestors of the Hebrew nation were of a stock that originally spoke Aramaic, but in Palestine gave up Aramaic for Hebrew. Hebrew was their language for many centuries, only to be replaced by Aramaic after all, following the Babylonian Captivity of the sixth century before Christ. In the time of Christ Aramaic was the spoken language of the Jews of Palestine. This brings out the interesting fact that the language ordinarily spoken by Jesus was that of Laban, not that of Jacob, though Jesus certainly was able to read and understand Hebrew.

"And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day" (31:48a). Moses comments. "Therefore was the name of it called Galeed, and Mizpah; for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another" (31:48, 49). Mizpah means "watch" or "watch-station". From this verse the so-called Mizpah Benediction is derived. Often used as a prayer or benediction at the close of religious meetings, it is almost never correctly quoted. The writer has heard it so used probably hundreds of times and cannot recall hearing it correctly quoted a single time. The incorrect form in which it is commonly quoted is "The Lord watch between me and thee, while we are absent one from the other", instead of "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." The differences are slight and verbal, of course, but when we quote the words of Scripture we should quote them with precision.

Apart from the common incorrect quotation, we may comment that it is a strange example of accommodation of Scripture that this verse has ever come to be used as a blessing in religious meetings. Probably the Christian Endeavor movement popularized it. As commonly used, it means something like this: "The Lord take good care of us all, until we meet again next Sabbath evening or at some future time." But as used by Laban it had no such implication of blessing. The saying was Laban's, not Jacob's, and it is full of unkindness and suspicion. The obvious meaning is: "The Lord watch to see that neither of us breaks the terms of this covenant by harming the other." It is an invocation of God to stand guard between two men, neither of whom really trusts the other. Leupold is correct in saying that the common use of the verse as a benediction "almost amounts to a wicked perversion of Scripture" (Exposition of Genesis, II, p. 856). A better character than Laban should be chosen from Scripture when we are looking for a form of benediction to use.

Questions:

1. At what point in the proceedings did Jacob become angry?

2. What fact was unknown to Jacob at the time when he became angry at Laban?

3. What challenge to Laban did Jacob utter?

4. What accusations did Jacob bring against Laban?

5. To what did Jacob ascribe his own prosperity and success?

6. What was the real character of Laban's reply to Jacob's speech?

7. What proposal did Laban make for a final settlement of the dispute?

8. What action was taken by Jacob to establish the settlement?

9. How was the covenant ratified?

10. What was the purpose of the heap of stones that was built up?

11. What language was spoken by Laban? What by Jacob?

12. Which was the original language of the ancestors of the Hebrew nation?

13. Which was their language in the time of Christ?

14. Which was their language during the greater part of their history?

15. What is the meaning of the name Mizpah?

16. How is the "Mizpah Benediction" often incorrectly quoted?

17. What is meant by "accommodation of Scripture"?

18. Why is the common use of the "Mizpah Benediction" an instance of accommodation of Scripture?

LESSON 133

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Laban continues his admonitions to Jacob: "If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee" (31:50). Here Laban suddenly shows an unusual concern for the welfare of his daughters. He casts a reflection on Jacob's character by suggesting the possibility that Jacob may treat Leah and Rachel badly, or may even marry new wives in addition to those he already had. This insinuation of Laban, we must say, is entirely uncalled for. As a matter of fact, Jacob had never really wanted more than one wife. It was, in fact, Laban's own fault that he had two. As for the addition of the maidservants Bilhah and Zilpah, Jacob was not primarily to blame for that either; he had yielded to the wishes of Rachel and Leah, but the idea had not been his in the first place. So for Laban at this time to insinuate that Jacob may be an abandoned and unprincipled polygamist, and perhaps also likely to treat his wives cruelly, was really adding insult to injury. Solemnly Laban calls upon God to be a witness between himself and Jacob if this (purely hypothetical) situation should ever arise. Laban is here trying to save his own face and make himself appear righteous by casting slurs upon a better man than himself.

Next, Laban suggests that Jacob might at some future time return with an expedition to take revenge. The heap of stones is to be a witness between himself and Jacob, that neither party is to advance beyond this spot to do the other harm. To add a color of piety to his insulting in-

sinuations, Laban solemnly calls upon "the God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father" to act as judge between himself and Jacob. We must remember that the man who is thus solemnly pronouncing the name of "the God of Abraham," etc., is the same man who a little while before was complaining because someone had stolen his idols. It is possible that by "the God of Nahor" Laban means a different deity from "the God of Abraham." In fact, this seems to be indicated by the fact that the verb "judge" in the Hebrew is in the plural, not the singular number. Laban evidently believes in more than one god; he is a polytheist; if deities are to be called upon, Laban apparently thinks, then the more the better.

Jacob, on his part, swears "by the fear of his father Isaac." It is possible that this form of the name of God was deliberately chosen by Jacob in order to avoid use of the form employed by Laban, inasmuch as Laban seemed to be identifying the God of Abraham with his own God (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, II, p. 858).

"Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount" (31:54). Note that it does not say that Jacob and Laban offered sacrifice jointly. This was not a union service. It was an act of worship on the part of Jacob, who certainly would not participate in the offering of sacrifice with a known idolater such as his uncle Laban was. The eating of bread which is mentioned in the latter part of verse 54, therefore, is to be regarded as something separate from the actual offering of the sacrifice itself. Or possibly the "brethren" who are mentioned included only the men of Jacob's establishment, not Laban and his party.

"And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place" (31:55). The "sons" here mentioned are, of course, Laban's grandsons. The "daughters" would be both his granddaughters and his actual daughters. This marks the exit of Laban from the history.

Attempts have been made to identify the site of the heap of stones built by Jacob and called Galeed or Mizpah. The only thing that is certain about the location is that it must be somewhere in Transjordan north of the Jabbok River. As to the actual site, it is unknown. It is unlikely that it will ever be discovered, for the record mentions no identifying features such as an inscription. Obviously any great heap of stones in the area might be the right one, but there is no way of determining which it is.

Questions:

1. How did Laban cast an unnecessary reflection on Jacob's character?
2. Why was this reflection on Jacob's character uncalled for?
3. How many wives did Jacob really want?

4. What must be regarded as Laban's real reason for casting slurs on Jacob?

5. What action did Laban insinuate Jacob might take at some future time?

6. Upon what God or deities did Laban call to ratify the agreement?

7. Why was Laban's calling upon "the God of Abraham" out of place and inconsistent on his part?

8. What may Laban have meant by "the God of Nahor"? What word in the Hebrew suggests this?

9. By what name of God did Jacob swear his oath?

10. Who offered sacrifice upon the mount? Why are we warranted in saying that this was not a union service?

11. What did Laban do early the next morning?

12. What was the general location of the heap of stones called Mizpah and Galeed?

13. Why can the exact location of the heap not be known?

LESSON 134

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Jacob is now almost home. "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim" (32:1, 2). It is upon Jacob's entrance to the Promised Land that he encounters the angels of God. It is possible that angels had been accompanying Jacob all the way, but that at this point, as he again treads on the sacred soil of the Promised Land, they are visibly manifested. In any case, this supernatural manifestation would serve the necessary purpose of reassuring Jacob. He has now safely escaped from his uncle Laban, but another trouble looms on the horizon — soon he must meet his brother Esau. The last time he saw Esau, the latter was "comforting himself" with plans to kill Jacob. The appearance of angels betokened the near presence and special protection and favor of God. Jacob names the spot Mahanaim. This Hebrew noun is the dual number and means "two camps" or "two hosts". The "two hosts" would be the host of angels, and the host of Jacob's company. As in the case of Mizpah, the location of Mahanaim is unknown today. It is, however, repeatedly mentioned in the historical books of the Old Testament, so the location must have been known long after the time of Jacob.

Another question concerns whether the angels were seen by Jacob alone, or by all in his company. This cannot be positively answered, though it is possible, perhaps probable, that Jacob alone saw them. Certainly Jacob was the only one present who possessed, so far as we know, any real spiritual maturity.

The appearance of the angels is followed by Jacob's careful preparations for meeting his brother Esau. Jacob sends messengers to Esau in advance, to the land of Seir, the country of Edom. This is the region directly south of the Dead Sea. It is some distance from the Jabbok River which Jacob is now approaching, perhaps about 75 miles. It will be recalled that Jacob's mother, Rebekah, promised to send for Jacob to come home when Esau's anger had cooled off (27:44, 45). But the promise has not been kept. Jacob is returning home without having been sent for. The implication would seem, in his mind, to be that Esau is still angry, and therefore that Esau still plans to kill him. As a matter of fact, Esau's murderous wrath has cooled and he is no longer planning to murder Jacob, but Jacob of course has no way of knowing this. Therefore he carefully plans and carries out conciliatory measures. The messengers are to find Esau, then they are to convey a message from Jacob to him. Esau is to be addressed as "My lord Esau" and Jacob is to be referred to as "thy servant Jacob." Esau is to be informed that Jacob has sojourned with his uncle Laban

until now; that Jacob now is a man of property, possessing oxen, asses, flocks, menservants and womenservants; and that Jacob entreats his favor, wishing to find grace in his sight. It is a very diplomatic procedure, calculated to win the good will of Esau (32:3-5).

The messengers have carried out their commission. They have found Esau and have conveyed the message. They also bring a reply. Esau is coming in person to meet Jacob, accompanied by four hundred men. (It is possible that the messengers did not have to travel all the way to Edom. Esau may have received advance news of Jacob's imminent arrival and have already set out to meet him. The messengers may have met Esau when but a couple of days' journey from Jacob's camp). In any case, Esau has not sent a favorable reply. He has not replied that Jacob has found grace in his sight. Instead, he is coming in person. The mention of four hundred men accompanying Esau would naturally alarm Jacob. People on peaceful and friendly errands do not usually travel accompanied by 400 men. Not unnaturally, Jacob feels dismayed. He was "greatly afraid and distressed" (32:7).

Taking precautionary measures, Jacob first divides his entire party into two bands — both the people and the animals. If Esau destroys one band, at least the other band may escape. Next, Jacob resorts to prayer, a very earnest prayer for protection from the malice of Esau (32:9-12). Some may be inclined to criticize Jacob for resorting to action first and leaving prayer until afterwards. We do not feel that way about it. While it sounds pious to say that prayer should always come first, the truth is that in emergencies sometimes action is our first duty. Action can be performed in the spirit of prayer even when our whole attention is necessarily absorbed by the action. If our house is on fire, it is our duty to devote all our energies to putting the fire out first; prayer properly comes afterwards.

In Jacob's prayer, note that he addresses God as "God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." This does not mean that he fails to recognize God as his own God, but rather that he pleads for like covenant mercies and blessings for himself, as had been given to Abraham and Isaac. Jacob pleads God's promises and his own need. He disclaims any personal worthiness, but mentions past blessings received from God. Coming directly to the point, he pleads for divine deliverance from his brother Esau, adding "for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." Finally, he recalls the covenant promise of God which had been given to him (28:13, 14).

The critics have taken this prayer of Jacob to pieces and raised various objections against it. In spite of the critics, we believe it to be a gen-

uine prayer of Jacob and a splendid example of believing prayer in time of need. To the charge that this prayer contains no confession or sense of sin, it is sufficient to reply that Jacob professed utter unworthiness over against God. As Leupold points out, the thing that makes us unworthy is just sin.

Spending the night at that spot, Jacob assembles a present for his brother Esau, calculated to pacify his wrath if it is indeed in wrath that Esau is approaching. The gift was a lavish and costly one, such as might be expected to influence a man like Esau and win his favor. The total number of animals set apart and sent on to Esau is 580, so the value must have been correspondingly great. It indicates something of the great wealth of Jacob that he was in a position to send such a rich gift to his brother. The droves, one kind of animals in each drove, are properly spaced and sent on ahead at intervals. Esau, of course, would be duly surprised when the first drove reached him, and his astonishment would mount as drove followed drove. There were five droves in all. The servants who convey the droves to Esau are to state that the animals are a present from Jacob to Esau, and that Jacob himself is following them. They are to remember to address Esau as "my lord Esau" and to speak of Jacob as Esau's "servant." Thus the costly present has been dispatched to Esau's hands. "So went the present over before him; and himself lodged that night in the company" (32:21).

Questions:

1. What supernatural manifestation was granted to Jacob at the time of his re-entrance to the Promised Land?
2. What purpose would be served by this supernatural visitation?
3. Why would Jacob specially need reassurance at this time?
4. What had been Esau's attitude toward Joseph when the two brothers had last seen each other?
5. What is the meaning of the name Mahanaim? Why did Jacob choose this name for the place?
6. What preparations did Jacob make for meeting Esau?
7. How far was Edom from the Jabbok River?
8. What fact would lead Jacob to conclude that Esau was still angry at him?
9. How are Jacob's messengers to address Esau? How are they to refer to Jacob?
10. What kind of reply did the messengers bring back to Jacob?

11. Why was Jacob "greatly afraid and distressed"?

12. What special precautionary measure did Jacob take as soon as he learned of the approach of Esau?

13. Was Jacob justified in taking action first, and leaving prayer until afterwards?

14. How can we answer the charge that Jacob's prayer contains no confession of sin?

15. What gift did Jacob send to Esau to conciliate him?

16. How was the arrangement and timing of the gift calculated to impress Esau and win his favor?

LESSON 135

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

At the end of the last lesson we learned that Jacob, having dispatched his rich gift to Esau, himself "lodged that night in the company" (32:21). Apparently, however, it was only for part of the night. For during the night he took further action. "And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone. . . ." (32:22-24).

Obviously it would be foolhardy to allow Esau to meet him while his establishment is involved in the difficult matter of crossing a stream; therefore Jacob undertakes to get this matter over with in advance. Jacob now remains alone on the north side of the Jabbok.

The Jabbok is a stream which flows into the Jordan from the east. In its last few miles before entering the Jordan it flows through a deep gorge. The stream is said to be about thirty feet wide, the depth of the water varying with the season, but clearly not being too deep for fording at the time.

We have now come to the study of one of the strangest, most mysterious incidents recorded in the Bible — Jacob's wrestling with "a man" until the break of day. This incident is so strange and mysterious that some scholars have pronounced it mythical rather than historical. Those who regard it as a myth, however, do not agree among themselves as to what idea the story is intended to represent. Over against the view that this experience of Jacob is mythical, we hold that it is historical and, moreover, that it was not a merely spiritual or subjective experience, but involved real wrestling with a person who was objectively present and was manifested in a bodily form.

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" (32:24). That this "man" was not really a human being is proved by a reference in the book of the prophet Hosea (12:2-5), which states of Jacob: "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevail-

ed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us; even the Lord of hosts; the Lord is his memorial." Here the "man" is called the "angel," and what follows implies that this "angel" is not an ordinary angel but is a theophany, a manifestation of God Himself.

Jacob has been up against strong opposition for years. Having finally gotten clear of his uncle Laban, he is still concerned and anxious about the coming meeting with his brother Esau. By his own admission, Jacob is afraid of Esau. His previous actions on this might show that the problem of meeting Esau was uppermost in his mind. Jacob regards his relationship to Esau as his great problem. But Jacob needs to learn the lesson that his greatest problem is not his relationship to his brother but his relationship to God. Really that is everyone's greatest problem — it is a problem which, when faced and solved, furnishes the key to the solution of all other problems. Jacob, then, needs to realize that his greatest and deepest concern must be, not about Esau, but about God.

Jacob's conflict with this mysterious stranger on the bank of the Jabbok is marked by distinct stages. The first stage is that mentioned in verse 24, the wrestling through the night until the break of day. The point of this part is that by reason of his heroic persistence Jacob obtained the blessing from the stranger in the end. Jacob persevered and overcame what seemed to be an insurmountable obstacle. Jacob's persistent wrestling with the stranger — really with God — has been compared to Christ's encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman. The woman persisted in the face of apparent rejection by Christ, until she obtained the blessing which she sought.

It should be noted that the record does not merely state that Jacob wrestled with the stranger, but that the stranger wrestled with Jacob. The stranger's wrestling with Jacob is what is primarily important in the incident. "We must, therefore, take into account the element of divine displeasure Jacob had to overcome, always remembering that this entered into the whole transaction from beginning to end. And this fact colored the frame of mind in which the patriarch prayed, and makes his experience an example for us of prayer, not so much in general, but of a

specific kind. It is prayer for forgiveness of sin and the removal of divine displeasure on account of sin that we here find illustrated. And in consonance with this the blessing craved and received was the blessing of pardon and a return to normal relations with God. The event taught Jacob that inheritance of the promises can rest on forgiveness of sin and a purified conscience only" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, pp. 113, 114).

The second stage of the encounter begins at the point where the mysterious stranger touches the hollow of Jacob's thigh, putting his thigh out of joint. Jacob thus learns that in the real conflict of life, the true victory is that of surrender to the will of God. God seems to be our adversary as we struggle in prayer, but as God prevails in our life and our will is surrendered to the will of God, we gain the real victory. Jacob must always remember this experience, therefore a physical disability is placed upon him as a reminder. In later life Jacob's limp will remind him of the night on the bank of the Jabbok where he wrestled with God and finally by persistence won the victory.

As day is breaking, the stranger asks to be let go. Jacob, however, refuses, saying, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This is a truly heroic faith, a truly heroic persistence in prayer. So far from being presumptuous or improper on Jacob's part, as some have held, it is highly commended and indicates his real victory in the conflict. Jacob holds on to the very last, he does not give up even when there seems to be good reason for giving up. His thigh is out of joint; the day is breaking; yet Jacob keeps on and will not give up until the blessing has been granted.

Before departing, the stranger changes Jacob's name to Israel. "For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (32:28). This verse proves that Jacob's continued struggle was commendable, not blameworthy. He is declared to have won the victory. The change of name indicates a change of character. Jacob means "Supplanter" — a name well fitted to Jacob's past history and character. Israel means "he who strives with God" — a name suited to Jacob's new life and character. It should be observed that in the Old Testament both names, Jacob and Israel, continue to be used interchangeably. We may say that "Jacob" stands for Jacob's old nature, while "Israel" stands for his new nature. But in his previous life Jacob had real faith in God as his Saviour, and in his later life he was not perfect but was still involved in some evil. Therefore it was fitting that both names should be used, even after his experience by the Jabbok. "As before, side by side with Jacob's perversity, there had been an element of spirituality, so also afterwards, side by side with the now matured spirituality, there remained traces of the old na-

ture. Hence God continued to subject the patriarch to discipline of affliction even to his old age" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 114). That is to say, though Jacob is now in a right relation to God, and can properly be called "Israel," he is not yet completely sanctified, nor has his old "Jacob" nature been completely eradicated; therefore he can also properly be called "Jacob."

Questions:

1. Why did Jacob send his household across the Jabbok by night?
2. How large a stream is the Jabbok? Where is it located?
3. What view of Jacob's wrestling with a mysterious stranger is held by some scholars?
4. Why should this incident be regarded as historical fact?
5. What Scripture text proves that the "man" who wrestled with Jacob was not a human being?
6. What was the real identity of the stranger who wrestled with Jacob?
7. What did Jacob regard as his greatest problem at this time?
8. What was really Jacob's greatest problem at this time?
9. What was the first stage of Jacob's conflict on the bank of the Jabbok?
10. To what New Testament incident has Jacob's wrestling been compared?
11. What kind of prayer is represented by Jacob's struggle?
12. At what point did the second stage of Jacob's struggle begin?
13. Why was a physical disability placed upon Jacob?
14. Why was Jacob's refusal to give up until he received the blessing commendable?
15. What victory did Jacob win?
16. What is the meaning of the name "Jacob"? Of "Israel"?
17. What fact concerning Jacob's life was indicated by the change of name?
18. Why was the name "Jacob" used along with "Israel" in the Old Testament from this point onwards?

LESSON 136

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.**4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.**

"And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there" (32:29). Jacob seems to be still not absolutely sure of the identity of the mysterious stranger who has been wrestling with him. He asks to be told his name, that is, his identity. The reply is a refusal to tell the name. We may wonder about the reason for this refusal. Luther held that the failure to disclose the name left an atmosphere of mystery about the whole transaction, which would lead Jacob to continued reflection upon it. "In spiritual experiences there is and must be the challenge of the mysterious. A spiritual experience so lucid that a man sees through and is able to analyze every part of it must be rather shallow" (Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, II, p. 880). Furthermore, Jacob can really know the identity of the stranger from the statement that he (Jacob) has power with God, and has prevailed. Also, the blessing which is conferred in verse 29 could really come only from God. As a matter of fact, Jacob realized that it was God he had been wrestling with, for in verse 30 he states, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

"And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (32:30). Peniel means "face of God." (Peniel is usually spelled Penuel in the Old Testament; the meaning is the same).

"And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh" (32:31). The injured thigh reminded him of the experience of the previous night — of his hours of struggle with God, ending in spiritual victory. The rising sun, we may suggest, symbolized the new day dawning in Jacob's life — his real and true life, for which his previous life was only a preparation. We are warranted in suggesting this symbolic significance by the mention of the sunrise in the narrative. It seems to be mentioned as significant. The sun rises every day and we take the daily sunrise for granted without special comment. The mention of it here is exceptional and suggests symbolic meaning. Jacob has crossed the Jabbok, but he has crossed more than the Jabbok. He has entered a new life, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; all things have become new. The matter of meeting Esau can now be viewed in its proper perspective. No longer need it loom high as the supreme problem of his life.

"Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow

of the thigh, unto this day; because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank" (32:32). "Unto this day" means, of course, unto the time when Moses wrote the Book of Genesis. How much longer this custom was observed the Bible does not state.

This abstinence from eating a specific part of the flesh of animals was not commanded by God. It was rather a mere custom which the Israelites observed spontaneously. In their observance of this custom we see a recognition, on their part, of the importance and significance of Jacob's strange experience that night by the Jabbok.

Obviously Jacob must have told the story himself. He had been alone with God by the Jabbok. The next morning as the sun rose he limped across the stream and rejoined his family on the southern side of the river. His wives, children and servants would of course instantly note that Jacob was limping. Naturally they would inquire as to what had happened. We can only imagine the wonder with which they would hear the story of that strange night as it was told by the patriarch. But from his telling of the story there arose the custom as to eating which is mentioned in verse 32.

Questions:

1. Why did Jacob ask the mysterious stranger for his name?
2. What may have been the reasons for the stranger's refusal to disclose the name?
3. What statement in the record indicates that Jacob realized that his opponent was God?
4. What name did Jacob give to the place where he had this strange experience?
5. How is Peniel usually spelled in the Old Testament?
6. What is the meaning of the name Peniel?
7. What purpose would the injured thigh serve in Jacob's later life?
8. What may be the symbolic significance of the statement that the sun rose as Jacob crossed over Peniel?
9. How could Jacob now regard the problem of meeting Esau?
10. What custom concerning food among the Israelites had its origin in Jacob's experience at Jabbok?
11. How would the Israelites know the story of what had happened to Jacob by the Jabbok?

(To be continued)

Blue Banner Question Box

Readers are invited to submit Biblical, doctrinal and practical questions for answer in this department. Names will not be published with questions, but anonymous communications will be disregarded.

Question:

Does the original form of the verb translated "perish" in John 10:28 literally support the Reformed doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints against the Arminian doctrine of uncertainty?

Answer:

Yes, emphatically and unequivocally. Speaking of "my sheep" who "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," Jesus said, "I give to them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand."

The text of Nestle (1927) is well established. There are no variant readings worth mentioning. The verb translated "perish" is unmistakably in the form of the Greek Middle Voice. "The only difference between the active and middle voices is that the middle voice calls special attention to the subject. In the active voice the subject is merely acting; in the middle the subject is acting in relation to himself somehow" (Robertson, *Gram. Greek N. T.*, p. 804). Here the "relation" is perfectly clear from the context. This verb, in the active voice, means "destroy"; in the middle voice, all the lexicons give "perish." But here "perish," though suitable in a general way, is ambiguous to the extent that while it includes self-destruction, it does not give any clear expression of the intrinsic meaning of the middle voice.

Bengel, in his "Gnomon of the N. T." (1.c.), calls attention to the middle form, and translates, "they shall not destroy themselves, i.e., they shall not destroy themselves *internally*." Here Bengel's editor and translator, Fausset of Trinity College, Dublin, adds a footnote, "By their own corruptions *within*."

Jesus continued, "and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." He will baffle every **external** enemy.

Bengel was a German Lutheran, and in some passages adopts the Arminian view; but, he was a real scholar, and eminently true to the exact words of Scripture. Here he has accurately interpreted the written words of Christ, and we are indebted to him as far as he went, though he stopped short of making the obvious application of them against Arminianism.

This interpretation is confirmed by the whole context, as well as by many other texts. We take space here to mention only the immediate context of the verb — the words meaning "forever" or "ever" that follow, and the Greek double negative that precedes. ("Not ever" is "never").

This double negative has the effect of making the negative very emphatic, and does so by its combined **external and internal** force. It is composed of two little two-letter words, the first being the **objective** (absolute) negative, and the second the **subjective** negative. The meaning of the latter is that the subject, or subjects, of the verb, possessing Christ's gift of eternal life, have **no** desire, **nor** any other prevailing tendency **within them**, to destroy themselves, to fall, break away, or to "snatch themselves out of the Shepherd's hand," as Arminians say. The **eternal life** given by Christ, according to its essential nature, manifests itself only in righteousness, and enables one to "keep himself," to "guard himself." Hence the command, "**Keep yourselves**." Compare 1 John 5:18, 21 with John 17:11, 12. Also Jude 1, 20, 21, 24.

The words of Jesus Christ before us plainly reveal that the glory and honor of God are involved (are at stake, so to speak) as well as the salvation of His people. Should any one to whom Christ gives eternal life, **finally** perish, whether by an outside enemy, or by something **within himself**, what would become of "the praise of the glory of His grace"? What, for us, would become of "the hope of the Gospel"? Can the Scripture be broken? But why trouble about impossibilities?

— F. D. Frazer

Question:

I would like your opinion on singing the Lord's Prayer. Is it ever right? If so, when and where?

Answer:

We believe, on what we consider Scriptural grounds, that only the Psalms of the Bible are to be sung in the worship of God. If the Lord's Prayer could be sung otherwise than in the worship of God, it could properly be sung. But inasmuch as the Lord's Prayer is a prayer, obviously it cannot rightly be used except as a way of worshipping God. To use the Lord's Prayer otherwise than in worship would be to misuse it. A prayer can rightly be used only as a prayer. When the Lord's Prayer is sung it seems to be used as a means of entertainment or displaying musical talent rather than as a sincere drawing near to God's throne of grace. For these reasons we do not believe that it is proper to use the Lord's Prayer as a song.

— J. G. Vos

Question:

What do you think of Covenanters participating in the singing of "The Messiah" on a week day?

Answer:

If "The Messiah" is sung on a week day and is clearly not intended as a way of worshipping God, or as a substitute for the worship of God, we believe that it may be proper to participate in the singing of this composition. The position held by the Reformed Presbyterian Church is that only Psalms are to be sung in the worship of God. The singing of other religious compositions on other occasions is not necessarily ruled out by this principle. To this it may be objected that singing is either (1) worship or (2) entertainment. In reply, the present writer would say that this is too simple an analysis of possible situations. Besides these two there may be a third possibility, namely artistic culture, which may properly include religious elements provided the distinction between this and worship is kept clear and carefully guarded. If any one has a doubt as to the propriety of participating in such a performance, he should refrain from it, in accordance with the principle enunciated in Romans 14:23.

— J. G. Vos

Question:

What does Hodge mean in his comment on Romans 10:4 when he says, "He has abolished the law as a rule of justification, or covenant of works. . ."? Was the law ever a "covenant of works" in the sense that men were to be justified by obedience to it except during Adam's probation?

Answer:

The reference is to Charles Hodge's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Hodge is commenting on Romans 10:4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." It would seem that the statement quoted in the above query from Hodge's Commentary is, to say the least, ambiguous and unguarded, and liable to serious misunderstanding. That Hodge did not really mean to imply that the law was ever, since Adam's probation, a possible way of justification, is shown by one of his doctrinal notes at the end of the same chapter of the Commentary, where he states: "The legal method of justification is, for sinners, as impracticable as climbing up into heaven or going down into the abyss." Since the people of Israel under the Old Testament were certainly sinners, justification by the law was impossible for them. As a matter of fact the Old Testament law, both moral and ceremonial, was itself a part of the system of grace, and as a principle was subordinate to the principle of grace. This is really visible throughout the Old Testament. For example, in the Ten Commandments we have **redemption** as the preface to the demand for obedience: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Israel was to be a people **saved by grace**, and in token of gratitude was to live in obedience to the law.

Israel entered the Promised Land by an act of divine grace — the almighty power of God exerted in the destruction of Jericho. They did not enter Canaan by works, but by grace. Jericho was to be left in ruins — never to be rebuilt — because it was to be God's memorial, to remind Israel that it was not by works but by grace that their forefathers had entered the rest of the Promised Land.

It is abundantly clear from numerous other statements in Hodge's writings that he did not believe that anyone, after Adam's fall, could ever be justified by works of the law. He was far removed from the crude notion sometimes heard at the present day in such statements as: "The Old Testament was for the Jews: the New Testament is for Christians. The Jews were saved by works; Christians are saved by grace." The superficiality and non-Biblical character of such statements should be obvious to everyone without argument.

In order further to clarify the matter at issue, we shall quote a few sentences from Biblical Theology, by G. Vos (pages 142-3):

"It is true, certain of the statements of the Pentateuch and of the O. T. in general may on the surface seem to favor the Judaistic position. That the law cannot be kept is nowhere stated in so many words. And not only this, that the keeping of the law will be rewarded, is stated once and again. Israel's retention of the privileges of the berith (covenant) is made dependent on obedience. It is promised that he who shall do the commandments shall find life through them. Consequently writers have not been lacking, who declared that, from a historical point of view, their sympathies went with the Judaizers, and not with Paul. Only a moment's reflection is necessary to prove that this is untenable, and that precisely from a broad historical standpoint Paul had far more accurately grasped the purport of the law than his opponents. The law was given after the redemption from Egypt had been accomplished, and the people had already entered upon the enjoyment of many of the blessings of the berith (covenant). Particularly their taking possession of the promised land could not have been made dependent on previous observance of the law, for during their journey in the wilderness many of its precepts could not be observed. It is plain, then, that law-keeping did not figure at that juncture as the meritorious ground of life-inheritance. The latter is based on grace alone, no less emphatically than Paul himself places salvation on that ground. But, while this is so, it might still be objected, that law-observance, if not the ground for receiving, is yet made the ground for retention of the privileges inherited. Here it can not, of course, be denied that a real connection exists. But the Judaizers went wrong in inferring that the connection must be **meritorious**, that, if Israel keeps the cherished gifts of Jehovah through observance of His law, this must be so, because in strict justice they had **earned**

them. The connection is of a totally different kind. It belongs not to the legal sphere of merit, but to the symbolico-typical sphere of **appropriateness of expression**. As stated above, the abode of Israel in Canaan typified the heavenly, perfected state of God's people. Under these circumstances the ideal of absolute conformity to God's law of legal holiness had to be upheld. Even though they were not able to keep the law in the Pauline, spiritual sense, yea, even though they

were unable to keep it externally and ritually, the requirement could not be lowered. When apostasy on a general scale took place, they could not remain in the promised land. When they disqualified themselves for typifying the state of holiness, they **ipso facto** disqualified themselves for typifying that of blessedness, and had to go into captivity." (Copyright 1948 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.).

— J. G. Vos

Book Review

Note: The following book review is in addition to the reviews found in an earlier part of this issue. It was not possible to get it in the regular book review section. Rather than delay it until the October-December issue we are publishing it separately here. — Ed.

Jesus of Yesterday and Today, by Samuel G. Craig. The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 147 N. 10th St., Philadelphia 7, Pa. 1956, pp. \$2.75.

Dr. Samuel Craig now makes his home in Princeton, New Jersey after being engaged as editor of the "The Presbyterian" and later as editor of "Christianity Today." He also served for twelve years in the pastorate. First as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Ebensburg, Pa. and later as pastor of the North Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, Pa. He is a graduate of Princeton University and of Princeton Theological Seminary, and later studied at the University of Berlin. Dr. Craig is the author of **Christianity Rightly So Called**.

Sensing the tide of lukewarmness which has almost completely engulfed the Christian Church today, Dr. Craig has succeeded in pin-pointing the source of this apathy. The present day Christian Church lacks boldness in taking God at His word. The Church has failed to claim God's promises. It is content to merely except the doctrines and principles which Jesus taught but it shuns the power which Jesus has promised to give.

Dr. Craig's thesis is that "Jesus Christ **IS** the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever." In the letter to the Hebrews the Apostle Paul pointed out this same truth to the early Christians. Jesus Christ lived on this earth some two thousand years ago. We read in the Bible of the great power which Jesus possessed. The power to transform lives, to heal the sick in body, and to forgive the sinner. We know Him to be a historical personage but do we know Him as our personal friend and redeemer? Do we know the person Jesus and the power of His resurrection? Is the Jesus that we know the same as the one which is revealed in Scripture, or do we worship a Christ who has been disrobed of His power by human pride and self-satisfaction? We are not

true Christians unless we worship Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. Our lives must be completely consecrated to the one who is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever.

Dr. Craig reminds the reader that Jesus is the sum total of Christianity. He sets forth the idea that Jesus is the "object" of our worship and not the "subject." By this he means that Jesus Christ is the one whom we are to praise and glorify. The one to whom every knee must bow. By logical reasoning the author destroys the modern concept that Jesus is merely the "subject" of our Christian thought. Jesus was a man but he was more than man — He is God who became man. Jesus is our example but not to the extent that our salvation depends on complete imitation of Jesus' perfection. This thought is more developed in the Chapter entitled "Jesus as our Example."

Following is a list of the topics which are discussed concerning the Jesus of our Christian faith:

1. Was Jesus a Christian?
2. Whence Came Jesus?
3. Why Jesus Came
4. Jesus as Lord
5. Jesus as Redeemer
6. Jesus as the Regenerator of Character
7. Jesus as Our Example
8. Jesus as a Man and as a Friend
9. Jesus as a Teacher
10. Jesus and Miracles
11. Jesus as a Social Reformer
12. Jesus as Judge
13. Jesus and His Place in the Cosmos

This book is not to be read as a textbook in Theology or Christology but is a treatise on the person and work of Jesus Christ in relationship to the sinner and the world. The author logically defends a faith in the historical Jesus. The reader gains a deeper insight into the person of Jesus by logical reasoning and not by emotional force. It is by rational thought and not sweet wooing words which moves the reader to a closer relationship with his saviour and friend.

Every minister of the Gospel should read this book and not hide it on the bookshelf, but pass it along to the elders and to other church officers. The usage of words is relatively simple with few if any technical terms.

Any person who desires a closer understanding of his or her saviour should read this book without delay.

— Marion L. McFarland



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**Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and
learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye
shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy,
and my burden is light.**

Matthew 11:28-30

A Quarterly Publication Devoted to Expounding, Defending and Applying the System of Doctrine set forth in the Word of God and Summarized in the Standards of the Reformed Presbyterian (Covenanter) Church.

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Our Martyrs' Answer

By Owen F. Thompson

The stones of Scotland mark our rest;
Not laid in rows nor tended well,
But scattered over hill and dell.
Like wind-blown flowers we fell. We fell
Beneath His banner, gave our best.
We stood the test!

Yes, we have died. Among the dead
We lie. O Christ, we died for Thee!
We died for men, to make them free!
Oh, may our dying fruitful be
To rear a race who'll hold instead
Christ's kingly banner o'er our head.

All dead are we? Nay, spirits live;
And of our spirit to you we give.
Be true, ye coming race, be true!
Ye soldiers of the Crown, be true! . . .

O Covenant dust, in Scotland's hills,
We hear thy call. God grant our wills
May falter not, nor pass the call.
O Lord, our Christ, we offer ALL!
And may our fathers' vow of old
Be now OUR Covenant — let it hold!

Ye cloud of witnesses, be near!
We need your presence with us here.
And Christ, our King, for whom ye died,
Leave not Thy place at our right side.
And in thy strength we'll carry on,
Till all the kings of earth are won;
And kingdoms of the world shall be
One mighty kingdom unto Thee.
Then from all lands a wondrous throng
Shall give eternal praise in song.

Not a word or look
I affect to own
 But by book,
And Thy Book alone.

Though I fail, I weep;
Though I halt in pace,
 Yet I creep
To the throne of grace.

— George Herbert

Safe where I cannot die yet
Safe where I hope to lie too,
Safe from the fume and the fret;
 You, and you,
Whom I never forget.

Safe from the frost and the snow
Safe from the storm and the sun,
Safe where the seeds wait to grow
 One by one,
And to come back in blow.*

*blow: bloom

— C. G. Rossetti

Till the Perfect Day

We still believe, though oft seems baffled
 Faith's noble, age-long fight;
For right we stand, though gloom the scaffold
 With shadows to affright;
For truth we strive, though still be ruffled
 His seamless robe of light.
Faith's goodly fight will we maintain,
Assured that righteousness shall reign.

His truth is mighty, though its power
 To man's rash heart seem slow;
His grace shall fruit, though oft its flower
 Seems frayed while tempests blow;
And hope, though threatening clouds may lower,
 Their frowns spans with a bow.
Undaunted, still we watch and pray
Till Christ bring in the perfect day.

(Author unknown)

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Roadblocks Limiting Church Effectiveness

By J. G. Vos

III. THE ROADBLOCK OF ANARCHY, OR CONTEMPT FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH

The government and discipline of the Christian Church are of divine institution and authority. Back of them is the command and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, which means, of course, ultimately, the authority of God. Therefore any disintegration of the government and discipline of the church must be viewed with alarm. It is the disintegration of something which is of divine authority and therefore of the greatest importance for the well-being and future of the Kingdom of God in the world.

We live in an age of relativism and expediency, when hardly anything is regarded as an absolute matter of principle, a clear-cut issue of right and wrong, any more. So it comes to pass that not only is there the greatest diversity of opinion and practice concerning church government and discipline, but also that the whole subject seems to be falling into neglect and decadence, apparently with the tacit approval of most Christian people and most churches.

Church discipline is a Scriptural ordinance.

I shall speak chiefly of church discipline, though of course church government and church discipline go together, and cannot really be separated. They are separate functions, but they are inseparably connected and interrelated. Without church government there cannot be any real church discipline. Church government is the authority which administers church discipline. A non-existent or impotent government cannot enforce anything. On the other hand, church government without church discipline is futile and useless. It is like the government of a nation which does not even attempt to enforce the laws and administer justice within the realm. Church government without church discipline becomes a mere paper government, a mere matter of form, serving no true purpose.

The following Scriptures, among many others, prove that church discipline is a divine ordinance in the Christian Church: Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; 1 John 2:18, 19; Rev. 3:18-23.

The church is in the world but it is not of the world. Since Adam's fall, there has been an antithesis between two kinds of people in this world—the antithesis of Cain and Abel, of Satan's king-

dom and God's Kingdom, of the world and the church.

Abraham was commanded by God to leave Ur of the Chaldees. The man who was to be the nucleus of the church could not remain in an environment dominated by the world. God put a difference between Israel and the Egyptians. Again, God insisted upon strict separation between the covenant people of Israel and the races of Canaan. And today God requires an antithesis and a separation between the church and the world.

The world must be kept out of the Church.

The requirement that the world be kept out of the church is obviously Biblical and necessary. But how can this be accomplished? In some countries of Europe where an official or state church exists there is hardly any distinction between citizens and church members. Citizenship virtually includes church membership. There are of course exceptions in the case of Roman Catholics and Jews, as well as other minority groups; but apart from these, church membership seems to be practically automatic for the mass of the population.

The Puritan Attempt to Exclude the World

It is often wrongly supposed that the criterion of church membership is regeneration. We are told that the church should exclude all who are not born again. Years ago in Manchuria a Chinese evangelist said to me: "Pastor, in this church, let us baptize only those who are truly born again." I replied, "Well, Mr. Chang, that is a high aim. But tell me, how are we going to decide with certainty which are really born again and which are not?" To which Mr. Chang replied: "Oh, that will be very simple. I will tell you which they are, and you can baptize them." But it turned out later that some whom the evangelist had approved were not truly born again, so far as we were able to judge.

It was the error of the early Puritan churches of New England that church membership is based on proof of regeneration, or, as they called it in those days, "real saintship." The applicant appeared before the church and related his religious experience, and if the congregation or elders

judged him truly converted he was admitted to membership. This theory broke down in practice, however. Many who had a good command of the English language were able to convince the church that they were truly regenerate, when as a matter of fact they were only good salesmen. And many others, who no doubt were truly the Lord's, did not have the boldness to make such claims for themselves, and remained outside of communicant membership in the visible church. This in turn led to the unscriptural system known as the "half-way covenant," by which adherents of the church who had been baptized but had never themselves made a public profession of faith or partaken of the Lord's Supper, were nevertheless allowed to have their children baptized, and so on, from one generation to the next, without any personal profession of faith.

Proof of Being Born Again not Required

The whole idea, however, is wrong and unscriptural. It is interesting to note that this old controversy is reflected in the **Testimony** of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (adopted 1806), which rejects as an error the proposition "That saintship is the criterion of church-membership, so that the visible church may not, without guilt, receive any who is not really a saint, or exclude any who is regenerated" (Chap. XXII, Error 3; in **Constitution of R. P. Church**, page 191).

According to the Bible and sound Reformed theology the true criterion of church membership is not "saintship" or proof of regeneration, but a credible profession of faith and obedience. Simon the sorcerer was baptized and a church member, but clearly he was not regenerate. Peter told him that he was in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. Similarly, those mentioned in 1 John 2:19, who went out from the church because they were not truly of it, were obviously former members who had once been received to the church's fellowship; otherwise, they could not have "gone out from" the church. The true criterion, therefore, is a credible profession of faith in Christ and of obedience to Him.

A Credible Profession of Faith and Obedience

A "credible" profession means a profession that it is possible to accept at face value. It does not mean a profession that compels acceptance. The applicant does not have to prove that he is converted. His profession is to be taken at face value unless there is evidence to the contrary. The burden of responsibility is on the applicant, not on the church, to decide whether he is truly born again.

A credible profession — a profession that it is possible to accept — is a profession that is adequate in content (not ignorant) and that is accompanied by a consistent life (not scandalous). The church, of course, must decide what constitutes such a profession, and must weigh the pro-

fession of the individual applicant for membership to determine whether it is indeed a credible profession; that is, the church must satisfy itself that the applicant is neither ignorant nor scandalous. By maintaining this Biblical standard for admitting members to the status of communicant membership in the church, the world is kept out of the church.

Bible Standards Often Ignored Today

It is notorious, however, that this standard is commonly violated today. Many denominations have virtually open membership, open baptism and open communion. Thus the dividing line between the church and the world is blurred or effaced. It is reported that a Unitarian Church had a wayside signboard bearing the name of the church and the added statement: "All who believe in the good life are welcome here." I suppose that even the devil himself believes in the good life, if he be allowed to define in his own way what he means by "good." Where open church membership exists, or where virtually open church membership exists, the gates are thrown open for the world to enter the church.

Only by insistently maintaining Biblical standards can the world be kept out of the church. Needless to say, this must be done in the sight of God and utterly without respect of persons. Who a person is related to has absolutely nothing to do with his or her right to be a communicant member of the Church of Jesus Christ. Only those are to be admitted who really make a credible profession of faith, accompanied by a corresponding life. The ignorant and the scandalous must be kept out at any cost.

The Church Must be Kept from Becoming Like the World.

The Bible standard of faith and life must also be insisted on in the case of those who are already members of the church. It should not be easier to remain a member than it is to **become** a member.

I understand that the U. S. Customs Service has a list of books which cannot be legally imported into the United States. These books, for one reason or another, are excluded. But the strange thing is that many of these same books are freely printed and sold by publishers in the United States. They cannot get in, but they can be in and stay in. A strange situation, certainly. Yet it is not unlike the situation which exists when a church tries to maintain high Biblical standards in admitting new members from the world, yet tolerates serious evils and abuses among those who are already members, and have been members for years. Certainly it should not be easier to stay in than to get in.

Discipline a Duty of the Whole Church

The officers of the church are to watch over the members to see that the Bible standard of

faith and life is maintained. This task, however, cannot be placed wholly and solely upon the ministers and elders. It is also the duty of the church as a whole, and of each and every member of the church. It is, indeed, first of all the duty of members as such. Members are to have a care for one another, to admonish one another, and so forth. Only when all this has failed of its purpose, must official action be taken by the courts of the church.

When the duty of mutual admonition and discipline is taken seriously by **both** the membership and the officers, then the church will be kept from becoming like the world. Scandals and troubles will be nipped in the bud, before they become extreme and desperate cases. Troubles will be cured before they become incurable. But both members and officers are often extremely reluctant to undertake this task. We all tend to be like Cain, who asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It may be, we fear, a bit unpleasant or embarrassing — it may, indeed, be extremely unpleasant and highly embarrassing — so we tend to put it off, if not to neglect it altogether.

Then things drift along from one thing to another until by and by some member is so far off the right track that it seems almost impossible to reclaim him. And finally, after he has become totally indifferent and has perhaps not attended public worship for several years, his name is dropped from the roll, to the accompaniment of a pious remark about the travel fund. But this is **not** Scriptural church discipline; this is certainly **not** what the Bible requires us to do.

When people **begin** to get off the track, the others should note this and restore them in a spirit of meekness. They should remonstrate with them and urge them to do right. The real purpose of church discipline is not to take a name off the roll after all other action has already become hopeless, but to prevent things from becoming hopeless by doing something about them in time.

What Kind of Conduct Requires Discipline?

In general, any conduct on account of which a person could be kept from becoming a member is proper ground for action in the case of one who is already a member. Scandal is not everything which is sinful, or which displeases someone else, but something so important that if committed by one not a member, it would be sufficient to debar him from membership until duly repented of. See the very sound and Scriptural summary of the subject of church discipline in the **Testimony** of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Chap. XXXI (found in **Constitution of R. P. Church**, pages 210, 211. To this should be added the statements of the **Book of Discipline**, Chapter I, especially paragraphs 3 and 8 (**Constitution of R. P. Church**, pages 279-281). We should note well that the **Testimony** says that without the faithful and spiritual ap-

plication of church discipline no church can hope for Christ's countenance and blessing. And the **Book of Discipline** adds that "Experience shows that the neglect of discipline is speedily followed by corruption of worship, of doctrine and of government." These statements are certainly true, and they have the sanction of the Word of God.

Church Discipline has Almost Vanished

In view of these facts, it must be regarded as a most extraordinary thing that, even in churches which regard themselves as pure and faithful, church discipline has all but vanished from the life of the church. The statements of the **Testimony** and of the **Book of Discipline** on this subject are virtually a dead letter today. In all but the most extreme and shocking cases, nothing is done and everyone knows that nothing will be done. But it is not such extreme and shocking cases that are ruining the church today. It is the common cases of neglect of the means of grace, the cases of openly violated covenant vows, the cases of disregard of the Sabbath, of neglect of baptism, of needless and habitual absence from the ordinances of worship, of gossip, slander and evil speaking, of miserly refusal to render due financial support to the church — it is cases such as these that cry aloud for Scriptural action, and yet seldom is anything done about them until it is too late.

John Calvin on Church Discipline

The Reformer John Calvin at Geneva regarded church discipline as so important that when matters came to a head between himself and the city council and assembly of Geneva, he absolutely refused to compromise on this issue. He was willing to yield on several other matters which did not involve vital matters of principle, but with regard to church discipline he absolutely refused to yield. There must be Scriptural church discipline; it must be in the hands of lawful church officers without interference by the civil magistrates; it must debar the ignorant and scandalous from the Lord's Supper; and it must, if and when all other measures failed, terminate in the sentence of excommunication.

This was too much for the pleasure-loving, worldly-minded people of Geneva. But Calvin would not compromise, and neither would the citizens yield. Instead, they voted to banish Calvin from their city, and he went reluctantly into exile, until in the providence of God the city of Geneva was constrained to call him back again.

Church Discipline is not a Method of Getting Rid of People

There exists a common misconception of church discipline, which regards it as merely a legal method of getting rid of people whose names are an embarrassment on the church's membership roll.

Discipline is more than "Purging the Roll"

Bring up a discussion of church discipline in a meeting of presbytery sometime, and see if within a few minutes some of the delegates are not using the expression "purging the roll" as equivalent to church discipline. The only kind of discipline many people know is the final erasure of a person's name after all other measures have become hopeless. Things have been allowed to drift for years; all truly Scriptural discipline has been avoided and neglected. Finally matters become desperate and the session decides to "purge the roll" — a surgical operation in which perhaps twenty or thirty names are simply stricken off the roll of communicant members in good standing. There are no charges, no trial, no admonition, no patient dealing with the parties. They may be sent a letter informing them that they have been "purged," or perhaps they may not even be informed of the session's action. Thus Biblical discipline is corrupted into a last resort for getting rid of "dead wood."

Discipline is not a Method of Saving Money

There is still another view of church discipline which is even worse in my humble judgment, than the view which regards it as merely a matter of "purging the roll." This worse view is the view which regards church discipline exclusively from the financial point of view. This is not only common, but even prevalent.

Bring up the matter of church discipline in a meeting of session, and see if one or more elders do not almost immediately offer the comment that by removing the names of such-and-such members, the congregation could save so-and-so much on the travel fund of presbytery and Synod. It is true, of course, that a congregation pays its travel fund according to its membership as shown in the public statistics. And it is true that the elimination of names will reduce the amount that the congregation is required to pay to the travel funds. Yet this is the merest sidelight on the subject of church discipline. Suppose that a congregation could save, say, twenty dollars a year by "purging the roll," still, I say, this would be the merest by-product of the exercise of church discipline.

It strikes me as truly shocking that in a matter involving the immortal souls of men and women, some church officers cannot seem to see any other aspect than the money aspect of the matter. If a member of your family were very sick, would you sit down with paper and pencil and figure up how much you could save on your annual grocery bill if he were to die? It is truly shocking when the subject of church discipline is approached chiefly, if not exclusively, from the standpoint of church finances. And yet I can assure you that this is commonly done. This impresses me as really profane. A matter which

concerns the honor of Jesus Christ, the spiritual welfare of His Church, and the eternal weal or woe of men's souls, is discussed from the standpoint of the treasurer's ledger. The honor of Christ and the recovery of erring members are the real objects of the church discipline—not a saving of dollars and cents on the travel fund.

Scriptural Discipline a Continuous Process

It is a great mistake to think of church discipline as limited to the final step of church discipline, namely, removing a person's name from the roll. Scriptural church discipline is a long, continuous process, not just a way of getting rid of a name from the roll. The steps in church discipline are graded steps. The process moves from one to another. These steps are admonition, rebuke, suspension, deposition (in the case of church officers), and excommunication. At each stage of the process there is renewed opportunity for the person to repent, renewed prayer on the part of the church that he will repent, renewed dealing with the person that he may repent. When this is faithfully done by the church, it will be accompanied by an increasing pressure of the Holy Spirit on the offending member's conscience, which will result, eventually, in his repentance and restoration, or if resisted to the end, in his complete hardening, his becoming "like a heathen man and a publican."

The common practice of "purging the roll" is not really discipline at all. It really concerns only the church's own records and statistics. It makes no real effort to deal spiritually with the offending member. Instead, it simply takes the ultimate step of erasing names from the roll, very much as the names of those who have died are erased from the roll. This is something very different from the church discipline required by the Bible and set forth in the historic church standards.

Only One Sin Justifies Excommunication

There is really only one sin which can properly result in the final sentence of excommunication. That sin is not murder, nor theft, not drunkenness, nor perjury, not adultery, not Sabbath-breaking, not blasphemy, nor any other such sin. The one and only sin for which a person can properly be excommunicated, or put out of the church, is the sin of **stubborn refusal to repent**. Where there is repentance, all other sins are forgiven, and the person can be a member in good standing in the church, even though he may be in prison under sentence to be hanged for murder. But the person who stubbornly refuses to repent when he is exhorted and commanded to do so, cannot be a member in good standing in the church. It makes no difference whether the sin that he refuses to repent of is a "big" sin or a "little" sin. It may be telling a lie, or making a mean, slanderous remark about

some other member. If he refuses to repent, in the end, after all other measures have been faithfully tried and have failed, he must be excommunicated. Our Lord Jesus Christ said so—if he will not hear the church, he is to be treated as a heathen man and a publican, as an unsaved sinner who needs the gospel just as much as the heathen on the foreign mission fields need it. The apostle Paul said so — he said to the Corinthian church, “Put away that wicked person from among yourselves.” But when that wicked man later repented, Paul also directed that he be restored to membership in the church.

Forms of Contempt for Church Discipline Today

If anything is characteristic of the Church today it is contempt for Scriptural church discipline. We see today not merely neglect of church discipline, but actually contempt for church discipline. There is a relativistic attitude in people’s minds today which causes them, when this subject is brought up, to discuss, not **what is right but what will in their opinion be likely to have desirable results.** People are concerned not so much with what God requires in His Word, as with what they think will be likely to “win friends and influence people.”

When church discipline is regarded from the standpoint of expediency, and people weigh the probable results before they are willing to take any action, then church discipline is regarded wrongly; it is regarded with contempt; it is regarded as of merely human authority, not of divine authority.

The real question about church discipline is not whether it is wise and prudent, nor whether people will like it, but whether it is right — whether God commands His Church to do it.

“Relativity” Causes Contempt for Discipline

Another form of contempt for church discipline exists where the session is unwilling to exercise necessary discipline because of “relativity.” People in a congregation may be closely related by ties of blood or marriage. If the session could find someone who is not related to anybody, they might be willing to exercise Scriptural discipline; but when a person is closely related to three or four of the most prominent families in the congregation, including some of the elders themselves — that is another matter. Under such circumstances sessions rarely exercise Scriptural discipline even when it is clearly called for.

Carnal Fear of Consequences

Another form of contempt for church discipline arises from a carnal fear of consequences. It is feared that if Mr. A, who is a communicant member but has not attended church for eleven years, is dealt with by church discipline, then

family B and family C, who are closely related to Mr. A, will leave the church in a huff.

It cannot be denied that such situations exist. But what shall we reply? Whether church discipline is to be applied to Mr. A is a question of right and wrong to be decided on its merits. What families B and C will think about it has nothing whatever to do with the question. We are opposed to corruption in our civil courts; what about improper influences in church courts? The old Latin proverb said **Fiat Justitia, ruat coelum** (“Let justice be done, though the heavens fall”). It is not our job to keep the heavens in place by corrupting justice.

And what about families B and C? Well, if their loyalty to Christ and His Church is so superficial and flimsy that they can be kept in the Church only by a policy of appeasement which handles them and all their relatives with kid gloves, then they are no asset to the Church. If families B and C can be kept in the Church only by calling black white, then families B and C are a liability to the Church, and if they leave, the Church will gain in spiritual power and purity what it loses in membership statistics.

Threats to “Leave the Church”

Another form of contempt for church discipline is the threat to “leave the church” if discipline is applied. This is far from imaginary; it has been carried out in practice only too often.

Mr. X is a flagrant Sabbath-breaker. He goes on long auto trips in the interests of his worldly business, using the Lord’s day for his travelling time. Now if the session so much as mention this to Mr. X — let alone taking any real action or pronouncing any real censure — if the session so much as speak to Mr. X about his Sabbath-breaking, what will he do? In nine cases out of ten such a person will become very angry, will announce loudly to all and sundry that he will not be a member of a church that interferes with his business, and will before the next communion season ask for his letter of standing and join a “tolerant” church which will make no demands whatever upon his life. That church will receive him with open arms and may even honor him by making him an officer.

Discipline Blocked by “Christian Love”

Another obstacle in the way of exercising Scriptural church discipline arises from the attitude of those church officers who object to the exercise of discipline on the ground that it is contrary to Christian love for the erring brother. A false antithesis is set up between discipline and love. These are regarded as mutually exclusive — it is held that we can exercise either discipline or love, but not both at the same time. Discipline is regarded as ruled out by the duty of Christian love.

This kind of obstacle in the way of Scriptural church discipline has been observed again and again in church courts. The plea of Christian love is put up in a very plausible and appealing manner by brethren who are universally honored and respected. This results in putting those who call for Scriptural discipline in a very bad light. They are regarded as lacking in Christian love. Sometimes, indeed, those who call for Scriptural discipline are openly declared to be actuated by a desire for revenge. The call for Scriptural discipline has even been represented as a demand for "a pound of flesh." Thus the plea of love for the offending brother results in a very unloving imputation of bad motives to the brethren who call for discipline.

Sometimes the plea is that the matter — whatever it may be — be dropped altogether. More often, perhaps, it is conceded that the time may come when discipline must be exercised, but it is pleaded that that time has not yet come. Discipline should be postponed in the interest of love. The time when Scriptural discipline can be exercised, like Felix's "convenient season," never arrives.

All of this of course results from the false antithesis between discipline and love. Scriptural discipline is not to be regarded as a manifestation of hatred or desire for revenge. On the contrary discipline itself should be regarded as an expression of love — not only love for the truth and love for the Church as a whole, but even love for the offending brother. It is no kindness to an offending brother to leave him unrebuked in his sin. The truest love will seek to apply the remedy appointed in God's Word that he may be humbled and recovered.

Congregation should Support Session's Acts

Still another form of contempt for Scriptural church discipline is found in the attitude of many church members who instead of backing up the session's actions with real moral support, will rather commiserate the disciplined member, tell him it is "too bad" that the minister and elders "cracked down" on him, that the session certainly had no business doing so, and so forth.

Thus church discipline is regarded merely as a private matter of the session — the minister and the elders. The other members tend to dissociate themselves from it, to deplore it, to lament it, and to comfort the unfortunate person who has been dealt with by the session. The person is told by other members that they would not stand for it themselves, and they don't see why he stands for it.

Needless to say, this sort of thing breaks down and destroys the effectiveness of all church discipline, just as in the home when one parent disciplines a child and the other parent comforts the child and tells him it is a pity he was treated

so harshly, all parental discipline is broken down and destroyed.

Actually, of course, discipline is the act of the whole congregation. It is carried out by the session, but the session acts in the name of the whole congregation. The entire congregation should back up the session's action with moral force. They are not to count the disciplined person as an enemy, but they are to make it plain, when occasion arises, that they approve of the session's action and they hope and pray that the offending member will repent.

Every member who is admitted to communicant membership has promised to submit to Scriptural church discipline. He has promised "due subordination in the Lord" to the courts of the Church. How many take this promise seriously? How can we explain the fact that people will leave the Church in anger if their sins are even mentioned to them? It is to be feared that many have taken their vows as a mere formality, with no serious intention of keeping them.

Church Discipline and Revival

There is much discussion of revival today. But real revival will never come until the church becomes serious again about drawing a clear dividing line between itself and the world. That dividing line is a credible profession of faith and obedience, maintained by proper exclusion of those lacking such a profession, and proper discipline of those who violate their profession after becoming members.

A Matter of Honesty

Church discipline is really a matter of honesty. Just plain honesty requires that the dividing line between the church and the world be drawn and maintained. God is an honest God, and He requires honesty of His people and His servants. When that dividing line is faithfully drawn and faithfully maintained, we will receive spiritual blessings that we can never get by programs, drives and campaigns.

Church discipline is a matter of honesty; it is a matter of facing realities. God will honor and bless honesty in His church and people. Without honesty we cannot expect God's blessing and we have no right to pray for revival. If the treasurer of a congregation were to report to Synod that he had paid the pastor \$100 more than he had really paid him, that would be dishonest. All right-minded people would object to it and would call for correction of the false statement. But for a session to report to Synod that there are, say, 150 communicant members on the roll, when the real truth is that several of them are "paper" members only and could not be considered in good standing by any stretch of the imagination, is also dishonest. It is really an untruth; it gives a false impression of the facts.

We must maintain honesty even if half of the members become angry and leave the church. We do not glorify God nor accomplish His purposes by dealing in dishonesty and untruth.

Suppose that half the members do become angry and leave the church. That would in itself be a great calamity. But there would also be something gained. The name and honor of Christ would have been vindicated, and the purity of His Church safeguarded. The dividing line between the church and the world would have been faithfully maintained.

God Will Bless His Own Ordinance

Church discipline is an ordinance of God, instituted for these purposes. Where it is faithfully and honestly used, **God will honor and bless it.** Sometimes the attempt to exercise discipline is objected to on the plea that "It won't do a bit of good." But how do we know that it won't do a bit of good? Remember, it is an ordinance of God, commanded in His Word. Then how dare we say that it won't do a bit of good? Do we not have faith in the Word and promises of God? If we do what God commands, He will honor His own Word and bless His Church.

This involves stepping out on faith. But there is no other way. We have to step out by faith, counting on God to honor His Word. Those denominations that maintain Scriptural church discipline, such as the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church and the Christian Reformed Church, have proved in actual practice that God honors and blesses this divine ordinance. Of course, they have lost some members; but they have been greatly strengthened spiritually at the same time. And they have reclaimed many, many erring members over the years.

Scriptural Discipline Necessary for Revival

The prevalent prayer for revival, **in the face of neglect of Scriptural church discipline**, is dishonest and hypocritical. God will not bless it, for it disregards His own Word and commands. Prayer for revival when the church is unwilling to exercise Scriptural discipline is hypocrisy and escapism.

There is much talk today about the need for more prayer, for more revival, and for more evangelism. We can readily agree that there is need for much more of all of these. But prayer is no substitute for obedience to the revealed will of God. I fear that many people today regard prayer

as a substitute for the action that God calls them to do.

When God called Abraham to offer his only son Isaac as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah, Abraham did not say: "This is a difficult situation. We need more prayer. I will call a prayer meeting." He already knew what God required of him, and he went about doing it.

When the children of Israel at the shore of the Red Sea were paralyzed with fear because of the pursuing Egyptians, the Lord said to Moses: "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Ex. 14:15).

There is no Substitute for Obedience

When God has clearly revealed His will in His Word, He requires us to obey it. Nothing else will take the place of obedience to the revealed will of God. Prayer will not do it; revival will not come without it; evangelism will not serve as a substitute. The first requirement for real evangelistic advance is the integrity of the church itself. An army honeycombed with disloyalty, disobedience, threatened desertion, and contempt for discipline, is in no shape to face the enemy and win any battles. Simply to give the order, "Forward, march!" without first making sure of the soundness and loyalty of our army, is not faith but foolhardiness, and will lead to disaster and disillusionment rather than to success and victory.

There is a crying need for more evangelism. I grant it. I believe it. But the first essential for true and successful evangelism is the moral and spiritual integrity of the church itself. Without that, evangelism will be a mere flash in the pan, and its anticipated benefits will prove a mere mirage.

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(To be continued)

Sketches of the Covenanters

By J. C. McFeeters

Chapter XXI

A Sifting Time — A. D. 1653

We now enter the most serious period in the history of the Covenanters. Hitherto we have

been on the skirmish line. All we have yet reviewed has been leading up to the desperate and sanguinary struggle, which lasted twenty-eight

years, costing treasures of blood and indescribable suffering, yet finally resulting in the wealthy heritage of liberty, enlightenment, and religion, which we now enjoy.

Oliver Cromwell, having defeated King Charles, ruled Scotland five years. He was titled "Lord Protector," but in reality was a Dictator. The government was centered more than ever in one man. Many strange qualities blended in this austere autocrat, some of which command our admiration. He was stern and painfully severe, yet much sagacity and justice characterized his administration. During his sway of power the Reformed Churches in his own realms and on the Continent were by him heroically defended. He became, in the hand of the Lord, "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The persecuted found shelter under his shadow, in the providence of the Lord. He avenged the massacre of the Protestants in Ireland, halted the persecution of Christians on the Continent, and gave Rome the alternative, to cease the work of slaughter, or listen to the thunder of his legions at her gates.

The Church of the Covenanters however had strange experience at the hands of Cromwell. In a ruthless and despotic manner he dissolved the General Assembly, put the Supreme Court of God's House out of existence to appear no more for thirty-five years. The meeting previous to this act of violence had been held in the mid-summer of 1653. The ministers and elders had come from all parts of Scotland, to sit in counsel, or rather in debate, concerning the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The salubrious air and genial sky of Edinburgh united with the sacred and exhilarating interests of the Gospel to arouse all that was noble and divine in every heart. The Moderator reverently led the Assembly in prayer and constituted the court most solemnly in the name of Jesus Christ. Such a prayer should overwhelm the soul with God's presence, burden the conscience with responsibilities, make the spiritual world dreadfully visible, and bring God's servants close to His throne of judgment.

The Assembly had met last year in this prayerful and solemn manner, but the business of the Lord Jesus soon degenerated into an acrid, harmful discussion, that lasted two weeks and ended in confusion. The debate evidently was now to be renewed with the additional bitterness and vehemence that had accumulated during the ensuing year. The ministers and elders having convened, the regular business was under way, when suddenly the Assembly witnessed what was unexpected — a regiment of soldiers in the churchyard. Cromwell had sent them. The soldiers, in bright uniform and bristling with swords and guns, struck amazement into the hearts of the delegates. The colonel ordered them to leave the house. They walked out in front of the soldiers and, being escorted beyond the city limits, were

sent home, not to return, under pain of punishment.

The General Assembly had fallen into a state of bitter strife — the snare of Satan. There were two parties and these were quite well balanced. Their power for good was greatly neutralized by one another; their influence for harm was incalculable; the baneful effect spread like a withering shadow over the land. The two parties, at the beginning, chiefly differed in the methods employed to accomplish the same end. The one was governed by expediency; the other by principle. Expediency drew the majority; principle held the remainder. The majority discounted the obligations of the Covenant; the minority held to the spirit and letter of the sacred bond. The party in power precipitated the direful conditions. This they did by repeated breaches of the Covenant. The responsibility for the disgraceful proceedings, and the shameful termination of the Assembly, must be attached to those who made the discussion a moral necessity.

The first shadow that darkened the General Assembly was the discussion of "The Engagement." Two unscrupulous men — one of them a Covenanter — had made a secret engagement with Charles I in his captivity. They had promised to seat him, if possible, again on his throne; he in turn had engaged to favor Presbyterianism three years. The Engagement aroused earnest and violent discussion in the Assembly. The element of strife had now entered the Supreme Court of God's House, and the downward trend was deplorably rapid.

The next vexation was the abolition of "The Act of Classes." The Act of Classes guarded all places of trust in the government and army. None but those who expressed sympathy with the National Covenant were eligible to places of trust. Here was an unparalleled state of civil affairs; the world had never seen the like. This was a marvelous stride toward the Millennium. The fathers are worthy of all praise for this unprecedented effort to build the national government upon the true foundation of God's will, and administer it by men in Covenant with Jesus Christ, the King of Kings. This was the first attempt to erect a Christian government, in which the fear of God should pervade every department and characterize every official. The abolition of the Act of Classes involved a great moral issue which the General Assembly had to meet. Strangely, the Assembly was divided in the discussion; the debate waxed vehement and bitterly passionate. The majority favored abolition, thus opening the flood-gates of moral laxity in official stations. These were called "Resolutioners", because they offered the resolution to this effect, and supported it; the minority were called "Protesters," because they protested against it.

The discussion continued year after year till

all other interests in the General Assembly were overshadowed. The voice of the Church, once powerful in guiding public issues, was now despised; the tones were guttural, sepulchral, alarming, making the blood run in chills. Then came Cromwell and snuffed the Assembly out like a candle. It was sending forth ill-odored smoke and but little light. Are we surprised that God permitted him to quench the noisome spark?

The Protesters stood for all that the Covenant embodied. The Covenant lay heavy upon their conscience; they trembled at its violation. They saw in the breach of the Covenant the wrath of God against themselves, against the Church, and against the nation. They believed that nothing could compensate for the loss incurred by forsaking the Covenant. They trusted in God with absolute faith; would not resort to expediency for any purpose; temporized with no principle, no, not for greatest advantages. They knew that God could send peace, victory, and prosperity to their country through the Covenant; and that He would send defeat, distress, and desolation through the breach of it.

The Resolutioners grew more and more lax. They may have dreaded to be termed narrow-minded; they may have sought to be reputed broad and charitable. They weakened in morals and influence, and lost power and position when tried by the fires of persecution. They finally melted away and disappeared among the enemies of the Covenant, as snowflakes falling on the mire.

The Protesters were the Covenanters who continued with the Lord Jesus Christ in His temptation. When the Covenant called for martyrs, they were the martyrs. When the cause of Christ demanded witnesses, they were the witnesses. They gave their testimony with a clear voice, and sealed it with their blood. These are they whose crimson path we will now follow, our Lord Jesus permitting, till we come to the last of Scotland's honored roll — the pleasant, youthful, innocent James Renwick.

God requires His Church to receive, proclaim, and defend the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as it is in the Lord Jesus Christ. This obligation is weighty, and the duty is difficult, yet no release is granted. The Church that holds most truth should draw most people; the Church that abandons any truth for any reason must be unsatisfying to honest souls. The organization that embodies the largest measure of God's Word is the largest Church; that which contains the smallest is the least. "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." These are the words of Jesus. In His sight a Church is measured, not by the number enrolled, but by the truth professed, incarnated, and proclaimed.

Points for the Class

1. How long did Oliver Cromwell rule Scotland?
2. How did he deal with the Covenanted Church?
3. How had the General Assembly previously deteriorated?
4. Give the downward steps.
5. What two parties henceforth in the Church?
6. By whom was the truth preserved?
7. What principle governs the true followers of Christ?
8. What distinguishes the largest Church?

Chapter XXII

An Illustrious Martyr — A.D. 1660

Archibald Campbell, the Marquis of Argyle, was the first martyr to suffer at the hand of King Charles II. Twenty-two years had this illustrious nobelman been in special training for the honors of a martyr. He became identified with the Covenanters at the General Assembly of 1638. From that time he brought his influence, wealth, power, and office into the service of his Covenant Lord, and grew mighty in the cause of God. He ripened early in convictions and hallowed experiences, which won for him the highest distinction conferred upon mortals — martyrdom. He was in the prime of his years, at the summit of his earthly career, when he gave his life for the cause of Christ. He was a true warrior; every drop of his blood was electrified with heroism. In meeting death he felt the military spirit throb, but suppressing it he calmly said, "I could die as a Roman, but choose to die as a Christian."

This was a cedar of Lebanon, a choice tree of God, distinguished for its grace, strength, and height, towering above the trees of the forest. Therefore the first blast struck it with such deadly force. Then descended the terrific storm upon the lesser trees, and the mountain of God's house was strewn with them. The next twenty-eight years were filled with lamentation, and mourning, and woe. Let us look at the condition of the Covenant Church, as this age of horror settles down upon Scotland.

When Cromwell had reduced Scotland, he attempted to convert the Covenanted Church to Congregationalism. Though he possessed some amiable qualities, yet this ignoble work was attempted in the spirit of a Turk — with the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other. A resolution in favor of Congregationalism was introduced in the General Assembly of 1652. This was voted down. The military suppression of the Assembly at its next meeting was Cromwell's bitter revenge.

Yet we must not fail to see the hand of God in the overthrow of the Supreme Court of His House. As with the Temple at Jerusalem before its destruction, this Temple was already desolate; the glory had departed ere the storm of Divine wrath smote it. The resolution of the "Resolutioners," some years previous, favoring the repeal of the "Act of Classes," was a gross violation of the Covenant, and the proceedings in the Assembly had thereby degenerated into bitter debate. The Assembly had lost its power for good and, therefore, its right to exist; this part of the golden candlestick had exhausted its oil and God removed the useless part.

The Church did not seem to be seriously affected by the abolition of the Assembly. The process was more like the removal of a tumor than of a vital organ. God can do without the most excellent parts of the Church's organization, when they become diseased and endanger the system with blood poisoning. During the rule of Cromwell, the subordinate courts were mostly unmolested. The synods flourished; the presbyteries were uninterrupted in their work; the congregations enjoyed quietness and refreshing. The strife that existed in the Church was chiefly among the shepherds, not among the sheep. There were 14 synods, 68 presbyteries, and 900 congregations, when the persecution began under King Charles II.

During Cromwell's administration the land had rest; unusual quietness prevailed among the clans; there was a great calm. The four angels were holding the four winds of the earth, till the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads. The people were diligent in waiting upon the Lord; the Holy Spirit fell upon them with power, they became intensely interested in the ordinances of grace. They clustered around the family altar, through the House of God, hallowed the Sabbath, observed the Sacraments, and tarried much in secret prayer. Thus they were unwittingly preparing to enter the dreadful cloud. The vine was taking deep root, anticipating the storm that was in the air.

When Cromwell died the public mind experienced a strange reaction. The politicians of the two kingdoms, Scotland and England, reverting from severe discipline of the "Protector," launched into every excess of luxuriousness and dissipation. A cry for the return of the profligate king swept the country from London to Edinburgh. Even the Covenanters were loud in calling for the banished monarch. They determined not to be last in bringing back the King. They would, however, renew their allegiance to him only on condition that he would renew the Covenant with them. From France, where he had found an asylum, came his captivating reply, "I am a Covenanted king." He was received with enthusiastic demonstrations.

King Charles organized his government in

Scotland by immediately placing in power the most virulent enemies of the Covenanters. Within one month they were ready to execute whosoever they would. The Earl of Middleton was the official. When off his guard by indulging in drink, he divulged the king's secret instructions, confessing that he had been commissioned to do three things: (1) Rescind the Covenant; (2) Behead Argyle; (3) Sheath every man's sword in his brother's breast.

Argyle in those days was one of the great men of Scotland, if not the greatest. He was recognized in the Council as overshadowing his associates, in personal excellence, public-spiritedness, trustworthiness, and executive ability. He was a fine scholar, masterly statesman, wealthy landlord, brave soldier, and faithful Covenanter. His magnificent estate lay in Argyleshire, where the mountains are fringed with lochs in the most picturesque manner. The scenery is charming. One summer evening as our ship passed along the broken coast, a sunset of surpassing beauty scattered its blending colors in rich profusion over clouds, hills, vales, and lochs. The scenery was panoramic and enchanting. But greater gorgeousness than a thousand sunsets fell upon the outlook, at the remembrance of the famous Argyle, himself and his wife and children; his home, hearth, altar, Covenant, and martyrdom. What incomparable grandeur where such hallowed associations throw their colors!

When Charles had first been placed on the throne, ten years previous, Argyle had the honor of setting the crown upon his head. The king at that time feigned great friendship and respect for him. He sought, and received, counsel from Argyle in apparent meekness and with evident appreciation. On one occasion he remained nearly all night with him in prayer, for preparation and fitness to rule the kingdom. He even sought Argyle's daughter in marriage. Such was the former intimacy of the king with Argyle. But once again on the throne, he determined to crush the Covenanters, and Argyle was his first victim.

When Cromwell was conquering Scotland, Argyle fought him till further resistance was useless. He even then refused to sign the declaration of submission, but agreed to keep peace. The agreement with Cromwell was the main charge preferred against Argyle. He was tried and convicted. The sentence was passed upon him on Saturday; he was executed the following Monday. He eloquently defended himself. It was a scene highly tragical — this calm, innocent, dignified man, looking into the face of his accusers and over-awing them with his bold vindication, and pathetic appeal for justice. Kneeling down he received his sentence, which was death by decapitation, his head to be placed above one of the city gates, as a gruesome warning to all Covenanters. Argyle arose from his knees and, looking upon his judicial murderers, calmly said, "I had the honor to set the crown on the king's head,

and now he hastens me to a better crown than he owns." The real cause of his death was his devotion to the Covenant, and the solemn admonitions he had tendered the king.

His wife, hearing of the decree of death, hastened to his prison. "They have given me till Monday to be with you," said he. The stricken woman was overcome. "The Lord will require it; the Lord will require it," said she in tumultuous grief. "Forbear, forbear!" replied Argyle, "for I truly pity them; they know not what they do." He was filled with inexpressible joy at the thought of honoring Christ with his blood. The fear of death was gone. Heaven was so near; glory was ready to break upon him; the Lord was soon to be seen face to face. He went to his execution like a prince to his coronation. This was the Stephen of that age, and this was the persecution that scattered the Covenanters.

We are soft and puny for lack of hardships. The difficult places and dreaded conditions, through which Christians pass, make life strong,

sublime, triumphant, fruitful in good work, resourceful in the Holy Spirit, and glorifying to God.

Points for the Class

1. Who was the Marquis of Argyle?
2. What service had he formerly rendered the king?
3. Describe the return of the king from banishment.
4. How did the Covenanters receive him?
5. What was the nature of the government he established?
6. What was his attitude toward the Covenanters?
7. Who was his first victim?
8. Describe Argyle's trial and execution.

(To be continued)

Some Noteworthy Quotations

There is an impassable gulf fixed between those who hang the efficacy of Christ's work upon the "free" action of man's will, and those who ascribe it all to God's free grace. They are of different religions.

— Benjamin B. Warfield

Give me the evidence that I am saved from the punishment of sin by saving me from its power.

— Thomas Chalmers

The greatest argument of the Saviour's power is His patience.

— Stephen Charnock

Lip-homage paid to all religions is the virtual denial of each.

— R. A. Vaughn

The secret of holy living lies in the doctrine of the union of the believer with Christ.

— Charles Hodge

It is an inexpressible grief to me to see the church spending its energies in a vain attempt to lower its testimony to suit the ever-changing sentiment of the world about it.

— Benjamin B. Warfield

Taking the line of least resistance makes rivers and men crooked.

— Anonymous

Love will stammer rather than be dumb.

— Robert Leighton

For ourselves, we do not affect the designa-

tion of moderate Calvinists. We believe the whole Calvinism of the Canons of the Synod of Dort, and of the Confession of the Westminster Assembly, and we are willing to attempt to expound and defend, when called upon, the whole doctrine of these symbols, to show that it is all taught or indicated in Scripture. We have been only confirmed in our Calvinism by all the study we have given to this subject.

— William Cunningham

The grace of God does not find men fit for salvation, but makes them so.

— Augustine of Hippo

If faith has not for its basis a testimony of God to which we must submit, as to an authority exterior to our personal judgment, and independent of it, then faith is no faith.

— Adolphe Monod

It may sometimes seem difficult to take our stand frankly by the side of Christ and His apostles. It will always be found safe.

— Benjamin B. Warfield

The more I study the Scriptures, the example of Christ, and the history of my own heart, the more I am convinced, that a testimony of God, placed without us and above us, exempt from all intermixture of sin and error which belong to a fallen race, and received with submission on the sole authority of God, is the true basis of faith.

— Adolphe Monod

You may read your Bible, and pray over it

till you die; you may wait on the preached Word every Sabbath day, and sit down at every sacrament till you die; yet, if you do not find Christ in the ordinances, if He does not reveal Himself to your soul in the preached Word, in the broken bread and poured-out wine, if you are not brought to cleave to Him, to believe in Him, to cry out with inward adoration: "My Lord, and my God"; "How great is His goodness! How great is His beauty!" — then the outward observance of the ordinances is all in vain to you. You have come to the well of salvation, but have gone away with the pitcher empty; and however proud and boastful you may now be of your bodily exercise, you will find in that day that it

profits little, and that you will stand speechless before the King.

— Robert Murray McChesney

Oh, if ye got but a view of the saints on Mount Zion, clothed with righteousness, even that of Christ, and a sight of the terror of God, ye would know that it is a bitter thing to depart from the living God; ye would abhor nothing like sin! Where there is so little hatred of sin it is an evidence that ye will not come to Him who is the propitiation for sin; even Him who came to be a propitiation for those that are sick and diseased with sin.

— Richard Cameron

Death to me is as a bed to the weary.

— James Renwick

Religious Terms Defined

DECREES OF GOD. "The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass." (S. C. 7)

FOREORDINATION. God's determination, from all eternity, of every fact in the universe, including every event that takes place in time.

PREDESTINATION. God's determination, from all eternity, of the final destiny of every individual among angels and men.

ELECTION. God's sovereign choice of particular angels and men to eternal life and glory.

REPROBATION. God's sovereign act of passing by those angels and men not elected to eternal life, and His act of ordaining them to dishonor and wrath to be inflicted for their sin.

CREATION. "The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good." (S. C. 9).

UNIVERSE. The sum total of all that God has created; all that exists excepting God Himself.

ANGELS. Intelligent, purely spiritual beings created by God for His service.

MAN. A special creature of God consisting of body and soul united in a single personality, distinguished from all other creatures in this world by being created in the image of God, thus being originally a perfect, though finite, replica of the Godhead.

EVOLUTION. The false biological theory that all forms of life have developed, by inherent natural forces, from earlier and simpler forms, implying that one species may develop into another, and that the human race has descended from a non-human ancestry.

PROVIDENCE. "God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions." (S.C. 11).

ORDINARY PROVIDENCE. God's preserving and governing His creatures by the use of means, or second causes.

MIRACULOUS PROVIDENCE. God's preserving and governing His creatures and their actions without, above or against the use of means or second causes.

SPECIAL PROVIDENCE. Those acts of God's providence which are especially directed toward the care and welfare of His Church. (Cf. Confession of Faith, V-7).

MIRACLE. A supernatural event, which is not the product of any cause except the will of God.

ORIGINAL RIGHTEOUSNESS. The real, but untested and changeable righteousness of mankind as created by God, before the Fall.

COVENANT OF WORKS. A covenant made by God, at the dawn of human history, with Adam as the representative of the human race, according to which Adam's obedience to a specific revelation of God's will would bring unchangeable righteousness and eternal life to the entire human race, whereas his disobedience would result in the fall of mankind into an estate of sin, misery, and subjection to the wrath and curse of God, both here and hereafter.

THE FALL. The radical change which came upon the human race as the result of Adam's first sin, whereby mankind lost "original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body." (C. of F., VI. 2).

SIN. "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God." (S.C. 14).

ORIGINAL SIN. The guilty and depraved condition in which we are born, as the result of our representative, Adam, having broken the Covenant of Works.

ELEMENTS OF ORIGINAL SIN. "The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin . . ." (S. C. 18).

IMPUTATION. God's act of reckoning righteousness or guilt to a person's credit or debit.

IMPUTATION OF ADAM'S FIRST SIN. God's act, in accordance with the terms of the Covenant of Works, of reckoning the guilt of Adam's sin of eating the forbidden fruit to every human being (except Jesus Christ) so that the whole world became guilty before God.

GUILT. Liability to the just wrath and punishment of God.

WRATH OF GOD. God's righteous hatred of sin and His anger against sinners, which require that sinners suffer just punishment.

DEATH. The "wages," or divinely appointed penalty, of sin.

PHYSICAL DEATH. The separation of soul and body, and the dissolution of the body which follows thereupon.

SPIRITUAL DEATH. Separation from the favor of God, and subjection to His wrath.

ETERNAL DEATH. Everlasting separation from the favorable presence of God, and condemnation to the endless sin and suffering of hell. (Also called the second death).

CORRUPTION OF NATURE. The depraved, ungodly character or "heart" which became the natural condition of all descendants of Adam (except Jesus Christ) as the result of the guilt of Adam's first sin being imputed to them.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY. A term used to describe humanity's sinful corruption of nature, indicating (a) that in the "natural man" there is nothing spiritually good; and (b) that there is no part of our human nature that has not been thoroughly corrupted and spoiled by sin.

ACTUAL TRANSGRESSIONS. Sins which a person commits himself personally, in distinction from original sin which is the condition in which the sinner comes into this world and which is the root of all actual transgressions.

INABILITY. The spiritual helplessness of the sinner, which results from his corruption of nature, and by reason of which he cannot originate a love for God and for holiness in his own heart, nor initiate the process of his own salvation from sin.

Psalm Fourteen

To a World of Wicked Fools and Ravening Persecutors, Who Will Bring Salvation?

By the Rev. Frank D. Frazer

I. A World Lying in Wickedness (verses 1-3)

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They have acted wickedly; they have done abominable deeds; There is none that doeth good. Jehovah looked down from heaven upon the children of Adam, To see if there was any man of understanding, seeking for God. All are turned away; together they are become corrupt; There is none that doeth good; no, not one."

This Psalm, with a few variations, is repeated as Psalm 53. Repetition in Scripture is for emphasis. The central truth of all Scripture, concerning SIN and JUDGMENT, and concerning SALVATION by a personal divine SAVIOUR, is

put in a nutshell in each of these two Psalms for more frequent use — lest we forget.

"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." If, in his heart, he says, There is no God, all his thoughts, words and deeds are evil. These three verses are quoted in Romans 3:10-12 as proving the universal apostasy and corruption of mankind. All are "under sin," under its power and guilt, and consequently under the condemnation of God. All are fools. There is not one wise man among them. There is not even a beginning of wisdom, for there is neither knowledge nor proper fear of God.

Positively, all have acted wickedly; all have done deeds of godlessness; all have turned away from God; together they are depraved, corrupt.

Negatively, "There is none that doeth good" (this, from verse 1, is, in Romans, rendered, "There is none righteous;" from verse 3, "There is none that doeth deeds of kindness"). Not one has understanding; not one has the moral intelligence to attend to the highest privileges and duties of human life, or even to realize the present state of the race; not one is seeking for God. There is not even one solitary exception.

The world by its wisdom knows not God. It refused His revelation of Himself. Its way of life is in rebellion against God. Sin is in every heart. It colors and distorts everyone's conception of God and view of life; blights all he is and all he does. "There is not a righteous man on earth, that doeth good and sinneth not" (Eccles. 7:20).

As Jehovah did before the Flood, before the Confusion of Tongues, before the Destruction of Sodom, so again and again He looks from heaven to see what JUDGMENT is required. His covenant curse for broken law shall be executed. But what of His covenant promise of blessing?

To understand the rest of this Psalm, we must keep in mind what is not explicitly mentioned in it, that the Covenant of Grace contains a promise of life to all who believe and repent. It offers a refuge of safety amid judgments that are sure to fall. Some have believed that God is, that He is true, and will do all that He has said. Though children of Adam, they have been "born again" and become "children of God." They have been convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. They have laid hold of the promise; put their trust in Jehovah, and fled to the refuge He provides. There is a "generation of the righteous" (verse 5). But they have been taken "out of the world," "rescued from the power of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (Col. 1:13, 14). Then they are sent "into the world" to be God's witnesses of His salvation. They are "in the world" but not "of the world;" hence, they are not included in the condemnation of the world. They are saved by prevenient grace.

II. A World Afraid of Judgment (verses 4-6)

"Is it not so that all workers of iniquity have no knowledge? Always devouring my people, they have eaten bread; On Jehovah they have not called. Then were they in great terror. For God is in the generation of the righteous. The counsels of the oppressed you would put to shame. But God is his refuge."

This is a Psalm of David, who himself had found refuge in God, as he so often testifies. He had entered into the Everlasting Covenant (2 Sam. 23:5), and looks out on the folly and wickedness of the world with clear and well-informed vision. He here appeals to common experience and obser-

vation, that the foregoing is a true indictment of mankind. "Is it not so that all workers of iniquity have no knowledge, no understanding?" Anyone can see the foolishness of others, even though he cannot see his own. The evidence is not far to seek. It is here in Israel. In verse 4, he testifies to what he had seen, and suffered. They are "always eating my people." Even of the rulers of Jerusalem it was afterwards said, "Her princes are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves" (Zeph. 3-3). "The workers of wickedness, continually eating my people, have eaten bread," that is, "satisfied their lust." Their meat is to do their own perverted will. David identifies himself with the victims. He often called them "my people" (e.g., 1 Chron. 28:2; 29:14), for he and all Israel had made a covenant that he would be their king, and they his people.

The word "eating" is often used for devouring, consuming, destroying, and the word "bread", figuratively, for various things consumed. This usage is especially frequent in the Hebrew, where the word for "bread" was, appropriately, derived from a root meaning to kill, destroy. For the bulk of man's food is organic, requiring the destruction of living things, vegetable and animal.

Those "whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame;" those hypocrites who "devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers" (with themselves), "called not on Jehovah" — a clause in the Scripture indictment of many nations. They neither prayed to Jehovah, nor praised Him, nor gave Him thanks. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. They coveted, they robbed; they hated, they killed. Like dumb brutes, their chief occupation is eating, trampling down and defiling what they do not eat.

Nevertheless, when they had killed and eaten and were filled to the full, they were suddenly seized with terror. "Then were they in great terror." Literally, "they feared a fear." What were they afraid of? They were afraid of the judgment of God, for somehow they were made aware of the fact that God was near, even in the generation of the righteous they had tried to destroy. They had eaten the flesh and blood of the saints whom God had set apart for His own purposes. They were afraid, as Adam was, after he had eaten what God had forbidden him. He tried to hide himself from God. "I heard thy voice in the garden, and was afraid because I was naked," — had no covering for my sin. "The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days . . . Distress and anguish make his afraid, because he hath stretched out his hand against God, and bid-deth defiance to the Almighty" (Job 15:24,25). God is always near. He makes His voice to be heard in the generation of the righteous. "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am Je-

hovah their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt (the land of darkness and wickedness) that I might dwell among them." He makes His presence felt in power. "And when He is come (to them) He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment."

In verse 6, David challenges the destroyers of his people with their evil purpose and its defeat. "The counsels (aims and plans) of the poor man (the oppressed and afflicted) YOU would put to shame, but Jehovah is his refuge." Strong and sure is that refuge. He shall never be ashamed. "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, even then will I be confident" (Psalm 27:3).

III. Israel Looking for the Saviour (verse 7)

Since all are not Israel who are of Israel after the flesh, "Israel" here stands for **the true Israel**, who receive the blessing from Jehovah, even righteousness from the God of their salvation; that is, "the generation of the righteous," being heirs of the righteousness that is by faith.

"Zion" is the place which Jehovah chose, where He dwells to be the refuge of His people. "This is my resting-place forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Psalm 132). Since Jehovah is there, salvation can come only from Zion.

"WHO will give, from Zion, salvation to Israel?" The answer is, Jehovah Himself, when He turns back the captivity of His people, who, as children of Adam, have been in bondage, slaves of Satan and of Satan's agents. For, "Every one who committeth sin is the slave of sin."

Jehovah remembers His covenant promise forever. "I have spoken, I will also bring it to pass, I have purposed, I will also do it . . . I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will give salvation in Zion for Israel my glory" (Isa. 46:11-13). When Jehovah delivers His people from captivity, He executes judgments upon their cruel oppressors. They shall not afflict them any more. "Say ye to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold your God will come with vengeance, with the recompence of God; He will come and save you" (Isa. 35:4).

"WHO will give, from Zion, salvation to Israel?" The verb "will give" is singular, third person, masculine. The interrogative "WHO?", therefore, asks for one particular PERSON. According to the covenant promise, the "SEED" of the woman shall crush the serpent's head, and

give salvation; later on this one is revealed to be the "SEED" of Abraham, then the "SEED" of David, (not "seeds", but ONE SEED, Gal. 3:16), the Prince of Peace, who is the Son of God.

This unmistakable reference, of David's Psalm, to the personal, divine Saviour has been obscured in our English versions (except that of the English Prayer Book), by "free" translations that ignore the pointed question of the Hebrew original, and turn it into an indefinite longing for salvation. Such defect should be corrected, and particularly in our version for singing.

"And thou shalt call his name JESUS, for it is he who shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32, 33).

And when He is come, "Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad." The name "Jacob" here stands for what God's people were once; "Israel" for what they become when delivered from captivity, sharing in the victory of their Saviour. "WHO will give, from Zion, salvation to Israel? When Jehovah turns back" — or better, "In Jehovah's turning back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice; Israel shall be glad." This answer comprehends the whole history of redemption from its beginning to its glorious consummation.

"And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the Way to Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for them (the redeemed); the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast go thereon; they shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come with singing to Zion; and everlasting joy shall be on their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:8-10).

"Now we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding that we may know him that is true, and that we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (I John 5:20).

Note: Mr. Frazer's studies in the Psalms will be continued, D.V., in the next issue of this publication. — Ed.

Studies in the Book of Genesis

LESSON 137

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

We have reached the beginning of chapter 33 in the Book of Genesis. This chapter relates, first, the meeting of Jacob with Esau, and his reconciliation with him; and after that, the settlement of Jacob and his family in the land of Canaan.

Jacob has spent the night wrestling with God on the bank of the Jabbok River. As the sun rose, he has crossed the Jabbok and joined his family, enjoying a new consciousness of the favor and blessing of God as he limps on his injured thigh.

"And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men" (33:1). As we have previously observed, a man does not ordinarily go on a peaceful errand accompanied by a bodyguard of four hundred men. So the sight of this large company would naturally cause Jacob to be on guard against danger. Jacob takes the only precautionary measure that is possible under the circumstances. He divides the company of his people up into separate groups, taking care to place his beloved Rachel and Joseph last so that if Esau actually attacks, possibly Rachel and Joseph can escape. We do not know the exact age of Joseph at this time but it may have been about six years.

In verse 3, the statement that Jacob "passed over before them" does not refer to crossing the river, for that had already been done. Rather, the meaning is that Jacob went forward to the head of the procession, passing the various groups of his establishment as he did so. Coming at last into the presence of his brother Esau, Jacob ceremoniously bows deeply seven times. This is a typically Oriental manifestation of formal courtesy. It does not imply that Jacob recognized Esau as his superior or his master, but only that he wishes to display the greatest respect toward Esau. After the way Jacob had treated Esau twenty years previously, an informal brotherly greeting would have been out of place. Leupold calls attention to the fact that such multiple bowing is mentioned repeatedly in the Tell-el-Amarna tablets.

Esau's reaction is very different from what Jacob had feared. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16:7). Jacob's earnest prayers are now answered. Esau, whom he has feared so greatly, turns out to be friendly rather

than hostile. "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept" (33:4). That this is to be regarded as a special answer to prayer appears from the fact that Esau is accompanied by four hundred men. The guard of 400 men indicates that Esau's intentions on leaving home were not necessarily peaceful or friendly to Jacob. It might be argued, of course, that Esau was actually afraid of Jacob and is accompanied by 400 men for self-defence. But in that case, why should Esau have left home at all? The narrative seems to indicate that Esau started out with hostile, or at least mixed, intentions, but on actually meeting Jacob, he has become friendly toward him. This, we repeat, can be regarded as nothing but a special answer to prayer. In it we see, too, the grace of God toward the unworthy. Jacob did not *deserve* good treatment at the hands of Esau, but God graciously brings it about that Esau is friendly to him.

When Jacob had left home twenty years before he was unmarried. Now he is accompanied by four women, eleven children and a company of servants. Naturally Esau inquires as to the identity of these women and children: what is their relation to Jacob? Jacob replies that they are the children which God has graciously given him. Following this, the handmaidens approach, with their children, and bow respectfully to Esau; then Leah and her children, and finally Rachel and Joseph. It is a strange fact that in verse 7 Joseph is mentioned before his mother Rachel; the reason for this is unknown.

The formal introductions and greetings having been attended to, Esau next inquires as to the droves of livestock which he has received from Jacob's servants. The servants, it will be recalled, were to present these animals saying "It is a present sent unto my lord Esau" from Jacob. Esau inquires as to the meaning or reason for the present. To this Jacob replies: "These are to find grace in the sight of my lord." "A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom, strong wrath" (Prov. 21:14). Jacob realizes that if he can get Esau to accept a valuable gift, it will prove the reality and permanence of Esau's reconciliation to him. If Esau accepts the present, he will be bound by the obligation of honor to drop any antagonism against Jacob which he may have been cherishing. A gentleman cannot accept a handsome gift and then turn and attack the giver. To do so would be to violate his code of honor — especially in an Oriental society.

Oriental politeness and "face" require, moreover, that such a gift be accepted only after a great show of reluctance and protest. Accord-

ingly, Esau protests: "I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself" (33:9). No doubt Esau is by this time a rich man. The fact that he can command a guard of 400 men proves this. So Esau protests that he has enough and Jacob should keep the animals.

Jacob, however, earnestly begs Esau to accept the gift. He pleads that acceptance on Esau's part will be the token or evidence that he, Jacob, has found grace in Esau's sight. It will demonstrate that Esau is really favorable toward him and not at enmity with him. "For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me" (33:10). Thus Jacob confesses that Esau's favor is a manifestation of the favor of God to himself. It was God's gracious working which changed Esau's hostile attitude to a friendly and favorable one.

Jacob further confesses that all that he has, he owes to the blessing of God: "God hath dealt graciously with me, and I have enough." Here the word "enough" is really "everything." And it is true that Jacob, possessing God as his portion, does indeed possess everything. "Nearly the same words are on the tongues of all; but there are few who truly ascribe to God what they possess: the greater part sacrifice to their own industry. Scarcely one in a hundred is convinced, that whatever is good flows from the gratuitous favor of God; and yet by nature this sense is engraved upon our minds, but we obliterate it by our ingratitude. It has appeared already, how laborious was the life of Jacob: nevertheless, though he had suffered the greatest annoyances, he celebrates only the mercy of God" (Calvin).

Following this earnest plea on Jacob's part, Esau finally consents to accept the present.

LESSON 138

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Next Esau proposes that the two brothers and their companies proceed together: "Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee" (33:12). Jacob declines, stating that "the children are tender" and that the flocks and herds with young will die if overdriven one day. Jacob proposes, instead, that Esau go on ahead, while Jacob with his household follows at a slower pace, as the children and the animals are able to bear.

We must face the question of the sincerity of this proposal on the part of Jacob. Some, including Calvin, have held that Jacob is insincere and that the real reason he does not wish to proceed together with Esau is that he still does not trust him fully. Calvin comments that although Jacob

Questions:

1. Where and how did Jacob spend the night before his meeting with Esau?
2. What fact indicates that Esau had started out from home with an unfriendly attitude toward Jacob?
3. What precautionary measure did Jacob adopt just before meeting his brother?
4. What is meant by the statement that Jacob "passed over before them"?
5. How did Jacob honor his brother upon meeting him?
6. What was Esau's attitude when he actually met Jacob?
7. How can the change in Esau's attitude be accounted for?
8. What question did Esau address to Jacob?
9. What was Esau's second question to Jacob?
10. Why was Esau reluctant to accept Jacob's gift?
11. Why was Jacob insistent that the gift be accepted?
12. What fact in the record proves that Esau was a rich man?
13. To what does Jacob attribute Esau's favorable attitude?
14. To what does Jacob attribute all the good that he possesses?

did have just reason for fearing Esau, nevertheless his anxiety was excessive. He adds that the excuses presented by Jacob were true in themselves, yet they were not his real reasons for being unwilling to accept his brother's proposal. Leupold, on the other hand, holds that Jacob was completely sincere and that the reasons alleged were indeed his real reasons. He states that the long, hard trip in escaping from Laban must have involved driving the livestock "to the limit," and that therefore "caution must be used lest they be overdriven." With regard to this question, the present writer believes that Leupold is correct and Calvin mistaken. There seems to be no sufficient ground for questioning the sincerity of Jacob at this point.

Jacob's proposal is that he and his establishment will proceed slowly "until I come unto my lord unto Seir." The fact that the book of Genesis does not record such a journey of Jacob to Mount Seir is held by some to indicate that he

never made the journey. This, however, is obviously unsound reasoning. It is perfectly possible that Jacob did go to Mount Seir, even though the Scripture does not record the trip; it is also possible that at the time of speaking with Esau, Jacob sincerely intended to join his brother at Seir, but later was providentially prevented from doing so. The fact that the New Testament does not state that Paul visited Spain, is no proof that the Apostle never did so. The argument from silence is a very precarious one. We believe Jacob should be credited with being honest and sincere, in the absence of proof to the contrary.

Finally, Esau proposes to leave with Jacob part of his 400 men, to serve as a guard for protection, no doubt. That this was a kind and well-intentioned offer we need not doubt. Nevertheless, Jacob declines his brother's offer. Jacob simply says "What needeth it?" without giving any explanations or reasons. We can only guess what his reasons may have been. Perhaps he wished to preserve his own independence and to avoid giving anyone the impression that he was in any way dependent on Esau for his wealth or well-being. With Jacob's refusal of Esau's offer, the matter is dropped.

Some have raised the question of the spiritual state of Esau at this time. Whether Esau when he finally came to die was a saved man we cannot say; in the nature of the case only God can know the answer to such a question as that. But does Esau at the time we are studying give evidence of being a saved man? Martin Luther held the affirmative. But as Leupold points out, the evidence points the other way. "Had his faith accepted what the Lord had ordained, he would have held to Jacob as the possessor of the divine promise. His failure to do this seems to indicate that the true spiritual values were not grasped nor understood by him. This prevents his being classed as a man of faith, though in the end the spiritual truth communicated by Isaac may have turned his heart to the Lord" (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, II.893).

"So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir" (33:16). Seir is another name for the land of Edom, located south of the Dead Sea. Esau here drops out of the narrative and does not reappear until 35:29 where he joins Jacob in burying the body of their father Isaac.

By gradual stages Jacob and his household proceed to Succoth. This was located in Transjordan not far from Peniel. Because of a bend in the river, a second crossing of the Jabbok would be necessary. The word "Succoth" in Hebrew means "booths," and the narrative states that the place was named Succoth because Jacob made booths there, that is, shelters for his livestock. It is also stated that Jacob built a house for himself at Succoth. This implies residence

there for a considerable period of time, perhaps some years.

Next, Jacob arrives at Shalem, "a city of Shechem." This was on the west side of the Jordan, therefore Jacob and his family have crossed the Jordan River, even though that fact is not mentioned in the text. (It is possible that "Shalem" is not to be taken as a proper noun, but as meaning "safely" or "safe and sound." See the American Revised Version (1901) which in the text reads "in peace" but in the margin "Shalem.")

Although he had built a house at Succoth, on arrival at Shechem Jacob is again a tent-dweller, thus holding to the patriarchal pattern, the significance of which is explained in Hebrews 11:9, 10. However, he purchases "a parcel of a field" from the local inhabitants as a place to pitch his tent, for "a hundred pieces of money". The word translated "pieces of money" here is "kesitas," a word which occurs only here in the Old Testament. The value of this unit is not known. It is presumable, however, that what Jacob purchased for 100 kesitas was not a large estate, but only a small field, and that it was done in order to maintain peace with the local inhabitants, and obviate complaints.

On the piece of land which he had purchased, Jacob erects an altar, and names it El-Elohe-Israel, which means "God, the God of Israel." We have previously read of Abraham and Isaac building altars for the worship of God. Calvin states that they were careful to adhere strictly to the divinely prescribed pattern of worship which had been handed down to them from Noah and Shem. "And not only does he (Jacob) worship God in the secret feeling of his mind; but he exercises himself in ceremonies which are useful and commanded by God. For he knew that men want helps, as long as they are in the flesh, and that sacrifices were not instituted without reason. He had also another purpose; namely, that his whole family should worship God with the same sense of piety. For it behoves a pious father of a family diligently to take care that he has no profane house, but rather that God should reign there as in a sanctuary. Besides, since the inhabitants of that region had fallen into many superstitions, and had corrupted the true worship of God, Jacob wished to make a distinction between himself and them. The Shechemites and other neighboring nations had certainly altars of their own. Therefore Jacob, by establishing a different method of worship for his household, thus declares that he has a God peculiar to himself, and has not degenerated from the holy fathers, from whom the perfect and genuine religion had proceeded. This course could not but subject him to reproach, because the Shechemites and other inhabitants would feel that they were despised; but the holy man deemed anything preferable to mixing himself with idolaters" (Calvin).

Jacob in naming the altar El-Elohe-Israel — “God, the God of Israel” — of course does not mean that a structure of stones and earth is a visible representation of God. Rather, as Calvin points out, this altar is intended as a memorial and pledge of the revelations and promises of God which Jacob has received in times past. When he sees this altar, he will remember God. “Jacob wished to testify that he worshipped no other God than him who had been manifested by certain oracles, in order that he might distinguish Him from all idols . . . Moreover Jacob had respect to his posterity; for since the Lord had appeared to him, on the express condition, that he would make with him the covenant of salvation, Jacob leaves this monument, from which, after his death, his descendants might ascertain that his religion had not flowed from a dark or obscure well, or from a turbid pool, but from a clear and pure fountain; as if he had engraved the oracles and visions, by which he had been taught, upon the altar” (Calvin).

This single altar, built by Jacob at or near Shechem, was perhaps the only center, in all the world of that day, of the pure worship of the true God. All nations had their shrines and temples, but this altar, doubtless a very simple erection of stones and earth, stood apart and alone as dedicated to the living and true God. However, as Isaac was still living at this time, we must suppose that an altar to the true God was in existence and in use at or near his habitation also.

Questions:

1. What proposal did Esau make as to the journey from Peniel?
2. On what grounds did Jacob decline Esau's proposal?

3. What was Calvin's opinion as to the sincerity of Jacob in this matter?

4. What view should we take as to Jacob's sincerity in declining to accompany Esau?

5. What can be said about the question of whether Jacob later visited Esau at Mount Seir?

6. What may have been Jacob's reason for declining Esau's offer to provide a guard?

7. What can be said about the spiritual state of Esau at this time?

8. Where was Seir located? What other name was used for the region?

9. Where was Succoth located? Why was it called Succoth?

10. What question exists concerning the meaning of the word Shalem in 33:18?

11. What, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, was the significance of the patriarchs' dwelling in tents instead of houses?

12. What may have been Jacob's reason for purchasing a field near Shechem?

13. How much did Jacob pay for the field? Why is it impossible to know how much this was in terms of present-day money?

14. What is the meaning of the phrase El-Elohe-Israel?

15. What probably were Jacob's reasons for building an altar?

16. What would be the natural attitude of the local inhabitants to Jacob's altar?

17. In what way was Jacob's altar unique, or nearly unique, in the world of that day?

LESSON 139

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Chapter 34, to which we have now come, records the scandalous events which followed upon the act of Dinah, daughter of Jacob and Leah, in venturing away from home “to see the daughters of the land.” The birth of Dinah is recorded in 30:21. It is probable that at the time of the events recorded in chapter 34 she was 14 or 15 years old.

Many writers have undertaken to place the blame upon Dinah for occasioning the scandals of this chapter. However, the record does not necessarily imply that she was at fault. As to what her motive may have been, and to what extent she was at fault, we are not informed and can only guess.

The inhabitants of Shechem are called Hivites, but in 48:22 they are referred to as Amorites. This is to be explained by the fact that the term “Amorites,” like the term “Canaanites,” was sometimes used as a blanket designation of the non-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan.

We shall not dwell on the sordid details of this story, but only note and comment on the main facts. Dinah is seduced and violated by Shechem, a Hivite prince. Following this, Shechem seeks to marry her. From his point of view, under the circumstances, this would be the honorable thing to do.

Negotiations follow between the father of Shechem and the family of Dinah. The sons of Jacob agree to the proposed marriage, but only on one condition, namely, that all the males of the Shechemites be circumcised. This proposal, as it turns out later, is not made in good faith by

the sons of Jacob, but with an intention of treachery.

The Shechemites agree to the proposal of the sons of Jacob, reasoning that by complying they will ultimately be able to absorb the family of Jacob and to possess all their property. They are one and all circumcised. Thereupon Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, take advantage of the incapacitated condition of the Shechemites and attack them suddenly, massacring all the males of the city. Taking all the wealth of the city as spoil, and the women and children as captives, they return home. Jacob their father, be it said to his credit, does not approve of this lawless massacre. He accuses his sons: "Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land" (34:30). They in turn reply, "Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?"

The question naturally arises, how did it happen that Jacob allowed his sons to carry on the negotiations with the Shechemites? Why did not Jacob handle the matter himself? Possibly Jacob placed too much confidence in his sons; probably, too, they concealed from their father what their real intentions were.

We shall give Calvin's comments on the inexcusable conduct of Jacob's sons recorded in this chapter:

"Moses shows that, not content with simple revenge, they fly together to the spoil. . . . Be it, that they were blinded with anger in shedding blood; yet by what right do they sack the city? This certainly cannot be ascribed to anger. But these are the ordinary fruits of human intemperance, that he who gives himself the rein in perpetrating one wickedness, soon breaks out into another. Thus the sons of Jacob, from being murderers, also become robbers, and the guilt of avarice is added to that of cruelty. The more anxious then should be our endeavors to bridle our desires; lest they should mutually fan each other, so that at length, by their combined action, a dreadful conflagration should arise; but especially, we must beware of using force of arms, which brings with it many perverse and brutal assaults. Moses says that the sons of Jacob did this, because the Shechemites had defiled their sister; but the whole city was not guilty. Moses, however, only states in what way the authors of the slaughter are affected: for although they wish to appear just avengers of the injury, yet they pay no respect to what was lawful for them to do, and make no attempt to control their depraved affections, and consequently set no bounds to their wickedness."

Whatever may have been the guilt of the Shechemites, in this chapter the sons of Jacob — the covenant people of God — appear upon an even lower ethical level than the men of Shechem. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can be said to excuse the conduct of Simeon and Levi and that of all the sons of Jacob in this chapter. Moses records

the facts objectively, leaving it to the reader to form an ethical judgment upon them.

This scandalous history may serve to bring out two things that are sometimes forgotten in studies of the Old Testament.

In the first place, the very existence of such a narrative is evidence on the face of it that it is historical, not legendary as some critics have claimed. No people would form legends, and preserve them in their sacred writings, which place their own ancestors in such an extremely bad light. Here are the sons of Jacob, the honored ancestors of the tribes of Israel, represented as lawless murderers and robbers. What nation would make up such a story about their founders and national heroes? The only explanation of the existence of such a story in the Hebrew writings is that it is historically true.

In the second place, those who are horrified at the presence of such stories in the Bible should realize that they are in the Bible just because the Bible is a book of truth. It portrays people as they really were, without idealizing them and without eliminating their bad deeds. A scoffer once said to the present writer that he would not leave a Bible where children or young people could see it, as the immoral stories in the Bible are (he claimed) worse than anything in the writings of the Italian author Boccaccio. This skeptic completely mistook the real point and purport of these so-called "immoral stories" in the Bible. They are not in the Bible as an example for us, or as a pattern for us to copy, but rather to show the real nature of sin and of sinners — to show what man is really like without the grace of God, and to show the judgment of God upon such wickedness.

Just because the Bible is a book of truth, it must tell the real truth about sin and sinners. If the Bible were merely the word of man, it would tone down sin and wickedness or cover it up. But because it is the Word of God, it tells the plain, terrible truth about sin and sinners. So far from such chapters as Genesis 34 being an argument against the divine character of the Bible, they are in fact a strong argument in favor of the truth that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God.

Questions:

1. Why did Dinah venture away from home?
2. By what two tribal names are the inhabitants of Shechem called in Genesis?
3. Which of the sons of Jacob took the lead in attacking the people of Shechem?
4. What should be our judgment as to the conduct of Jacob's sons?
5. What can be said about the bearing of this chapter on the question of whether the history of the patriarchs is legendary or historical?

6. What mistake is made by people who use stories like that of Genesis 34 as an argument against the Bible?

7. What does the presence of such incidents as those of Gen. 34 in the Bible really show as to the origin and character of the Bible?

LESSON 140

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

Chapter 35 opens with the command of God to Jacob to go to Bethel: "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make thee there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother" (35:1). The time has come for Jacob to fulfil his vow of 28:22, "And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house . . .". The command of God for Jacob to build an altar at Bethel makes clear to us the meaning Jacob had in mind in making the vow some twenty years before; by "God's house" he clearly meant a religious shrine or sanctuary, of which, of course, the principal feature would be an altar.

The command of God to Jacob to "dwell" at Bethel does not imply a requirement of permanent residence there. The Hebrew verb may be translated "tarry," implying no more than living there long enough to carry out God's instructions concerning the altar.

Jacob at once realizes that for real obedience to the command of God a rededication of himself and all his household to God is needed. Accordingly he says to his household, "and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments. And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went" (35:2,3). The result of this was that the members of the establishment turned their idols and idolatrous paraphernalia over to Jacob, who buried them under the terebinth tree at Shechem. (The word "oak" in the King James version is an incorrect translation). No doubt the idols now buried included the images which Rachel had stolen from her father Laban at the time of departure from Mesopotamia.

If we are surprised that there should be idols in Jacob's company, we should realize that apart from the special grace of God the tendency of religion is always to deteriorate. From Joshua 24:2 we know that the ancestors of Abraham served false gods in Ur of the Chaldees. Besides Rachel having her father's images, it is highly probable that some of the servants may have been idolaters, at least secretly. Also the women added to the clan at the time of the massacre of the men of

Shechem probably brought idolatry with them. With what we know of the moral standards of Jacob's family, we have little reason to suppose that their religious standards — except in the case of Jacob himself — were very high. Therefore we must conclude that Jacob's call for a cleaning out of idols and idolatry was very necessary at the time. (The term "strange gods" is literally "gods of the foreigner"). We note that the clearing out of idolatry was complete — "they gave unto Jacob ALL the strange gods which were in their hand. . . ." (35:4).

Idolatry having been cleaned out, the household moves toward Bethel. "And the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob" (35:5). This is God's favorable response to Jacob's act of purifying his clan of idolatry. God's restraining hand prevents the Canaanites from harming the family of Jacob. The text implies a miracle or supernatural act of God in restraining the Canaanites, and this in turn implies that there had been some kind of plan or intention to interfere with or harm the family of Jacob. By His almighty power God terrified the local cities and tribes so that they did not dare to carry out their plan of harming Jacob's clan. Here again we see exemplified the truth that "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Note, too, that this is grace on God's part, for surely Jacob and his family did not really deserve such wonderful divine protection, especially after the scandalous sins recorded in chapter 34.

"So Jacob came to Luz which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him" (35:6). As we have already seen at 28:19, the original (Canaanite) name of this city was Luz, but Jacob named it Bethel, which means "house of God." Jacob, of course, would always remember his wonderful experience at Bethel when God had appeared to him and confirmed to him the great covenant promises originally given to Abraham (28:13-15). Probably Jacob, even after more than twenty years, was able to locate the exact spot where he had slept and received the vision.

At Bethel the altar is built, and the spot is named El-bethel ("God of Bethel"), in commemoration of the revelation of God given to Jacob when he was fleeing from his brother Esau. The town or city was named Bethel, but the spot where the altar was built was named El-bethel. So Jacob's vow of twenty years before is carried out in action.

At this point we are informed that Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and was buried near Bethel under an oak, which came to be called Allonbachuth ("Oak of Weeping"). This is the first time that we are told that Rebekah's nurse was named Deborah. She has appeared previously at 24:59, where, however, her name is not given. But how does it happen that Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, is a member of the household of Jacob? Certainly she did not accompany him when he fled from Esau, for we are explicitly told that he went alone (32:10). Nor is there any record of her joining Jacob's household at any time after his departure from Laban. In view of the silence of the record we can only guess at the facts. Probably Rebekah died during Jacob's long absence from home. This may explain the fact that he finally left Laban without being sent for by his mother as she had promised (27:45). The record is also silent as to the time and circumstances of the death of Rebekah, though we are told in 49:31 that she was buried in the cave of Machpelah near Hebron. It would seem probable that following the death of Rebekah, when Deborah learned that Jacob had returned to Canaan, she left the establishment of Isaac and joined that of Jacob. We should note that the sacred record regards the death and burial of this humble woman servant as important enough to warrant a place in the narrative. The weeping which is mentioned indicates that Deborah was highly respected and greatly loved.

Questions:

1. What command of God to Jacob is found at the beginning of chapter 35?
2. What vow of Jacob must now be fulfilled?
3. What does this new command of God show us concerning the original meaning of Jacob's vow?
4. What is meant by the command of God to Jacob to "dwell" at Bethel?
5. How did Jacob prepare his household for worshipping God at Bethel?
6. How can we explain the fact that members of Jacob's household were idolatrous?
7. What was God's response to Jacob's act of cleansing his household of idolatry?
8. What had the local Canaanite cities evidently intended to do to the clan of Jacob?
9. What was the original name of the city of Bethel?
10. What is the meaning of the name Bethel?
11. What is the meaning of the phrase El-bethel?
12. How may the presence of Rebekah's nurse Deborah in Jacob's household perhaps be explained?

LESSON 141

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26.

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.

At this point a new theophany (appearance of God) is granted to Jacob. This is stated to have been "when he came out of Padan-Aram" because Jacob is still regarded as enroute home. It is not until 35:27 that he actually returns to his father's residence at Mamre (cf. 28:21, "So that I come again to my father's house in peace. . ."). The change of his name from Jacob to Israel, which had already been revealed at Peniel (32:28) is now repeated and confirmed (35:10).

This is followed by a repetition of some of the great covenant promises originally given to Abraham, especially as concerns numerous posterity and inheritance of the land. "And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him" (35:13). The language here used indicates that this theophany or manifestation of God's presence was not merely in Jacob's mind but was objectively real and visible. As Leupold states it, "His visible ascent occurred in a plainly visible fashion." It is popular in our day to regard

all divine revelation as subjective, or in some sense a product of the consciousness of the human subject. Thus present-day writers tell us that the Old Testament prophets "felt" this, and "discerned" that, they "realized" that something was true and they "recognized the value" of something else — all of which they sold to the public under the label "Thus saith the Lord." Very different is the Bible's own view of divine revelation. God REALLY appeared to men and REALLY spoke to men — not only through men, but to men. The source of revelation was outside of and distinct from the human consciousness. It is folly to try to psychologize the supernatural works of God. What leads men to attempt it is, we believe, a deep antipathy to the supernaturalism of the Bible.

Jacob is deeply impressed by his experience. He repeats his actions of more than twenty years before, setting up a stone for a pillar and pouring oil on it to consecrate it to God. This transaction is not to be identified or confused with that recorded in chapter 28. It is a repetition and yet a distinct act in which a new pillar is consecrated to God.

Needless to say, there is not the slightest

hint of anything idolatrous or superstitious in Jacob's setting up such a pillar and consecrating it to God, as some critics have claimed. These stone pillars were not images nor were they worshipped. Nor was the libation of oil an offering to the dead as some have asserted.

"And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel" (35:15). Though this is a repetition of an act of twenty years before, there is an important difference, for the first time only Jacob alone, a single person, was there; now it is a large family or clan, with many people, who are involved.

Next we are told of the birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel (35:16-20). Rachel dies in giving birth to her second son, and "as her soul was departing" she calls his name Ben-oni ("son of my sorrow", but Jacob later called him Benjamin ("son of the right hand"). "And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem." Rachel was, therefore, not buried in the cave of Machpelah where the mortal bodies of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah were laid to rest to await the resurrection day (49:30-32; 50:13).

"And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day" (35:20). "Unto this day" means, of course, unto the time of Moses' writing the book of Genesis. Rachel's tomb was long known. It is mentioned in the time of King Saul, 1 Sam. 10:2. Davis' Dictionary of the Bible states that in the fourth century of the Christian era it was claimed that the location was known. Davis also gives a drawing of the present-day structure on the reputed site of the tomb; thus structure, however, is of Mohammedan origin and not ancient. It is two miles north of Bethlehem.

"And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar" (35:21). Edar is usually spelled Eder in the Old Testament. The exact location of this tower is unknown. The phrase "tower of Edar" means literally "tower of the flock" and it is possible that a lookout tower of shepherds on the southwest hill of Jerusalem may be meant (cf. Micah 4:8).

If this is the correct location of the tower of Edar, it was only a few miles from the place where Rachel died and was buried.

In 35:22 we read of an additional scandal involving one of Jacob's sons — Reuben, his first-born, who committed adultery with Bilhah, who was originally Rachel's maidservant and who became Jacob's concubine. It is recorded "and Israel heard it." This must have been an additional grief to Jacob.

Next the twelve sons of Jacob are listed (35:22-26) — first the sons of Leah, then those of Rachel; then those of Bilhah, and last those of Zilpah. Although the text gives the general

statement that these twelve sons were born to Jacob in Padan-aram, the fact is that the youngest, Benjamin, was born in the land of Canaan.

"And Jacob came unto his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arba, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned" (35:27). We may wonder that Jacob had not hastened to see his aged father as soon as possible after his return to the land of Canaan. We must remember that the scene of this history is not modern America but the ancient Near East; people took life more slowly and deliberately in those days. Leupold calculates that Isaac was 168 years old at the time of Jacob's return to Mamre. Since Isaac died at the age 180, Jacob was still able to be with his father twelve years before the latter's death (cf. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, II. 929).

"Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him" (35:29). The expression "was gathered unto his people" is not a reference to his burial, which is mentioned separately immediately afterwards. Rather, it is an intimation of faith in a personal immortality beyond the death of the body. The same expression is used of Abraham, who was buried hundreds of miles from the graves of his ancestors. This expression, "was gathered unto his people", while it is not yet the clear daylight of the New Testament revelation concerning the future life, nevertheless expresses a real faith in a personal immortality beyond the grave.

"And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him." Possibly this was the first meeting of Esau and Jacob after their separation by the banks of the Jabbok; possibly not. The record does not say. We may consider it probable, on general grounds, that the two men may have met several times during the interval, but we cannot be sure.

Questions:

1. What is meant by the term "theophany"?
2. Why is this theophany, which occurred in Canaan, declared to have been "when he came out of Padan-Aram"?
3. What promises were confirmed to Jacob at this time?
4. What statement in the record shows that God was really and visibly present to Jacob?
5. What action of twenty years before was repeated by Jacob on this occasion?
6. What is the meaning of the name Ben-oni? Of the name Benjamin?
7. Where was Rachel buried?
8. How long was the location of Rachel's tomb certainly known?

9. What may have been the location of the tower of Edar?

10. Which of Jacob's sons was involved in a new scandal at this point?

11. How many years did Jacob probably live with his father Isaac before the latter's death?

12. What is meant by the expression "was gathered unto his people"?

LESSON 142

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

5. Isaac's descendants through Esau. 36:1-43

"Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom" (36:1). As we have already noted, this formula — "these are the generations of . . ." — is the standard way, in the Book of Genesis, of introducing a new subject or a new division of a subject. The new subject taken up on chapter 36 is the descendants of Esau. The history of Isaac having been completed by the recording of his death, the book follows its usual pattern in first disposing of the less important history of the descendants of Esau, before proceeding to the more important history of the descendants of Jacob. The data given in this chapter, while not of primary importance for the history of God's plan of redemption, are nevertheless of importance for the history and descent of the Edomites, one of Israel's near neighbors and a kindred nation.

The chapter may be divided into several sections. The first section includes 1-8 and deals with Esau's wives and children, and their settlement in the land of Edom or Seir.

A difficulty appears in the fact that the names of Esau's wives as given in chapter 36 differ from those given in 26:34 and 28:9. 26:34 speaks of two wives, Judith and Bashemath, both of them being Hittites; 28:9 adds Mahalath, who is an Ishmaelite. In 36:1-3 the Ishmaelite wife is called Bashemath, and the two Hittite wives are called Adah and Aholibamah. Moreover 36:2 speaks of the father of one of these women as a Hivite, not a Hittite. While we are not able fully to resolve this complex of problems, we should not regard the facts as proving that the Bible contradicts itself. The New Bible Commentary (Davidson, Stibbs & Kevan) states concerning these problems: "The discrepancies are not real, but arise out of the fluid use of names in oriental custom." Leupold says: "Such changes of names need surprise no one, for Orientals commonly go under several names, especially the women, who frequently receive a new name at marriage" (Exposition of Genesis, II.934). With regard to the problem of the father of one of Esau's wives being called both a Hittite and a Hivite, this is probably to be explained by the well known fact that "Hittites," like "Canaanites" and "Amorites," was sometimes used as an inclusive general term for the non-Israelite inhabitants of the land of Canaan, and at other times in the stricter sense designating the Hittites specifically in distinction from other tribes. Thus the man in question could be a Hivite

in the strict sense, and still could be called a Hittite in the more general sense.

"And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob. For their riches were more than that they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle. Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom" (36:6-8). The question which confronts us here is whether this separation of Esau from the land of Canaan took place before Jacob's return from Padan-aram or after that return. Prior to Jacob's return, the flocks and herds of Isaac consisted partly of those which would eventually belong to Jacob and partly of those which would eventually belong to Esau. As the possessor of the birthright Jacob would be heir to the larger portion. It is possible that Esau, with his household and possessions remained at home with his father Isaac until Jacob's return from Mesopotamia added such a large amount of livestock that a prompt separation became inevitable. On this view, Esau's removal to Edom took place after Jacob's arrival home. On the other hand, the narrative (32:3; 33:14,16) seems to imply that Esau was already living in Mount Seir, or Edom, prior to Jacob's return. This, however, need not be regarded as an insoluble problem. Prior to Jacob's homecoming, Esau may have been living south of the Dead Sea (Edom) from time to time, and he may have pastured part of his flocks and herds there while the rest were kept in southern Canaan where Isaac lived. The statement of 36:8, "Thus Esau dwelt in Mount Seir" may mean no more than that from that point of time he made Edom his sole and permanent dwelling place.

As to how the clan of Esau occupied the country of Edom, we cannot say definitely. It may be that the land was taken from the former inhabitants by military conquest; on the other hand it is possible that the occupation was more peaceful and merely involved moving in among the previous inhabitants, followed by intermarriage with them. Statements in chapter 36 suggest that there was considerable intermarriage between the descendants of Esau and the previous inhabitants of the land of Edom.

Verses 9-14 concern the sons of Esau and his grandsons. Among these we note the name of Amalek, a son of Esau and a concubine named Timna. Amalek is the ancestor of the Amale-

kites, a nomadic people of importance in the later history of the Israelites.

Verses 15-19 list the chiefs of the Edomites. These are called "dukes" in the King James Version. This is obviously an improper translation, for the word "duke" has associations with the feudal system of medieval Europe which are quite foreign to these ancient nomadic Semitic tribes. The Hebrew word may mean "ruler of a thousand", though of course "thousand" may be taken as a round number and need not be understood literally. On these verses Leupold comments that they show "how at a comparatively early date Esau's descendants advance to positions of prominence and honor" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 940-1).

Verses 20-30 present the Horite chiefs. These Horites formed the other main component of the Edomite stock. The historical Edomites were a combination of Horites and descendants of Esau. Archaeological evidence seems to indicate that the Biblical Horites were identical with an ancient people known as the Hurrians. The discoveries of Ugarit (Ras Shamra) in Syria and Nuzi (east of the Tigris River) and elsewhere have revealed the existence of the Hurrians and many facts about them. They were important in the fifteenth century B. C. — about the time of Moses. The word "Horites" means "cave-dwellers." It is possible that the Horites were identical with, or closely related to, the Hivites.

We note that in 36:28 a man named Uz is mentioned. This calls to mind the opening verse of the Book of Job, where we are told that Job lived in the land of Uz. Whether there was a real connection between the two, and if so just where "the land of Uz" was located, we do not know.

The chiefs of the Horites enumerated in verses 20-30 may have ruled successively, but it seems more probable that part of them, at least, were simultaneous. The passage affords no information on this point.

Verses 31-39 present "the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel" (36:31). Some critics have held that Moses could not have written verse 31 because (they say) it must have been written after there was a king in Israel, i.e., in the time of Saul or later. We do not agree with this claim of the critics. Moses definitely looked forward to the time when Israel would have a king (Deut. 17:14-20), so it would be quite natural for him to speak of the Edomites having kings before there was any king in Israel. Of course the same critics also reject the genuineness of Deuteronomy, holding that it is a forgery produced in the time of Josiah about 800 years after the time of Moses. We believe there are very good reasons for siding with Moses against the modern critics.

Eight Edomite kings are listed, and of three of them it is said that they had cities, which are named. The others are not stated to have had cities. It is evident that the kingship in Edom was not hereditary, for none of these Edomite kings is said to be the son of any other of them.

In verses 40-43 we have another list of Edomite chiefs. Some of these have already been mentioned in verses 15-19. The important thing to note in verses 40-43 is the phrase "after their places" in verse 40. This is a listing by geographical location. The word "duke" is of course improper and misleading here as in 15-19. The word "chief" is a preferable translation. Some of the names in verses 40-43 may be geographical rather than personal names. Thus Leupold translates: ". . . the chief of Timna, the chief of Alvah", etc. If these are names of places, some of them can be identified today, others not.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the formula "these are the generations of . . ."?
2. What difficulty exists concerning the names of Esau's wives?
3. What may be the solution of this problem?
4. How can we explain the fact that the father of one of Esau's wives is called both a Hivite and a Hittite?
5. Whither did Esau move from Canaan?
6. What can be said on the question of when Esau made this move?
7. What may have been the method of Esau's clan occupying Edom?
8. What son of Esau gave his name to a nomadic people which were important in later Old Testament history?
9. What may be the literal meaning of the Hebrew word translated "dukes" in the King James Version?
10. Why are the Horite chiefs listed in this chapter?
11. What does modern archaeological evidence indicate concerning the Horites?
12. What is the literal meaning of the name "Horites"?
13. Why do some critics claim that Moses could not have written 36:31?
14. How can this claim of the critics be answered?
15. How can it be shown that kingship among the Edomites was not hereditary?

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

6. The early life of Joseph. 37:1-36

The descendants of Isaac through Esau having been discussed, the narrative now turns to the main subject, the descendants of Isaac through Jacob. The history of Joseph is told in great detail and occupies the greater part of thirteen chapters. In other words the history of this one man's life is given more space in the book of Genesis than the entire history of the world prior to the time of Abraham (11 chapters). As the Book of Genesis approaches closer to the time of Moses, its human author, it naturally deals with its subject matter in greater detail.

Verse 1 calls us back from Edom to the land of Canaan. In contrast with Esau and his descendants, Jacob dwelt in Canaan. We should realize that although Isaac's death is given in the record at the end of chapter 35, the evidence indicates that he lived twelve years after Jacob's return to Mamre, and therefore that Isaac was still living when Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers.

The chapter opens with Joseph at the age of 17, helping to pasture his father's flocks, along with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. "And Joseph brought unto his father their evil report" (37:2). From what we know of Jacob's sons from chapter 34, there was probably plenty of bad conduct on the part of his brothers for Joseph to report to his father. Some have held that Joseph was a "tattle-tale" with a self-righteous attitude in reporting the bad deeds of his brothers to his father. It is not necessary to regard the matter thus. If their actions were to any degree similar to what is recorded in chapter 34, then it was Joseph's duty to report the matters to his father.

However, Joseph's acting the part of an informer naturally would not increase his popularity with his brothers. Regardless of the right or wrong involved, they would naturally tend to hate the one who reported their evil deeds. This is the first root of the brothers' opposition to Joseph.

The second root of the brothers' hatred of Joseph lay in Jacob's partiality toward him. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children, "because he was the son of his old age" (37:3). It is easy to discern other reasons for Jacob's partiality. Joseph was the son of Rachel, the wife whom he loved best. Also Joseph seems to have been the only one of the brothers — during this period, at least — who had any real spiritual sensitivity and religious kinship with his father.

We cannot blame Jacob for his feeling of partiality toward Joseph, but we should blame

him for a most unwise way of manifesting his affection — by bestowing upon Joseph a special "coat of many colors." Leupold points out that the Hebrew means "he used to make," implying that when one such coat was worn out Jacob provided another to replace it. He also suggests that the coat was a symbolic token of a position of leadership. Naturally, Joseph's being distinguished in this way fills the brothers with jealousy. They cannot help noticing their father's attitude to Joseph. The result is that "they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him" (37:4).

We have noted two sources of the brothers' antipathy to Joseph. A third arose from Joseph's dreams. Though the dreams certainly came from God, as shown by the remarkable manner in which they were fulfilled in later years, this did not warrant Joseph's telling them to his brothers as he did. The brothers hated him "for his dreams, and for his words" (37:8). The dream of the sheaves was so obvious in meaning that the brothers could not miss the point. Naturally enough, they are indignant and express their indignation forcefully.

Joseph's second dream was that of the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to him. This one he tells not only to his brothers, but also to his father. Jacob, the father, of course instantly recognizes the import of the dream. He rebukes Joseph, evidently for his pride in telling the dream. In the dream, the moon, of course, refers to Joseph's mother. Rachel, however, was already dead; therefore the reference may be to Leah who no doubt took the place of Rachel as Joseph's mother after his real mother's death.

"And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying" (37:11). The attitude of the brothers was a jealous hatred, that of the father, thoughtful wonder concerning the future.

The brothers have gone to pasture their father's flock in Shechem. We may wonder that they would venture back there after their outrageous conduct there in chapter 34. The explanation may be that the brothers were bold men with no fear of danger. At any rate, Jacob sends Joseph to Shechem to find out how his brothers are getting along, and bring word back to his father again. Joseph accordingly sets out from "the vale of Hebron" and reaches Shechem. This would be a journey of about 45 miles "as the crow flies," but of course somewhat longer than that by any road or path. We note that there is no indication in the record that either Jacob or Joseph suspected that the brothers might harm Joseph. As Joseph was only 17 years old we can readily see how he could fail to realize the full wickedness of his brothers; but we can hardly fail to be a little surprised that Jacob seems so trustful and unsuspect-

ing, especially in view of the known past conduct of his sons.

Joseph has reached Shechem, but is unable to find his brothers. A stranger who sees him wandering in a field provides the information that the brothers have gone to Dothan. On going there, Joseph locates them. Dothan was about 12 miles north of Shechem.

Seeing and recognizing Joseph while he is yet at a distance — no doubt by his coat of many colors — the brothers conspire together to murder him. They propose to dispose of his body by dropping it into a pit, and to report to their father that some wild animal has killed him. But Reuben, the oldest of the brothers, who apparently had no part in the plan to kill Jacob, succeeds in rescuing the lad from their hands, proposing to drop him into a pit and leave him there to die. The idea was that this would avoid the guilt of bloodshed, although of course a murder is a murder regardless of the precise method employed. But Reuben's secret intention is to get Joseph back home safely to Jacob again. As the oldest brother, Reuben seems to have some feeling of moral responsibility which the others lack. Yet we know that Reuben was not truly a godly man, as is shown by his committing adultery as recorded in 35:22. Of course it is possible that in the interval Reuben has repented but there is nothing in the record to indicate this.

Questions:

1. How many chapters of Genesis are devoted mainly to the life of Joseph? How does this compare with the number of chapters devoted to the entire period of world history prior to Abraham?

2. How should we regard Joseph's bringing his father the evil report of his brothers?

3. What were the three main roots of the brothers' antagonism to Joseph?

4. What reasons can be assigned for Jacob's partiality toward Joseph? What reason does the Scripture give for it?

5. What may have been the symbolic meaning of Joseph's coat of many colors?

6. What fact shows that Joseph's dreams were of God?

7. Why was it unwise for Joseph to tell his dreams to his brothers and his father?

8. What was the reaction of the brothers on hearing the dreams?

9. What was Jacob's attitude to Joseph's dreams?

10. Where did Jacob send Joseph to find out about his brothers? How far away was this place?

11. How old was Joseph at this time?

12. Where did Joseph finally locate his brothers?

13. What plot to murder Joseph did the brothers form?

14. Which of the brothers prevented the murder?

15. Why would this brother feel a greater responsibility than the others?

16. What secret intention did this brother have?

LESSON 144

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

6. The early life of Joseph. 37:1-36, cont.

"And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him; and they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it" (37:23, 24). Calvin comments on the hypocrisy of the brothers in supposing that they would be less guilty of their brother's death if they dropped him into a pit and left him to starve than if they killed him with a knife or sword: "As if, indeed, it made any difference, whether they ran their brother through with a sword, or put him to death by suffocation. . . . It was a barbarous thought, that they should not touch his life, if they did not embroil their hands in his blood; since it was a kind of death, not less violent, which they wished to inflict by hunger."

The brothers, having cast Joseph into the pit, sit down to eat their meal. How hardhearted these men were is shown by the fact that they were able to eat food immediately after such a wicked deed as they had done. It has been observed by some writers that very likely Simeon was the one who actually manhandled Joseph. What suggests this is not only Simeon's wickedness shown in chapter 34 but especially Joseph's treatment of Simeon years later in Egypt (42:24).

Next a caravan of merchants is seen on the horizon. These are called Ishmaelites in verse 25 but in verse 28 they are called Midianites. This involves the problem of how the same group of people could be called both Ishmaelites and Midianites. One possible explanation is that there were members of both tribes in the caravan. We know from other places in the Bible that the Midianites and the Ishmaelites were closely connected. Both Ishmael and Midian were sons of Abraham, the former being born of Hagar and the

latter of Keturah (16:15; 25:2). In Judges 8:24 the Midianites which were defeated by Gideon are called Ishmaelites. In view of the close connection between the two tribes we need not wonder that the caravan in Gen. 37 is called by both names.

This caravan of traders is coming from Gilead, that is the country east of the Jordan and opposite the northern part of Canaan. With their camels they are carrying spices, balm and myrrh to Egypt for sale. These products were various kinds of aromatic gums for which the region of Gilead was famous, and which were greatly in demand in Egypt, where they were used both for medicine and for embalming the dead.

At this point Judah makes a proposal. (It is evident from verse 29 that Reuben, the oldest brother, was not present at this time). Judah proposes that instead of leaving Joseph to die in the pit, they sell him to the passing merchants. "What profit is it that we slay our brother, and conceal his blood" (37:26). We should note that this question asked by Judah involves an admission that leaving Joseph to die in the pit is morally equivalent to shedding his blood.

Though some have praised Judah's proposal as a noble effort to save Joseph's life, it seems that he does not deserve such praise. He appeals to their desire for profit — "What profit is it?" — rather than to their conscience. And certainly a proposal to sell one's own brother to a foreign country to be a slave is a brutal and hardhearted proposal. If Judah really wanted to do what was right he should have come out boldly and insisted that Joseph be set free.

The brothers agree to Judah's proposal. Joseph is drawn out of the pit and sold to the merchants for twenty pieces of silver. Note that the word "pieces" is in italics in the King James Version, indicating that it is not found in the Hebrew but was supplied by the translators. Coined money was not used at this period; the money was weighed. In Leviticus 27:5 we find 20 pieces of silver as the valuation of a boy from 15 to 20 years of age. The Law of Moses fixed compensation for the death of a full-grown slave at 30 pieces of silver (Ex. 21:32).

From a later chapter in Genesis we know that Joseph did not submit to this treatment without protest, but on the contrary implored his brothers not to do it. This is seen in 42:21 where the brothers are in the presence of Joseph in Egypt, but are not aware that it is Joseph nor that he can understand the language they are speaking. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

Later Reuben returns to the pit, expecting to

find Joseph in it, and on finding the pit empty, he rends his clothes, the sign of extreme emotional stress. Reuben returns to the other brothers and says: "The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?" (37:30). Perhaps the others did not even answer Reuben; at any rate, no answer is recorded. But inevitably Reuben must soon have learned the truth about that which had happened to Joseph.

The wicked hardheartedness of the brothers is further seen in their plan to lie to their father. After making Joseph's coat bloody with goat's blood, they present it to Jacob with the lie: "This have we found" followed by the suggestion: "Know now whether it be thy son's coat or no" (37:32). Not one of the brothers is willing to tell Jacob the truth. Jacob of course recognizes the garment as Joseph's and at once concludes that a wild beast has killed and devoured Joseph.

Perhaps the brothers did not realize that Jacob would take the loss of Joseph so hard. For he proves inconsolable. Rending his clothes, he puts on sackcloth and mourns for his son many days. The brothers and their sisters become alarmed. This is worse than they had expected. So a concerted effort is made to comfort him, "but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him." They rose up to comfort him — but what hypocritical comfort, based as it was on a conspiracy of lies! Not one has enough love and pity to tell Jacob the truth. If they had only told him the truth, it might have been possible to send someone to Egypt to buy Joseph back. If a slave can be sold, he can also be bought. But the brothers are more concerned about concealing their own guilt than about consoling their grief-stricken father or getting their brother back home safely.

"And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard" (37:36). This preliminary information about Joseph's situation in Egypt prepares the way for the more detailed story which follows in chapter 39.

Questions:

1. What hypocrisy was involved in the brothers' decision to drop Joseph into the pit?
2. What action after they dropped Joseph into the pit shows the callousness of the brothers?
3. On what ground has it been supposed that Simeon was the one who actually dropped Joseph into the pit?
4. How can we explain the fact that the merchants are called both Ishmaelites and also Midianites?
5. Where was Gilead? For what kind of products was it renowned?
6. What proposal was made by Judah?

7. Is Judah's proposal praiseworthy or not? Why?

8. At what price was Joseph sold?

9. How do we know that Joseph did not submit to being sold without protest?

10. What was Reuben's reaction upon finding the pit empty?

11. What did Jacob conclude upon seeing the bloody coat?

12. What was the effect of this shock upon Jacob?

13. Why was the effort of his sons and daughters to comfort him hypocritical?

LESSON 145

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

7. The scandalous sinfulness of the family of Judah. 38:1-30

This chapter records the lamentable decline of part of the family or clan of Jacob to the low moral standards of the Canaanites. Some of the deeds recorded in this chapter are so morally offensive and so shocking to modesty and good taste that the present writer would hesitate to use the chapter as material for class discussion. At the same time it must be realized that this chapter belongs in the Bible and is there for a good purpose. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). The devout Bible student can gain very worth-while lessons from this chapter. Without taking up the details of the chapter we may suggest the following implications of its contents:

1. Apart from the special grace of God even the covenant children of godly parents may fall very deeply into heinous sin.

2. There is need for constant watchfulness lest the moral standards of God's people be lowered to the level of the world.

3. God is a God of grace who forgives even great sin. He does not save people because they are good, but in order that they may become good.

4. All the actions and relationships of men are subject to the moral judgment of God.

5. Practices which are not considered sin at all by the world may be grievous sins when viewed in the light of the will of God.

8. The history of Joseph continued. 39:1 to 50:26

Joseph has been taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard. The record specifically states that Potiphar was "an Egyptian" (39:1). It is highly probable that this was during the period of Hyksos domination of Egypt. The Hyksos were Semitic invaders who gained control of Egypt and held it for some hundreds of years. Being Semites from southwestern Asia, the Hyksos were distantly related to the Hebrews and distinct from the genuine Egyptians, who were descended from Ham rather than from Shem. The fact of the Hyksos reign in Egypt at this period may be the reason

for the specific mention of the fact that Potiphar was "an Egyptian."

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian" (39:2). What a contrast Joseph forms to his brothers, especially Reuben and Judah! They fell deeply into sin even while at home under the favorable influence of their father; Joseph maintains his uprightness even when away from home, unjustly treated and in a wholly unfavorable environment. All through the history of Joseph we see the blessing of God resting upon a man who chooses to suffer wrong rather than to commit wrong. All that Joseph knew of the true God and His way of salvation he learned before he reached the age of 17 when he was sold into Egypt. His religion and his moral code stood him in good stead and proved sufficient for building a life upon — one of the greatest lives of all history. Joseph was not like a hot-house plant but like a sturdy oak, by the grace of God. Certainly he was not like some church members of the present day who have to be constantly encouraged and exhorted and catered to in order to get them to maintain even a passable outward show of a Christian profession.

We are told that Joseph was in the house of his master the Egyptian. This implies that he was not living in the (doubtless much poorer) servants' quarters but actually in the building occupied by Potiphar and his family. This must have been in marked contrast to the rather humble tent dwellings he had been accustomed to in Canaan, even though we must remember that his father was a rich man.

Even Potiphar, though not himself a worshipper of the true God, saw that Joseph's success and prosperity in all he undertook must be attributed to the Lord being with him (39:3). As time passes Potiphar is more impressed by Jacob's character and attainments; Joseph "found grace in his sight" and is promoted to be business manager or steward of the entire household establishment. The record indicates that Potiphar became increasingly aware by degrees or stages, of the fact that the blessing of the Lord was upon Joseph and upon all that he did, both "in the house and in the field." "The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake" (39:5). This exemplifies a truth taught by the Bible and often observed in history, namely that blessings come to the world and worldly people because of their

connection with the people of God, or the presence of the people of God among them. God would have spared Sodom for the sake of ten righteous persons among the inhabitants. In this sense Christians are the salt of the earth.

So complete is Potiphar's confidence in Joseph that he fully entrusts all his possessions to him. Joseph takes full charge of everything. Apart from eating his meals, Potiphar does not need to pay any attention to anything that belongs to him. As Potiphar was a high officer of the Egyptian government, very likely he was more than busy with his official duties and was glad to be relieved of all responsibilities for the management of his household.

Verse 6 adds the information that "Joseph was a goodly person, and well favored." This is stated at this point, perhaps, to prepare the way for what comes next, the infatuation of Potiphar's wife with Joseph. Incidentally, it has been observed that Scripture speaks of very few men as handsome or good looking. We may call to mind Saul, David and Absalom.

"And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me" (39:7). No doubt Joseph was not only good looking, but also handsomely dressed, as befitted his rank in Potiphar's household. She makes a shameless and lawless proposal to Joseph, which he, however, instantly and completely refuses, on the two grounds that to comply with her wishes would be (1) a breach of the trust his master has placed in him, and (2) a wicked sin against God (39:8, 9). Presumably Potiphar's wife was a believer in the common idolatrous religion of Egypt; yet even so, Joseph's mention of a sin against God could not be misunderstood. For adultery is recognized and condemned as sin even by corrupt and pagan faiths.

Joseph's refusal however did not end the evil desires of Potiphar's wife. We are given to understand that the temptation was continued over a considerable period of time ("day by day", verse 10). Joseph consistently refuses to pay attention to her advances.

Finally Potiphar's wife wickedly attempts to trap Joseph in such a way that even if not guilty he is sure to appear guilty to others. Taking advantage of a time when none of the servants are present, and when Joseph is in the house attending to his necessary business, she takes hold of his garment and repeats her lawless solicitation. Joseph, realizing that the situation is serious, leaves the coat in her hands and flees. The Hebrew indicates that he fled not merely into another part of the house, but actually out of doors or into the street.

Now Potiphar's wife is angry with Joseph because he has spurned her advances. To remove

suspicion from herself and pin it on Joseph she immediately makes a great outcry, summoning the men of the house and accusing Joseph of attempting to attack her. We may doubt that all the servants believed Potiphar's wife. Surely some of them, at least, must have realized something of her true character and also must have sensed Joseph's moral integrity.

Possibly Potiphar's wife indulges in an appeal to racial prejudice when she says, "See, he hath brought in a Hebrew unto us to mock us" and again refers to Joseph, not by name, but as "the Hebrew servant." At any rate, with a great show of injured innocence Potiphar's wife displays Joseph's coat. On the face of it, this would seem to be evidence of Joseph's guilt, however different the real facts might be. It is not recorded that the men of the house made any reply. As Leupold comments, "They may not have been unduly impressed by her protestations of innocence" (Exposition of Genesis, II. 1000).

Questions:

1. Why are matters such as those found in chapter 38 included in the Bible?
2. What is the universal tendency of all moral standards apart from the grace of God?
3. What is the probable reason why the record specifically states that Potiphar was an Egyptian?
4. Who were the rulers of Egypt at this time?
5. How is Joseph's life in contrast to that of Reuben and Judah?
6. How old was Joseph when he was sold into Egypt?
7. What is implied by the statement that Joseph was in the house of his master the Egyptian?
8. What was Potiphar's attitude to Joseph?
9. What benefits came to Potiphar because of Joseph's presence?
10. What is meant by the statement that the people of God are the salt of the earth?
11. To what extent did Potiphar entrust his household and property to Joseph?
12. What information does the Bible give about the personal appearance of Joseph?
13. On what two grounds did Joseph refuse the proposal of Potiphar's wife?
14. By what evidence did Potiphar's wife attempt to prove Joseph guilty?

LESSON 146

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.**8. The history of Joseph continued. 39:1 to 50:26, cont.**

Evidently Potiphar was away from home at the time of the alleged assault upon Potiphar's wife, for "She laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home" (39:16). Perhaps Potiphar's official duties required him to be away from home a good deal of the time, and his wife may have felt lonely and neglected. However the Scripture record pictures her as a brazen and shameless woman. At any rate, when Potiphar returns home his wife triumphantly displays Joseph's coat and repeats her false accusation of Joseph.

Naturally, Potiphar's wrath was kindled (39:19). It should be noted that the record does not say that Potiphar was angry with Joseph, though of course he may have been. As Leupold suggests, it is possible, at least, that Potiphar was angry principally because the whole incident was a vexation to him. He may well have doubted his wife's word, but naturally he had to take his wife's word against that of a servant, when it was a choice between the two. However, if Potiphar knew anything of his wife's real character he may well have doubted the truth of her accusation. At any rate, he adopts the easy and obvious remedy and removes Joseph from his household, putting him in prison. In view of the fact that the usual penalty for adultery in ancient times was death, it would appear that Joseph was treated rather leniently. This may reflect doubt in Potiphar's mind as to his real guilt, or provocation that he had been deprived of the services of a highly competent steward.

The prison in which Joseph is confined is described as "a place where the king's prisoners were bound" (39:20). Whether "the king's prisoners" means political offenders or merely persons imprisoned — for whatever reason—on the king's orders, we do not know. At any rate, "the king's prisoners" must have been people of some importance, as is shown by the fact that the chief butler and chief baker of the royal palace were later placed in the same prison. This was, therefore, not a common jail for petty thieves and the like. Prominent people were committed to it.

"And he was there in the prison" (39:20). This seems to imply the passing of a considerable period of time. From 41:1 we know that Joseph was in prison over two years.

Yet even in prison God has not forsaken Joseph, nor has Joseph's faith in God weakened. "But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison" (39:21). Just as Potiphar

had noted Joseph's remarkable combination of ability and reliability, so the warden of the prison notes that this man is different from other prisoners. Soon tasks and duties are assigned to Joseph by the warden, and he is entrusted with more and more responsibilities until he is business manager of the prison as he had been business manager of Potiphar's household. "And whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper" (39:22, 23). In all but name, Joseph has become the real warden of the prison. The official warden has an easy, carefree life because everything is being properly attended to by Joseph. If the warden had placed such complete confidence in anyone except Joseph, the results might have been disastrous; but in Joseph's hands everything is done honestly, efficiently and safely.

During all this time the aged Jacob is grieving and mourning the loss of his son Joseph, and the brothers are brazenly facing it out, none of them being willing to tell their father the truth about Joseph because that would involve an admission of their own guilt. Years pass, and Jacob is still left to believe that Joseph was killed and eaten by a wild beast somewhere between Mamre and Shechem. Yet God has not forgotten either Jacob or Joseph. The providence of God seems to us to work slowly, but it is working all the time.

"And it came to pass after these things" — how long after we do not know — "that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt" (40:1). What the offence of these men was we do not know. As chief butler and chief baker (cf. verse 2) they held very responsible positions. Having control over the king's food and drink, his health and even his life depended on their integrity and watchfulness. There is a Jewish account to the effect that the chief butler and the chief baker had been involved in a plot to poison the king. This is very improbable, as the penalty for such an offence would have been immediate death rather than imprisonment. Much more likely is the supposition that these two men, being prominent persons at the king's court, had been involved in some political plot or intrigue which had been discovered, on account of which they were put in prison.

"And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound" (40:3). From 39:1 we know that "the captain of the guard" was none other than Potiphar himself. It would seem, therefore, that Joseph is still in Potiphar's service,

even though it is in his prison rather than in his household.

"And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; and they continued a season in ward" (40:4). It is evident from this verse that the king's butler and baker were considered important people, and even in prison they are "served" or waited on in accordance with their rank and position. The expression "a season" is quite indefinite, but may even mean a period of years.

Questions:

1. What fact indicates that Potiphar was away from home at the time of Joseph's alleged assault upon Potiphar's wife?
2. What may have been the cause of Potiphar's wrath?
3. Why would Potiphar believe his wife rather than Joseph?
4. In view of the laws and customs of those

times, how severe was Potiphar's punishment of Joseph?

5. What may have been the reason or reasons for Potiphar's comparatively lenient treatment of Joseph?
6. To what prison was Joseph committed?
7. How long was Joseph in prison?
8. What was the attitude of the warden to Joseph?
9. What change came in Joseph's life in the prison?
10. Why would the king's chief butler and chief baker be regarded as important persons?
11. What may have been the offence of the chief butler and chief baker?
12. Who, apparently, was the "captain of the guard" mentioned in 40:3, 4?
13. What new responsibility was committed to Joseph after the chief butler and chief baker were committed to prison?

LESSON 147

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

8. The history of Joseph continued. 39:1 to 50:26, cont.

From chapter 40 verse 5 we have the account of the dreams of the chief butler and chief baker, and Joseph's interpretation of the dreams. In times before the completion of the Bible, one of God's ways of revealing Himself and His will was by dreams. As a general rule — though there may be some exceptions — revelation in dream form came to persons in a relatively low spiritual state. When persons were in a higher spiritual state, and living in close fellowship with God, more direct modes of revelation were ordinarily employed.

The two prisoners — the chief butler and the chief baker — both have dreams in the same night. Moreover these were not common dreams, but dreams with a meaning, for it is said that they dreamed "each man according to the interpretation of his dream" (40:5). Ordinary dreams may be the product of something in the subconscious mind of the person and may be explained by psychology, but these dreams were different. They were a vehicle of divine revelation.

In the morning Joseph notes that both men look sad, and inquires as to the reason for their sadness. They in turn reply that they have dreamed, but lack an interpreter. Joseph then says, "Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you" (40:8). Joseph does not

promise to interpret the dreams, but quite evidently he feels that it is possible that God may enable him to interpret them, therefore he does not hesitate to ask that the dreams be told him. In speaking of "God," Joseph of course meant the Lord, the true God, even though inevitably the two Egyptians would have a distorted idea of his meaning.

The chief butler tells his dream first (40:9-11). In his dream he stood by a grape vine with three branches; as he stood there the vine budded, blossomed, and produced ripe grapes; he pressed the juice into Pharaoh's cup and handed the cup to Pharaoh to drink. All these things could not happen so rapidly in real life, of course, but in dreams the sense of time is often distorted and what in real life would take weeks or months seems to happen in a few moments.

"And Joseph said unto him . . ." (40:12). The record does not state that Joseph gave the interpretation of the dream immediately. Certainly it is possible and even probable that Luther is correct in his supposition that at this point Joseph retired to seek the Lord in prayer. In any case, Joseph is infallibly guided by God in interpreting the dream. He brings out clearly the meaning of its main features. The three branches stand for three days. The handing the cup to Pharaoh signifies a restoration to the butler's former functions and duties. Therefore the dream means that within three days the chief butler will be released from prison and restored to his former position.

Joseph adds a personal plea to the chief but-

ler: "But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon" (40:15). Joseph is telling the truth to the chief butler, who will be even more convinced of Joseph's truthfulness after three days when the interpretation of the dream will be fulfilled. The simplicity and lack of elaboration of Joseph's statement has the ring of truth.

Next the chief baker tells his dream, hoping for as favorable an interpretation as the chief butler received. It is not surprising that the chief baker expected a good interpretation, for his dream was in some respects quite similar to the chief butler's. In his dream he stood with three baskets of baked goods stacked on his head, containing many kinds of bread and cakes for Pharaoh to eat. Then the birds swooped down and ate the food out of the baskets that were on his head. As Leupold points out, the chief baker himself failed to note the most important thing in this dream, namely the fact that in the dream, when the birds swooped down to eat the baked foods, the chief baker was helpless to drive them off; they ate without interference.

No doubt Joseph would have liked to give the chief baker as favorable an interpretation as he had given the chief butler. But as he had himself said, interpretations belong to God. Joseph is only a servant of God; it is not in his power to decide what the interpretation shall be; his function is only to declare it. So it occurs that honesty and faithfulness require Joseph to impart bad news to the chief baker. He informs him that the three baskets stand for three days, after which Pharaoh will punish the chief baker by having him beheaded; following that, his body will be hanged on a tree, and the birds will eat the flesh from his bones. Though this was an unpleasant interpretation, it was the truth, and Joseph did not shrink from disclosing it.

Calvin comments on this passage by stating that the majority of religious teachers and preachers, "in desiring to yield to the corrupt wishes of the world, adulterate the word of God. Wherefore, no one is a sincere minister of God's word, but he, who despising reproach, and being ready, as often as it may be necessary, to attack various offences, will frame his method of teaching according to the command of God. Joseph would, indeed, have preferred to augur well concerning both; but since it is not in his power to give a prosperous fortune to any one, nothing remains for him but frankly to pronounce whatever he has received from the Lord. So, formerly, although the people chose for themselves prophets who would promise them abundance of wine and

oil and corn, while they exclaimed loudly against the holy prophets, because they let fall nothing but threatenings . . . yet it was the duty of the servants of the Lord, who had been sent to denounce vengeance, to proceed with severity, although they brought upon themselves hatred and danger." (Calvin). We can readily realize the application of this truth to our own day, when many people want only preachers who will proclaim a "popular" type of message—a message that makes people feel comfortable and peaceful while they are still in their sins and unreconciled to God.

"And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. And he restored the chief butler to his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: but he hanged the chief baker; as Joseph had interpreted to them" (40:20-22). Thus Joseph's interpretations are verified by coming to pass. It is well known that in ancient times kings frequently celebrated their birthdays not only by banquets (Mark 6:21) but also by pardoning selected offenders. The history recorded here is therefore very true to life.

"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him" (40:23). No doubt Joseph hoped to be released from prison soon. Very likely he thought that the chief butler would be so happy about being released from prison and restored to his position that he would be only too glad to intercede with Pharaoh for Joseph. But it did not happen. The chief butler ungratefully forgets Joseph, who is left to languish in prison. As a matter of fact, two full years pass, and Joseph remains in prison. "Therefore, we are all taught, in his person, that nothing is more improper than to prescribe the time in which God shall help us; since He purposely, for a long season, keeps His own people in anxious suspense, that, by this very experiment, they may truly know what it is to trust in Him" (Calvin). We believe that there was a special purpose of God involved in the chief butler's forgetting Joseph. It was for the further development of Joseph's faith and patience. On the other hand, this does not at all excuse the chief butler, who was guilty of ingratitude in forgetting Joseph. Moreover it is hard to believe that the chief butler could have forgotten Joseph accidentally or unintentionally. From time to time, at least he must have remembered Joseph and recalled the interpretation of the dream which had been so wonderfully fulfilled. But either because he thought the time was not opportune, or for some other reason, he neglected to carry out Joseph's request. Possibly he just preferred to "let well enough alone" rather than become involved in the case of another prisoner which might have had results for himself.

Questions:

1. To what class of people did God usually reveal Himself by dreams in Bible times?

2. How do we know that the dreams of the chief butler and baker were not caused by their own subconscious mind?

3. Why did Joseph ask the chief butler and baker to tell their dreams to him?

4. What was the meaning of the chief butler's dream?

5. What personal request did Joseph make of the chief butler?

6. What argument did Joseph use in making his request of the chief butler?

7. What important point in the chief baker's dream was unnoticed by the dreamer?

8. Why did Joseph interpret the chief baker's dream as bad news for the chief baker?

9. What is the bearing of Joseph's interpretation of the chief baker's dream on the duty of ministers of God's Word today?

10. How did kings in ancient times often celebrate their birthdays?

11. What purpose of God was involved in the chief butler's forgetting Joseph?

12. Could the chief butler have forgotten Joseph accidentally?

13. What may have been the chief butler's reasons for failing to carry out Joseph's request?

LESSON 148**III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.****8. The history of Joseph continued. 39:1 to 50:26, cont.**

As chapter 41 opens, two full years have passed, and Joseph is still in prison. Again dreams enter into the history of Joseph. This time it is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who dreams. As in the previous instances, the dreams are not ordinary dreams but are revelations of the purpose of God. As in Joseph's own boyhood experience, there are two dreams with the same meaning. The first is the dream of the seven fat and seven lean cows; the second is the dream of the seven full and seven thin ears of grain. Following each dream, it is recorded, Pharaoh awoke. The fact that divine revelation came to Pharaoh in the form of dreams, rather than by a more direct method, confirms the observation made in a previous lesson that dreams were the mode of revelation to those not living in close contact with God. Pharaoh, as an Egyptian, was of course a pagan and an idolater. His idea of God would inevitably be distorted by the false religion of Egypt.

Pharaoh's dreams are a strange combination of features that are entirely natural and appropriate in Egypt, with things that could never happen at all in real life, whether in Egypt or anywhere else. The river, the meadow by the riverside, the cattle grazing in the meadow — all this fits the Egyptian scene perfectly. Doubtless Pharaoh and every Egyptian had gazed on just such a scene many a time. Moreover there would be nothing out of the ordinary in both fat and lean cattle being seen, for Egypt might have either kind, according to the season and the abundance of pasture. But the thin cattle eating up the fat cattle is something that could only happen in a dream. No doubt it was this very strange feature that caused Pharaoh to awake and ponder the dream.

Again, the seven well-filled ears of grain on a single stalk would be no uncommon sight in Egypt, which was renowned as the granary of the Mediterranean world. With the Nile River continually restoring fertility to the fields in its flood plain and supplying water, it is no wonder that Egypt produced immense crops of wheat and other grain. Nor would the seven thin ears, blasted by the hot east wind, be a strange sight in Egypt. The hot, dry east wind blowing from the desert is said to wilt and blast vegetation at the present day in Egypt. But contrary to what could happen in real life, the seven thin ears eat up the seven fat ones. Again Pharaoh awakes and realizes that he has been dreaming.

In the morning Pharaoh, being convinced that these strange dreams must have a special meaning, summons his experts, including, perhaps, professional dream analysts, and relates the dreams to them. But they are unable to interpret the dreams. It is remarkable that Pharaoh's wise men and magicians did not attempt to make up an interpretation of the dreams, for it would not have been difficult to arrive at a plausible meaning by guesswork. As everyone knew, the Nile River was (and is) Egypt's source of fertility, and the cow was worshipped as a symbol of the productive power of nature. The dreams, then, were framed in terms of ideas familiar to every Egyptian, and we are almost surprised that the wise men of Egypt were unable to discern the meaning. "Apparently, the hand of God was upon the interpreters, making their own devices of no effect, in order that the revelation might come by His own chosen instrument" (Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, II. 1023). Something can be said, too, for the honesty of the Egyptian wise men. Though devotees of a false religion and no doubt largely involved in the study of pseudo-science, they do not consciously and deliberately attempt to satisfy the king by the use of falsehood.

The wise men and magicians having failed to interpret the king's dreams, the chief butler speaks up: "I do remember my faults this day" (41:9). Well he may remember his faults — he has basely "forgotten" Joseph for two full years, while Joseph remains unjustly imprisoned. The chief butler relates his experience and that of the chief baker, and tells how the interpretations given by Joseph in each case came true. The result of this is that Pharaoh summons Joseph to the royal palace.

The record states that Joseph was brought "hastily" out of the prison. But first he must be shaved and properly attired. This does not imply that in the prison Joseph has been living in a dirty or unkempt condition, but merely that there were special requirements for a person to be presented before the ruler of Egypt. After these matters have been attended to, Joseph is brought into the presence of Pharaoh in order to interpret the king's dreams. Joseph humbly replies, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. Here Joseph displays the mark of every true servant of God, in that he gives all the credit to God and takes none to himself.

LESSON 149

III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.

8. The history of Joseph continued. 39:1 to 50:26, cont.

Pharaoh repeats his dreams to Joseph (41:17-24), adding the statement "I told this unto the magicians, but there was none that could declare it to me." Joseph at once proceeds to give the interpretation of the dreams. In Joseph's speech, we note the emphasis placed on God as the revealer of truth and the controller of events. Whatever may be Pharaoh's original idea of God or gods, he cannot fail to note in what Joseph says the idea of one God who holds absolute control over all things, including the forces of nature and the events of the future.

First of all Joseph lays down the proposition that "the dream is one," that is, Pharaoh's two dreams have but a single meaning. Later he adds (verse 32) that the reason for Pharaoh having two dreams rather than just one, is for emphasis on the absolute certainty of the thing coming to pass, and that soon.

The interpretation is that there shall be a succession of seven specially good years in Egypt, in which there shall be plentiful harvests, followed by a succession of seven years of famine. The years of famine will be so severe that the plenty of the seven good years will be forgotten.

So much for the meaning of the dreams. We may note in the fact of these dreams a double pur-

Questions:

1. How much time passed while Joseph remained in prison?
2. What were the two dreams of Pharaoh?
3. What is implied by the fact that God's revelation came to Pharaoh in the form of dreams rather than some other form?
4. What features of Pharaoh's dreams were things natural and common in the land of Egypt?
5. What features of the king's dreams were things that could not happen in real life?
6. What was Pharaoh's first attempt to learn the meaning of his dreams?
7. Why is it surprising that the Egyptian wise men were not able to interpret the dreams?
8. How can we explain the wise men's failure to interpret the king's dreams?
9. What confession did the chief butler make?
10. What preparation was necessary before Joseph could be presented at the court of Pharaoh?
11. What statement of Joseph indicates that he was a humble and true servant of God?

pose of God. First, Pharaoh's dreams are God's way of getting His servant Joseph out of prison. Secondly, Pharaoh's dreams proceed from the compassion of God on the people of Egypt and neighboring countries. There are to be seven years of famine, but in the mercy of God these will be preceded by seven good years; and in the mercy of God this is revealed to the king of Egypt in advance so that wise preparations can be made and the suffering of the seven bad years somewhat mitigated.

Thus in the affairs of Egypt and the dreams of Pharaoh, as these proceed from the providence of God, we see both God's general compassion on His creatures, and His special favor to His elect. Both God's compassion on human suffering and His special redemptive purpose connected with the seed of Abraham are seen at work in this history. The immediate purpose is to prevent or mitigate suffering in Egypt; the long-range (redemptive) purpose is to preserve alive that portion of the human race from which the Messiah, the Seed of the woman, must finally come.

Having declared the meaning of the dreams to Pharaoh, Joseph adds some wise counsel (41:33-36). He proposes that a "discreet and wise" man be found and appointed as food administrator of the land of Egypt, to have supervision over officers who shall collect and store one-fifth of the crops of grain during the seven good years, so that this surplus can be rationed out to the people during the seven years of famine which are sure to follow, "that the land perish not through the famine."

"And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh" (41:37). Apparently neither Pharaoh nor his advisors thought of questioning the truth of Joseph's interpretation of the dreams, nor the divine source of the dreams themselves. In connection with this, no doubt the testimony of the chief butler to the reliability of Joseph's interpretation of dreams carried much weight. Yet beyond this, we may see a special operation of God. Did no Egyptian official become jealous of the honor and prominence about to be bestowed upon a foreigner just removed from prison? Did none of the Egyptian magicians and wise men become irritated by their own lowered prestige in comparison with that of this newcomer? Apparently not. We can see in this the special working of God, who brings His purposes to pass without fail. It is truly astonishing that a foreign slave, just out of prison where he had been put for alleged crime, should suddenly be entrusted with the highest and most responsible position in the kingdom, subordinate only to Pharaoh himself. And that this should occur, as it seems to have, without delay or opposition, is an even stronger proof of the wondrous working of God. We would naturally expect the Egyptian magicians, wise men and politicians to be intensely jealous. Yet there is no indication of the slightest opposition to Joseph. We can only wonder what Potiphar's wife may have thought of the turn of events!

The proposal is not only good in the eyes of Pharaoh, but also "in the eyes of all his servants" (41:37). Pharaoh decides that no person can be found better qualified than Joseph himself to be the food administrator of Egypt, clothed with almost unlimited powers to carry out his program of conserving grain during the good years and rationing it out during the years of famine.

"Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. . . See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt" (41:40, 41). This grant of authority is symbolized by the transfer of Pharaoh's ring from his own hand to Joseph's hand. This would be a signet ring used for authenticating documents — a sort of "power of attorney" granted to Joseph, so that his acts and decrees will be of the same authority as those of Pharaoh himself. To the ring are added clothing of fine linen, and a gold chain about his neck. Moreover Joseph is made to ride in the second chariot of Egypt, while runners ahead of him cry "Bow the knee!" Pharaoh adds that without Joseph shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt, implying that absolute powers have been conferred upon him. What a change in the circumstances of Joseph from the day when his brothers stripped him of his coat of many colors and dropped him into a pit to starve to death, and later sold him to a caravan of merchants for twenty pieces of silver!

For Egyptian social standing it was also necessary that Joseph be a married man. Accord-

ingly, Pharaoh provides for this too. Joseph is given an Egyptian name, Zaphnath-Paaneah. The meaning of this name is uncertain. It may mean "abundance of life" or some related idea. For his wife Joseph is given a lady of high rank, Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. On was the city where the worship of the sun-god was centered. Both the names, Asenath and Potiphera, seem to have idolatrous connotations. But we may certainly suppose that following her marriage to Joseph Asenath was converted from the errors and superstitions of Egyptian paganism to faith in the one true God, the Lord, whom Joseph worshipped. Leupold suggests that Joseph's marriage to the daughter of such an important and prominent Egyptian was calculated to neutralize whatever prejudice may have existed against him as a foreigner.

Questions:

1. What special emphasis is found in Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams?
2. Why did God reveal the future to Pharaoh by two dreams rather than by just one?
3. What was the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams?
4. What two purposes of God can be discerned in Pharaoh's dreams?
5. What counsel did Joseph give to Pharaoh after interpreting the dreams?
6. How can we explain the fact that there seemed to be no prejudice against Joseph or opposition to his appointment?
7. What powers did Pharaoh confer upon Joseph?
8. What symbols of authority were given to Joseph?
9. What Egyptian name was given to Joseph? What may its meaning be?
10. Why was it necessary, from the Egyptian point of view, for Joseph to be a married man?
11. Who became Joseph's wife?
12. What may we suppose as to her religion before and after her marriage to Joseph?

(To be continued)

Lord, grant us eyes to see, and ears to hear
 And souls to love, and minds to understand,
 And confidence of hope, and filial fear. . . .
 Lord, grant us what Thou wilt, and what Thou wilt
 Deny, and fold us in Thy peaceful fold;
 Not as the world gives, give to us Thine own;
 Inbuild us where Jerusalem is built
 With walls of jasper, and with streets of gold,
 And Thou, Thyself, Lord Christ, the corner-stone.

— Christina G. Rossetti

Reviews of Religious Books

The favorable reviewing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Within the limits of the editorial policy of *Blue Banner Faith and Life* each reviewer is solely responsible for the opinions expressed in his reviews. Please purchase books from your book dealer or direct from the publishers; do not send orders to the manager of this magazine.

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, published monthly by Progressive Calvinism League, 366 East 166th St., South Holland, Ill. Annual subscription rate: students, \$1.00; others, \$2.00.

This little magazine is now in its second year. Published by a private organization, the Progressive Calvinism League, its background is orthodox Calvinism of Dutch antecedents. The founders of the Progressive Calvinism League are members of the Christian Reformed Church. The contents of the magazine, however, are not limited to matters of particular concern to that denomination, but include discussions of basic issues which should be matters of concern to those who profess the Reformed Faith, in whatever denomination they may hold membership.

Progressive Calvinism is a serious call to hard thinking. It challenges positions that may often be held on merely traditional grounds. To quote from a recent issue:

"A young Calvinist who, as the result of his religious education, has affection for Calvinism can well take as his goal the thorough study and systematic re-examination of Calvinism, and its restatement in **modern** terms. What he needs for that purpose is some ability; a capacity for hard work in religion and in all of the sciences, especially the praxeological sciences (social sciences). What he needs above all is honesty and intellectual integrity. He must be more than a repeater of what Calvinists in a previous age have taught. There is not, in fact, anything that Calvin himself taught that should not be re-examined . . . Progressive Calvinism also has that general aim, namely, to **analyze systematically every important Calvinist problem**. What we shall do will at best be only a small fragment of the work that should be done" (April, 1956, pp. 98-9). Another recent issue states that the magazine is devoted to **liberty** and **noncoercion** and **meekness** (May, 1956, p. 129). This statement gives what may be regarded as the keynote of the magazine's viewpoint with regard to the field of government or the state: it stands opposed, on Biblical grounds, to "big government," arbitrary power and coercive infringement by the state of the proper liberty of the individual, the family and other spheres of human society.

To give our readers some idea of the contents, we shall comment briefly on some of the

articles in recent issues. The April, 1956 issue contains a significant two-page article on **The Decline of the Ministry**. After stating and illustrating the proposition that the Protestant ministry "is not presently in such great repute as it was formerly" and adding that the condition of the churches is one of "mental confusion and faithlessness", the article submits "for consideration as true" several ideas as to the reason for the present "decline of the ministry." These are: (1) "That most of what the churches have been accepting from the 'world' has hurt the churches." (2) "That the churches have largely become mere sounding boards or megaphones for ideas not derived from Scripture." (3) "That the churches do not testify to any significant extent against the real evils in the world but against trifling or even spurious evils or evils perpetrated by the weak." (4) "That the churches do not understand the structure of modern society and that therefore their social ideas are erroneous." (5) "That the churches must have a new reformation, if they wish to become influential again." These alleged reasons for the decline of the ministry are obviously controversial, but an article such as this is provocative in the best sense; it challenges people's mental complacency and stirs them up to think seriously.

Another article in the same issue is entitled **Polygyny in Nigeria** ("polygyny" is sometimes called "polygamy"). This article discusses a practical problem existing in the African mission field of the Christian Reformed Church. The article criticizes church leaders and makers of mission policy for regarding polygyny in Nigeria as a problem in itself, without serious attempt to analyze the social causes of the practice and to change them. "We are not convinced that a genuinely Biblical approach has been made to the polygyny problem in Nigeria. We consider the existing solution in Nigeria to be a defective solution; the thing to do is to alter the circumstances that superinduce polygyny . . . Take away the reason for polygyny and the institution will die a natural death. Why talk about the sin of polygyny or excuse it as ignorance when there is no real attempt made to reduce **infant mortality?**" (April, 1956, p. 121).

The May, 1956 issue is divided between a discussion of **Academic Freedom at Calvin College** and an article entitled **Sex is Not Sin**. In the

former it is argued that in a private school controlled by parents for the benefit of minor children, academic freedom can exist only by the consent of the parents and to the extent that they deem proper. The second article undertakes to present a rational discussion of Biblical teaching on the ethics of sex. The position taken is that sexual desire and activity, being based on the Creation and not on the Fall of man, cannot be sinful in themselves; they are sinful only when used in a morally irresponsible manner. Scripture makes the parties to a marriage responsible to each other and to society. Where the law of the State does not insist that sex activity must be responsible in this sense, the law is contrary to Scripture and harmful to society, and should be disregarded by the Church, which must always obey God rather than men.

The June, 1956 issue is wholly devoted to a discussion of the subject of money. Starting with a profession of belief in the doctrine of total depravity, the magazine argues for the sanctity of the gold standard for currency, and against the manipulation of currency by the government. The devaluation of the American dollar is held to be basically immoral, and the United States Government is held to be guilty of violation of the moral law by tampering with the value of the dollar.

The reviewer wishes to commend the Progressive Calvinism League for its manifest loyalty to Scripture, which is truly radical (in the best sense of the term) and for its courage in facing difficult and sometimes embarrassing problems. Certainly a publication such as this which seeks to face serious problems of our day with light rather than with heat is performing a real service in the Kingdom of God. It is not to be expected that the reader of a magazine which deals largely in controversial issues will agree with every position taken or with the implied exegesis of every text of Scripture that is cited. But every serious reader will be challenged to think hard about beliefs and positions which he may have accepted uncritically in the past, and to hold fast that which is found to be truly based upon the Word of God.

— J. G. Vos

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS, by Joseph Parker. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan. 1956 reprint, pp. 272. \$2.75.

Joseph Parker, the author of this book, was an English Nonconformist divine who lived 1830-1902. Prominent in English Congregationalist circles, he exerted an immense influence as the preacher of the City Temple of London. His sermons and expositions of Scripture are characterized by originality of presentation and a sort of rapid colloquial eloquence which are very striking.

The volume we are reviewing is not a commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, nor can

it properly be called an exposition of the Epistle. Rather, it is a series of meditations upon selected statements of the Epistle, in which many teachings of Ephesians are omitted altogether or given only the barest passing mention. For example, the author starts his study at chapter 1, verses 22 and 23, with the theme of "the Church, which is His body." Thus the very strong emphasis on predestination and salvation by grace which is found in chapter 1 verses 1-21 is omitted completely.

The book makes fascinating reading, and contains many true and helpful teachings of a very practical nature. As a specimen we shall quote a few sentences from pages 256-7, where the author is speaking about the use of "the whole armor of God":

"The enemy stopped my prayer yester morning, but I got it back in the evening; the Lord was more than the enemy. My soul's opponent endeavoured to tempt me to commit myself to false principles and hazardous issues, and just whilst I was thinking whether on the whole it might not be better just to give way in this instance, the Lord swept the devil and his tricks out of my road, and I came to church, the sanctuary, and the altar, and it was well with me. And it will be well with you, suffering brother. You have your difficulties at home, in your business, in your church, and principally in your own heart. Be strong in the Lord; never try to stop the inrushing stream of fire which shoots from the volcano of hell with the last tract on secularism, socialism, agnosticism, and the various other little inventions of irresponsible minds. Understand that you are now hearing a man speak who has been through the whole case, who has suffered, so far as man may have suffered on this earth, the torments of the lost, and who has had to fight the enemy at midnight, and who found out soon that he could not fight that enemy with straws, but only with the steel of Heaven, the panoply of eternity. The Lord knows, therefore, what we are doing. He says in the first instance, 'Withstand' — be obstinate, do your very best, uttermost, that, having done all, you may get away from 'withstand' into 'withstand' without the 'with' — and having done all may stand. We owe everything, under God, to the men who have followed that policy."

In view of the obvious good in this book, the reviewer is truly sorry that it is seriously marred by unsound tendencies. First of all, a couple of heretical statements should be noted. On page 109 the author states: "Children are so good that we baptize them; we receive them into our arms with this certificate, written in light and perfumed in the incense of the morning, 'Of such is the kingdom of God,' and we baptize them with the dew of the morning." Needless to say, this sentence cannot be reconciled with the orthodox doctrines of infant baptism and original sin. Children are not baptized because they are "so good"; they are baptized because they are sinners, but by God's

covenant of grace entitled to receive the outward sign and seal of the covenant relationship. When the Bible speaks of children and says "Of such is the kingdom of God" it is not the goodness of children that is referred to — they are not good, they are sinful — but their unsophisticated, trustful attitude toward their parents.

Again, on page 74 there are found the following sentences: "Emerson said that when Dr. Lyman Beecher got to heaven, and found Dr. Channing there, he would say, 'Why, Channing, are you here?' And Channing would answer, 'Why, Beecher, are **you** here?' There is one faith, and until we realize the faith, rather than the creed, we shall have divisions and alienations and controversies, out of which livelihoods are made."

It would be difficult to compose two sentences that would more totally deny the importance of doctrinal orthodoxy and more completely assert the modern notion that it does not really matter what a man believes. Emerson was a Unitarian preacher, a denier of the Deity of Jesus Christ, who gave up his pastorate because he did not believe that Christ appointed the Lord's Supper as a permanent sacrament. Channing was also a Unitarian, a leading opponent of the doctrine of the Trinity, and a rejecter of the inspiration of the Scriptures and the Deity of Christ. Lyman Beecher was alternately a Congregationalist and a Presbyterian. He was an opponent of Unitarianism, though he himself was tried for heresy in 1836, but acquitted. Dr. Parker's sentences cited above seem to imply that the doctrinal differences between these men are of no importance — they had different creeds, but they had the same faith, and of course all went to heaven when they died.

Throughout the book there is a most unfortunate polemic against creeds and exact doctrinal orthodoxy. "When we are more anxious about the faith than about the creed we shall have a real Church in the country" (p. 73). This false antithesis between "faith" and "creed" occurs repeatedly in the book. We might ask, how can anyone have "faith" without believing something definite about something or someone? As soon as we say what we believe, we have a creed. Faith without creed is a mere abstraction.

The author's remarkable ability in handling the English language has often led him to deal in pyramided bursts of rhetoric without careful attention to the exact statements of the text of Scripture. Exegesis is here too often washed aside in a flow of marvellous language. The author is evidently aware of this and even glories in it. For example, he says on page 107, "We are reading in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. It is more like walking through a forest than dallying in a garden. We must in any case give up his grammar and acquaint ourselves with the music of his soul." On this the reviewer would comment: We must in any case NOT give up Paul's grammar. The Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God. God has revealed his truth to men in words, which are

connected according to grammar. We will never grasp the message of God, nor even the music of Paul's soul, except by a careful, exact study of his words and grammar.

Possibly the "dead orthodoxy" of Parker's day stimulated his antipathy to creeds and to exact study of the text of Scripture. But such an emphasis is terribly unfortunate at the present day. What we need today is not less emphasis on creeds and exact Biblical scholarship, but more — much more. The antithesis between "faith" and "creed" is a false one; so is the antithesis between "grammar" and "music." It is a pity that the good in this volume is so largely neutralized by this type of false antithesis.

— J. G. Vos

BY GRACE ALONE, by Herman Kuiper. 1955, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan. pp. 165. \$2.50.

This book by Professor Kuiper of Calvin Seminary is a study in Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. The title accurately indicates the theme of the book, that every step of the way of salvation is taken by means of divine grace. "It is God and God alone who saves. In every element of the saving process it is God's almighty power which makes this process efficacious unto actual salvation" (p. 10).

The importance of this study is realized when we note how prone Christians are to magnify the work of man in salvation. The Bible doctrine of *sola gratia* has never been a popular teaching. "There have always been many and there still are many who, while admitting that a sinner cannot attain salvation wholly apart from divine grace, nevertheless hold that it is man who steps in at the most crucial point, and determines his own salvation" (p. 11).

A chapter on the history of the doctrine of salvation gives us a helpful sketch of the various views of the way of salvation that have been held, from those of the early church fathers down to the current teachings of the crisis theologians, Barth and Brunner.

Following this is a chapter on The Ultimate Basis of Salvation. The source of all saving graces in the life of the believer is said to be the believer's vital union with Christ; but the ultimate basis of salvation is the plan or covenant of redemption, including the divine counsels of electing love.

Emphasis is placed throughout the book on the *ordo salutis*, that is, the correct order of the various steps of the process by which God applies the blessings of salvation to sinners. The question of order is of crucial significance to a true proclamation of the salvation message. Most Protestant evangelism is based on the notion that the new birth, regeneration, depends upon and follows the decision-act of man's faith and conversion, while

the Reformed doctrine of grace alone reverses this order and makes regeneration the prerequisite to saving faith, conversion, justification, sanctification, etc. Otherwise stated, popular Christianity holds that sinners are born anew because they embrace Christ as their Savior, while biblical Christianity holds that men are enabled to embrace the Savior because by God's free grace alone they have been born anew unto salvation.

This is not to say, however, that there is little place in the divine scheme of salvation for energetic faith on man's part. On the contrary, faith occupies a central place in the way of salvation (p. 92). The author constantly stresses the necessity of faith as the appropriating organ by which we come into personal possession of the righteousness of Christ in both justification and sanctification. While faith is the prerequisite or condition of justification, the ground of justification is the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ. Nor is justification mere pardon on the basis of Christ's merits. It also includes the imputing of the righteousness of Christ to the sinner, by which he is declared just before the holy God. Both of these aspects of the doctrine of justification by faith, as the author has set them forth, need fuller emphasis in present day evangelical preaching.

The common notion that sanctification is a joint work of God and man is rejected. "God and God alone is the author of sanctification" (p. 121). Although man is called to exercise faith and put forth strenuous effort in the way of holiness, the power to proceed comes from the Spirit of God who dwells in the believer's heart. The chapter on sanctification includes a good discussion of the part played by faith in sanctifying grace (pp. 125-128), and in addition, several pages dealing with the question of sinless perfection in the present life.

In keeping with his theme of grace alone, Dr. Kuiper prefers to speak of "presevation" rather than "The perseverance of the saints". While it is true that God keeps Christians, through faith, unto salvation, it is also true that Christians persevere, by grace, unto the end. Human responsibility and activity is as vital here as in the elements of faith, conversion and sanctification. Hence some Reformed theologians prefer the term "perseverance", as employed in the Westminster Confession of Faith, because it denotes the engagement of our lives in a strenuous and perpetual devotion to those means which God has ordained for the accomplishment of his saving purpose.

The last step in salvation, glorification, sets before us the complete realization of salvation, namely, final deliverance from the power and presence of sin and evil and entrance into the realm of glory. It is a glorious hope which the author has set before his readers.

The theology presented here is not speculative but is fully attested by Scripture. A textual

index contains references to more than 225 passages of Scripture, and most of these are quoted in full in the text of the book — a very helpful feature.

The author writes in a non-technical style for the most part and in terms easily understood by most adult Christians. This is a popular work on an important division of systematic theology. At the present time when there are so many confusing voices representing American Protestantism and all claiming to be true Christianity, this should prove a very helpful study.

— Joseph A. Hill

KEEPING THE HEART, by John Flavel (Volume I). 1955, pp. 96, paper cover. 75 cents.

PRAYER, by John Bunyan; **THE RETURN OF PRAYERS**, by Thomas Goodwin (Volume II). 1955, pp. 42, 60, paper cover. \$1.00. Sovereign Grace Book Club, 413 S.E. First St., Evansville, Ind.

These Puritan Classics remain a part of the church's great devotional literature. Although the style is somewhat archaic, the truths expressed are timeless. The series of reprints of which these are the first two volumes includes works by Richard Baxter, Jonathan Edwards, John Owen, Charles H. Spurgeon and other notable divines. Such devotions, if reserved for Sabbath afternoon meditation, would sanctify the day and make it a delight.

Keeping the Heart is a detailed exposition and application of Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The author gives directions for acquiring and maintaining purity of heart through diligent attention to the duties of holy devotion. The theme which is treated exhaustively is as follows: "The keeping and right managing of the heart in every condition, is one great business of a Christian's life" (p. 3) The author names several seasons in which it is especially needful for Christians to keep the heart free of impure motives, desires, attitudes, etc. Among them are, the time of prosperity, when providence smiles upon us; the time of adversity, when providence frowns upon us; the time of Zion's troubles, when the church is oppressed; the time of danger and distraction; the time of outward wants; the season of duty; at times when we receive injuries and abuses from men; in times of great trials, temptations, doubting and spiritual darkness; suffering for the faith; in sickness and the shadow of death.

In our day when so many are turning to religion as a way out of personal problems, it is well to remind ourselves that the chief duty of Christians is that of holy living as the means of glorifying God. Many are turning to Christ as the Savior from the consequences of sin without turning from their sins. While Christianity is not a means of escape from difficulties, we believe that

the Christian practice of keeping the heart is the cure for much of the personal trouble in human life. For it is in the heart that each person's relationship to God is centered, and it is in the heart that all the issues of life are settled. We recommend **Keeping the Heart** to all who are seeking a richer, happier Christian life.

The treatise on **Prayer**, dated 1660, comes from the heart and pen of the author of **Pilgrim's Progress**. It is evident that John Bunyan knew how to pray. Yet it is not only from personal experience but principally from the Scriptures that he teaches us to pray.

His creedlike definition of prayer is worth memorizing: "Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God hath promised, or according to the Word for the good of the Church, with submission, in faith, to the will of God" (p. 1).

After enlarging upon this Bunyan expounds 1 Corinthians 14:15, "I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." The emphasis in these sections is on the work of the Holy Spirit in enabling the believer to pray effectually and intelligently. Following this is "The Application" containing practical considerations and hortatory remarks — a form of discourse that is all too frequently omitted in present day sermonizing.

The Return of Prayers, by Thomas Goodwin, is a full discussion of the Christian's duty to expect and recognize the answers to his petitions. It is our duty (and privilege) not only to pray, but also to observe how our prayers are answered. We should follow the example of Habakkuk, who offered a prayer against the tyranny of Nebuchadnezzar; and having ended it, he begins the second chapter thus: "I will stand upon my watch tower, and see what he will answer me."

The author would place the praying saint in the position of a merchant ordering goods from afar, who having every reason to expect them, awaits their arrival and checks off each item in his ledger. Likewise the praying Christian should take account of each petition and mark how it is answered. There are ten excellent chapters dealing with a commonly neglected area of Christian duty. The chapters are subdivided, so that it could easily be used for family readings after meals. The reader will be impressed by the author's constant appeal to the Scriptures for examples of answered prayer and of patient waiting for answers to prayer.

Studies of this type will do much to help us cultivate the gift of prayer, so that our prayers, instead of being stereotyped and full of "vain repetition", are informed by Scripture and ground-

ed in the promises of the covenant. These little volumes represent the highest type of devotional literature.

— Joseph A. Hill

THE "EVILS OF CALVINISM", by Frank B. Beck. Published by the author, Millerton, N. Y. 8-page booklet. 10 cents; \$1 per dozen.

The author of this booklet is a Baptist pastor who is a convinced Calvinist. He correctly states that the Reformer John Calvin did not originate the system of truth called Calvinism: "Calvin got it from St. Augustine, as well as from Scripture, and Augustine got it from Paul the Apostle, and Paul received it, not of man, but of God" After stating some of the distinctive doctrines of Calvinism, the author calls attention to the common error of calling those who believe these doctrines "hyper-Calvinists" when they are simply Calvinists.

The alleged evils of Calvinism which the author discusses, and which he shows to be simply the teachings of the Bible, are as follows: 1. Calvinism abases man. 2. Calvinism exalts God. 3. Calvinism honors Christ's death. 4. Calvinism recognizes the power of the Holy Spirit. 5. Calvinism magnifies the grace of God. 6. Calvinism gives eternal assurance to believers. 7. Calvinism gives the right enthusiasm to evangelism. The discussion is Biblical and convincing.

Finally, the author mentions some evils that can never be laid at the door of Calvinism. These are: 1. The denial of man's moral responsibility. 2. Destroying evangelistic zeal. 3. Belief in salvation by works. 4. Belief in a defeated God or Christ who tries to save men but fails.

This booklet is commended to our readers as a good discussion of an important subject. It would be a good tract to place in church tract-display racks.

— J. G. Vos

HOW TO PREACH (?) AND FOOL THE PEOPLE, by Frank B. Beck. Published by the author, Millerton, N. Y. 4-page folder; no price stated.

This tract presents a strong contrast between true and false preaching of the Gospel. A faithful and clear warning is issued against rationalists who deny the supernatural features of the Bible, and against those evangelicals who preach only on selected subjects which are palatable to their hearers, while omitting such unpopular themes as hell and predestination. Over against these types is placed the faithful minister of the Word of God, who not only believes the whole Bible but preaches its whole message consistently and fearlessly.

The style seems rather colloquial and in places

even flippant, which is unnecessary and seems to detract from the impact of this tract on a serious subject. "Jonah," "shouldest," and "stingily" are misprinted.

— J. G. Vos.

IMMORTALITY, by Loraine Boettner. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1956, pp. 159. \$2.50.

This experienced writer in the field of theology, in which he specialized at Princeton under Dr. Hodge, has written a book in popular yet impeccable style on one of the most important of doctrines, that is a delight to read because of its excellent English style, and at the same time a delight to the heart of every Christian theologian, expressing Calvinism well and distinctly. Dr. Boettner deserves even greater fame than he has, representing as he does the tradition of true Calvinism, and the tradition of good style that once characterized most of the utterances of our foremost preachers and scholars. It is refreshing to read through this book of 159 pages, so crammed full of good sense, good logic, and apt expression.

It is not unnatural that I should be especially interested in his most able treatment of Spiritualism (pp. 137-159), since my parents had at one time fallen into his pernicious error, and I was brought up in close association with various "mediums" and fortune-tellers. His quotation from Evangelist Biederwolf did me much good: "There is good reason to believe that all of the spiritualistic phenomena is produced by the mediums themselves or by their helpers. Even the most famous mediums have been detected in fraud, and some of them have been exposed time and again as morally bad characters. And if they cheat sometimes, how do we know that they do not cheat all the time?" He also quotes to good effect from that genuine expert, Houdini, who saw these fakers as what they are. On the stage these tricks have the name of "mentalism," and are well recognized as part of the magician's stock in trade. Dr. Boettner does not hesitate to say that Spiritualism violates the moral code of Christianity, which of course it does.

Dr. Boettner's excellent logic readily disposes of such unchristian dogmas as purgatory. He supports Calvinism ably by both Scripture and logic, and also by selections from men like Charles Hodge, William C. Robinson and Louis Berkhof, as well as John Calvin and a carefully selected quotation from John Wesley.

Readers of all sorts, from seminary professors to the ordinary Christian, will find great delight in this book. With the neat simplicity of his style all will be pleased, for it is both correct and unstilted; and since his matter is biblical, no orthodox Christian can properly take exception to it. Altogether, it is a book worth room on anyone's shelf.

— John Burton Thwing

THE STORY OF STEWARDSHIP IN THE U.S.A., by George A. E. Salstrand. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1956, pp. 169. \$3.50.

To the statistically-minded, this may prove a valuable reference work; it treats of the subject of stewardship (primarily of possessions) historically, spreading its research over many if not most of the "important" denominations, the present-day Covenanters being omitted.

Dr. Salstrand, for what reason I am not sure, acts in an obscurantist manner regarding doctrinal matters, glossing over, in his account of the "progress" of the Presbyterian Church, the whole controversy that centered about Dr. Machen and the ordination of men who would not affirm belief even in the bare essentials of the Christian religion; yet he quotes Dr. "Spear" (Robert E. Speer) quite freely enough on the subject of missionary giving. In accounting for a diminution in giving in that church, he is silent about the "mandate" of its General Assembly which declared that each person must give through its mission board, if he were not to be adjudged guilty of an offence equal to that of refusing the communion. Many indeed were those for whom this oppressive, though quite illegal, "act" of the General Assembly was the last straw in causing their giving through the "regular" channels of that denomination to cease.

Needless to say, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, born of the struggle of those times, is not even so much as mentioned. It is really not hard at all to form a **suspicion** as to where the writer stands, especially after his favorable opinion concerning the General Council. The nearest he comes to frankness in this matter is in his reference to the New World Movement, which failed for hundreds of thousands of dollars, all of which was paid for later by individual denominations and donors. The "fundamentalist-modernist controversy," he imagines, or seems to imagine, was confined to the "Watchman-Examiner" and other Baptist publications and institutions, and occurred incidentally in the "Northern" Presbyterian denomination. He (it seems) carefully skirts all mention of the personalities involved among the Presbyterians, though he mentions the names of Massee and van Osdel among the Baptists. The manner in which he deals with it makes the whole controversy seem like a very mild tempest in a very small teapot. Yet it left eventually two more denominations added historically to the already large roll of Presbyterian denominations; and the withdrawal of many, and the uncertainty of many more regarding the use of their gifts to missions, must have had a considerable effect upon the distribution of the tithe. As a matter of fact, I think Dr. Salstrand could be safely challenged to prove that it did not have some effect. It is certain that the approximately quarter of a million dollars left by Dr. Machen's will to the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions was not sent through channels of the Presbyterian

Church in the U.S.A.; and the known utterances of Dr. Machen give us an unmistakable reason for this fact; he, like many others of less wealth, completely mistrusted the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and had actually taken part in an attempt to change its membership only a few short years before his death of pneumonia while as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church he was on a visit to home mission fields in South Dakota.

In spite of the fact that she has since become a well-known secular author, Mrs. Pearl Buck is not even so much as mentioned in this painstaking work on tithing; yet she was a prominent figure in the controversy, Dr. Machen claiming (and proving) that she was heretical in her teaching under the Mission Board. Being a Christian gentleman, he omitted all mention of her character or life; but the newspapers have not been thus considerate of her.

Nor is Harry Emerson Fosdick, who, in a manner of speaking, touched off the whole conflagration given space for his name. Yet there is no doubt that when the whole story is told, there will be space for both these heretics' names.

On the surface, because of the wide coverage of denominations, it might seem that Dr. Salstrand is quite fair in his treatment of the subject; but appearances are not always indicative of the truth. I know nothing of Dr. Salstrand except what his book tells; but I cannot recommend it to the general public as an honest, complete picture of "The Story of Stewardship in the U.S.A."

— John Burton Thwing

GLORY AWAITS ME, by William Goulooze, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1956, pp. 111. \$2.00.

The author of this book has fought a losing battle with cancer since 1946. He was released from his suffering September 5, 1955 and received the glory that awaited him. Through his suffering he wrote several books and booklets on suffering.

This book was dictated during the months preceding his death and published afterwards as a memorial to him. While this book was written especially for those who are suffering or are near the end of their earthly pilgrimage, it is one which could be read with profit for every child of God. In these days of materialism we need such a book to awaken us to the glory which awaits us in heaven.

Meditations on ten texts make up the ten chapters of this book. They are meditation at its best, for the author is constantly teaching. He is not just presenting sentimental thoughts, but is instructing out the Word of God. A few quotations will show the high value of this book.

"In our struggle many people never see the full glory of being children of God. Our text

writer tries to tie these together when he says, 'We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' He does not answer all the questions concerning our coming heavenly existence. He does not unfold for us the full riches of that glory and the full meaning of its physical and spiritual significance. Even John does not know these details; but he does know that when Christ shall appear we shall be like Him and we shall see Him as He is. This is enough for the Apostle John. This ought to be enough for us. This should be enough for us. This should create in us an awareness of the reality of the glory that now is ours, and anticipation of that which shall be complete when life is finished" (p. 16).

"Yet there is one purpose and one desire that all of us should seek to cultivate. We should make our living and our dying, our funeral and our possible memorial a God-glorifying reality, so that to Him may be given all praise, honor and glory. . . . There is hope for our loved ones and hope for us. The grave is not our goal, there is much that awaits us beyond. And this glory should not be considered one that is only blessing and strength to the individual who passes. It is a glory in which God is in the center and man His worshipper enlightened by His grace and glory. . . . 'The word of God abideth forever' " (p. 52).

"Let us take courage and let us receive new enthusiasm from the Lord. Let us be assured of the fact that each one of us can say, 'Glory Awaits Me.' This should be a present reality for all of life, because of our present standing and the hope of our future relationship to Jesus Christ in all eternity" (p. 108).

It is regrettable that there are a few glaring errors in printing. We trust that there will be a wide circulation for this fine book.

— Philip W. Martin

THE SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST, by Richard Baxter. Sovereign Grace Book Club, 413 S. E. First St., Evansville, Ind. Photo reprint of 1840 edition, pp. 176. No price stated.

It has been said of Richard Baxter "that if he had lived in primitive times he had been one of the fathers of the church." He was born in 1615 and died in 1691. He lived during days of trouble for the church in England. His works were various. Dr. Bates, preaching at his funeral, stated "that his books, for the number and variety of matter in them, make a library." The Saints' Everlasting Rest was written at a time when Baxter's health was in a languid condition. He was only 34 years of age and it manifests the marvelous maturity of his spiritual growth at that time.

This treatise is based on the text "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). The author deals with the meaning

of the term and then goes on to discuss the character of those for whom such rest is intended, the misery of those who lose the saints' rest, and the assurance of a title to such rest. Practical suggestions are given as to how a Christian should live a heavenly life upon earth, and emphasis is laid upon the necessity of cultivating a serious contemplation of heavenly realities.

While Baxter has been accused of endeavouring to steer a middle course between Calvinism and Arminianism there is nothing to fear in reading this work. Typical of the age in which it was written, the style is verbose and repetition abounds. There is much to reward the person who patiently and thoroughly studies this Puritan classic, and we commend this effort on the part of the Sovereign Grace Book Club, in making it available in such attractive volumes.

— Alexander Barkley

EXPOSITION OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, by Robert Haldane. Vol. II (Chap. 4-7), pp. 310. \$2.00. Vol. III (Chap. 8), pp. 160. \$2.00. Sovereign Grace Book Club, 413 S. E. First St., Evansville, Ind.

In Vol. II there is an exposition of chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, while Vol. III deals with chapter 8. The same high standard of analysing the teaching of each verse is maintained, and much helpful devotional material is provided. Haldane's sympathy for the Baptist position of total immersion is evidenced in his exposition of chap. 6. "The rite of baptism," he states, "exhibits Christians as dying, as buried, and as risen with Christ." Little effort is made to deal with the expression "Baptized into Jesus Christ" and its theological implications. Chap. 7 is interpreted as referring to the experience of the believer in the course of sanctification.

Almost the whole of Vol. III is devoted to the exposition of chap. 8. "This chapter," he writes, "presents a glorious display of the power of the Divine grace and of the provision which God has made for the consolation of His people." Included in this volume there is an excellent treatise on the "Sanctification of the Sabbath."

This is a useful and suggestive commentary for those who are not acquainted with the Greek.

— Alexander Barkley

THE GOSPEL OF THE SPIRIT, by Samuel Eyles Pierce. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1955, pp. 104. \$1.50.

This is a work of a Biblical scholar of the early nineteenth century. There are two parts. Part I consists of three chapters on "The Person and Office of the Holy Spirit." In these chapters the author deals with the Scriptural proofs for the personality of the Holy Spirit, His love to the elect and His work in the church.

Part II deals with "the Work of the Holy Spirit in the Redeemed" and embraces such doctrines as "The Holy Spirit in the Covenant of Grace" and the work of the Spirit in Regeneration, Conversion, Sanctification, Perseverance, Prayer and Preparation for Death.

Throughout this little volume the appeal is constantly to the Scriptures, both the Old Testament and the New. The influence of the Bible is reflected in the style and the book is easy to read.

The so-called Keswick movement has resulted in widespread Arminian teaching regarding sanctification and the Spirit-filled life. It is therefore gratifying to read such a work of intrinsic excellence. It is in a treatise like this that the corrective can be found for the error that is so widely propagated. For young Christians seeking earnestly to grow in grace, this book is worthy of commendation.

— Alexander Barkley

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD, by W. H. Griffith Thomas. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1955, pp. xv, 303. \$3.00.

These lectures were first delivered on the L. P. Stone Foundation at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1913. Dr. Griffith Thomas in his conclusion states, "It is admitted by all that we are living in difficult and solemn days. The outlook depresses the earnest soul, for wherever he turns he is conscious of elements of evil and trouble, and of strange conditions in the Church and in the world. Callousness becomes more defined; indifference more widespread; the love of many waxes cold; universal charity tends to tolerate many forms of false teaching, and as a result the clear witness of the Church to Christ is hindered" (p. 270). If this was true in 1913 it is just as descriptive of conditions in 1956. This is a timely reproduction of a useful and important book. It is not an exhaustive study of the subject, but it is comprehensive and abounds with suggestions for those wishing to read more widely.

The contents are arranged in four sections, dealing respectively with the Biblical Revelation, Historical Interpretation, Theological Formulation and Practical Application of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Many quotations are given from various writers including Swete, Smeaton, Moberly, Walker, Garvie, Moule, Forsyth, Denney, etc. Some of these writers held liberal views in the realm of Biblical criticism and in doctrine. While the quotations on the whole are sound there is no distinction made between the general views of the scholars quoted. The appearance of numerous quotations does not make reading tedious, for Dr. Thomas has shown skill in the choice of such. The reader, therefore, is enriched by these brief but suggestive introductions to some of the more important works on the Holy Spirit.

In a series of notes attention is directed to a large number of subsidiary topics such as "The Fulness of the Spirit," "Baptism of the Spirit," etc., and references are given to books in which these questions are more fully considered. The usefulness of the volume is also enhanced by the provision of an index of subjects, an index of authors and an index of texts.

Many publications from Dispensational, Arminian and Pentecostal sources are in wide circulation with resultant confusion regarding the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is with gratitude that we welcome the third edition of this important series of lectures by a scholar widely known for his devotion to the Scriptures and the depth of his spiritual experiences.

— Alexander Barkley

CHRIST'S BRETHREN, by Cecil J. Lowry. The Tabernacle Book Room, 425 10th St., Oakland, Calif. 1950, pp. 60, paper cover. 50 cents.

The author of this polemic against "the heresy of ultra-dispensationalism" was himself once in that school and wrote a book, "God's Plan for the Ages," in defence of it. He therefore writes from conviction brought upon him by the Spirit as he thought he did God service. His repudiation of his former associates is marked by courtesy to them.

Mr. Lowry defends the traditional view of the church as the one body of God's redeemed in both dispensations against the dispensational view that Old Testament prophecy has not a word to say about the church. Christ's brethren are those who love Him and do His will, not the racial stock of Israel. This is shown to be the belief of the Church from the Apostles down to the present time, except for the dispensational school arising about a century and a half ago.

At one point the author makes a rather puzzling statement: "We now approach the end of the second day of the Messiah" (p. 36). The context does not shed any light on whether this is some new "dispensationalism."

The work contains a great amount of information on the subject, including many quotations from many sources.

— E. Clark Copeland

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES AND THE MIND OF PAUL, by D. Guthrie. The Tyndale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London, W.C.1, England. 1956, pp. 44, paper cover. 1s. 6d. In U.S.A.: The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1444 N. Astor, Chicago 10, Ill.

The author of this 1955 Tyndale New Testament Lecture is Tutor in New Testament at London Bible College. The lecture is a clear, scholarly defense of the Pauline authorship of the Pas-

toral Epistles against the "Fictional Approach" of F. C. Baur, H. J. Holtzmann and Martin Dibelius; and the "Fragment Approach" of Credner, P. N. Harrison and B. S. Easton. The author's investigation is limited to the psychological factors involved in the problem, and results in clear evidence that the Pastorals are undoubtedly the work of the mature mind and experience of the author of the other ten Pauline Epistles, not of second or third century church leaders seeking to give authority to their teachings by writing over Paul's signature.

Among other things, in examining the vocabulary, doctrine, style and content determining the psychological factors, the author presents four valuable word charts to support his analysis, two of them being compiled, ironically enough, from P. N. Harrison's work in support of the "Fragment Approach."

The work is, of course, a technical one, but it is written in plain language with a simple style that an interested layman may well grasp. Such studies are most valuable in keeping pastors and laymen abreast of the theological thought of our day. The Graduate Fellowship of England is to be congratulated on its fine work in conducting these lectures and printing them for those of us who cannot hear them delivered.

— E. Clark Copeland

SOME MODERN RELIGIONS, by J. Oswald Sanders and J. Stafford Wright. The Tyndale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London, W.C. 1, England. 1956, pp. 61, paper cover. 2 shillings. In U.S.A.: The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1444 North Astor, Chicago 10, Ill.

The purpose of this work is to give the basic information necessary to compare the claims of some of the modern cults with the doctrines of evangelical Christianity. Christian Science, Seventh-Day Adventism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Spiritualism, Christadelphianism and Theosophy each have a chapter devoted to them. An appendix gives brief notes on Anthroposophy, Baha'ism, Cooneyites, I AM Cult, Mormonism, New Thought, Swedenborgianism, Unitarianism and the Unity School of Christianity.

A very brief historical sketch is given of each cult, followed by quotations from their own books presenting the doctrine taught concerning such things as God, the Trinity, Christ, Creation, the Atonement, the way of Salvation; then there is a general discussion of the cult. This is a most excellent method to follow as it presents their doctrines in their own words with Scripture set down beside them. For this we most heartily recommend it.

The reviewer finds the general discussion of Seventh-Day Adventism very weak for the following reason: It presents a false antithesis between law and grace. The Sabbath as a part of the

decatalogue was limited, it is said, to the Jewish nation and the land of Palestine in its application. The claim is made that the Sabbath was an integral part of a law which "disappeared" when Christ nailed it to His cross (Col. 2:14). It fails to make the proper distinction between the Christian's obligation to perform all the revealed will of God and salvation by works. Though it is shown that the Seventh Day has been superseded by the First Day, a false conception is given: "we do not observe the Lord's Day because we must, but because we may. We do so gladly and willingly from love to Him, and not because of legal restraint." Such half-truths are dangerous. Thus this section fails to present sound reasons for rejecting the Seventh-Day Adventist cult, though the former section gives a clear picture of their unscriptural views in general.

With this reservation, we recommend the work especially for Sabbath School teachers and youth workers who need to be able to point out clearly the pitfalls of the many vigorously propagated isms of our day.

— E. Clark Copeland

MISSION FIELDS TODAY, A BRIEF WORLD SURVEY, edited by A. J. Dain. The Inter-Varsity Fellowship (The Tyndale Press), 39 Bedford Square, London, W.C. 1, England. 1956, pp. 126, paper cover. 4 shillings. In U.S.A.: The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1444 North Astor, Chicago 10, Ill.

The British Co-Secretary of the World Evangelical Fellowship has done a valuable service to the Christian world in publishing this survey of the position of the main mission fields of the world today. The object of the work is to set forth as nearly as possible an up-to-date picture of the impact of the church and the task of the missionary. As the factors affecting the missionary and the young churches are very rapidly changing in these post-war years, the editor faced a most difficult task. He has so succeeded as to provide a most interesting and challenging work.

The editor gives a concrete picture of the situation through a number of statistical tables showing population, ratio of missionaries to population, size of local church, number of local workers, etc. Most of these statistics are taken from the World Christian Handbook for 1952. One wishes later figures had been available.

The short paragraph on Cyprus is of interest in that it is said that "in Nicosia, the capital, there is an American Academy, where, so it was reported, the Holy Spirit has been working among girl students, and where some of the Christians have been used in child evangelism" (p. 86). It is not known who provided the material on Cyprus.

This booklet should prove a challenging study for missionary societies and youth groups,

especially. It certainly stirs one with the sense of the vast unevangelized masses in comparison to the few laborers, and the many adversaries in the way.

— E. Clark Copeland

Tracts and Booklets published by the Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Belvidere Road, Phillipsburg, N. J.

All of these works are attractively bound, printed on good quality paper, presented in simple language, thoughtful and reasoned in approach, inviting attentive use. The Committee is to be commended for its splendid work in the presentation of the Reformed Faith.

THE ORDAINED LAMPSTAND, by Edwards E. Elliott. 1955, pp. 11, pocket size, paper cover. 10 cents.

In a day when much of the evangelistic message is focused on the individual, this tract is a timely statement of the nature and form of the visible church and her responsibility to maintain a corporate witness in confession and life for the glory of God. Pastors would do well to see that a supply of this tract is on hand for distribution to their congregations and passed on when read.

— E. Clark Copeland

ARE YOU A BIBLICAL BAPTIST? by George W. Marston. 1955, pp. 27, pocket size, paper cover. 15 cents.

A brief, yet exceptionally clear, statement of the Scriptural bases of infant baptism by sprinkling. The conclusions are that the meaning of the word "baptism" is not "immersion," but that it stands for spiritual union with Christ. No New Testament incident describes immersion as the mode of baptism; on the contrary, the New Testament term concerning the application of the blood of Christ for cleansing is "sprinkling" (Heb. 9:10-23), taken from the Old Testament. Baptism is the seal of the Covenant of Grace, given by Christ in place of the previous seal, circumcision. The application of Baptism is determined by the terms of the Covenant of Grace. This clearly includes the children of believers both in the New Testament and in the Old Testament. Infant baptism is one of the many things clearly taught in the New Testament, but not directly commanded in it. We heartily recommend this statement for the confirmation of Covenant parents and the persuasion of others.

— E. Clark Copeland

DO YOU BELIEVE? by Edward J. Young. 1954, pp. 37, paper cover. 25 cents.

This excellent tract is designed to lead an unbeliever to Christ. Dr. Young begins by confronting the sinner with his sinful attempt to suppress the knowledge of God that he has by the

light of nature and the Scriptures. From the outset the reader cannot escape the fact that he is a sinner of such a nature that he cannot be saved except by the wholly unmerited, free grace of God, and that no action or condition in himself brings God to save him. It ends with the often neglected, yet truly Scriptural, injunction that the person who has confessed faith in Christ should seek membership in the church as the necessary expression of his confession and means of his growth in grace.

This tract will serve a very valuable purpose especially among Covenant young people who have come to the saving knowledge of Christ. A bit briefer statement might have wider use among the unchurched. We would like to see more tracts of this type.

— E. Clark Copeland

A MESSAGE TO THOUGHTFUL INQUIRERS, by Henry W. Coray. 1954, pp. 11, paper cover. 15 cents.

A truly Reformed Gospel tract for the unsaved, so interestingly written as to stimulate inquiry into the way of salvation. Mr. Coray's vivid style, interesting illustrations and Reformed presentation of the Gospel challenge the reader to listen earnestly and with open mind to God's plea to come to Him. This tract is most heartily recommended.

— E. Clark Copeland

CONFESSING CHRIST, by Calvin K. Cummings. 1955, pp. 62, paper cover. 35 cents.

The author calls his book a primer of the Reformed Faith to be used with communicant classes. There are six chapters whose titles describe the contents and unity of the course: 1. The Bible — the Basis of our Confession. 2. Christ — The One We Confess. 3. Repentance and Faith — Requirements of a True Confession. 4. The Christian Life — Living our Confession. 5. The Church — Unit-ing with Others in our Confession. 6. The Sacraments and Prayer — Means of Grace for the Christian Confession.

The simple language and style, references, questions and topics for discussion make it a fine pupil's book as well as a pastor's book. It will not wear out with the completion of the communicant's Class.

— E. Clark Copeland

(End of booklets pub. by Comm. on Christian Education)

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR FOR GOD'S SAKE, by Herman Hoeksema. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1955, pp. 195. \$2.50.

This is the 9th volume of an Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism. It covers the Catechism's

treatment of the second table of the Law in a very satisfactory and comprehensive way. One or two general criticisms may be made at the outset. While the argument is always quite clear, the language is sometimes clumsy and does not give the sense very definitely. The author has an unqualified hatred of the doctrine of Common Grace, and takes every opportunity to attack the principle. Indeed, without attempt at proof, he says categorically in page 123, "There is no common grace." He holds that the commandments have no application to man in general, but are to be preached only to those who love the Lord. And even then he fears lest preaching the Law becomes merely a matter of civic righteousness.

Readers of the book, however, will find a wealth of material of the finest spiritual kind and will readily accept the author's unhesitating denunciation of many of the sins and errors that are common today. He underlines the mutual responsibilities of parents and children, and shows that obedience in the home and in other spheres of life represents our part in the Covenant. He shows in the comment on the sixth Commandment that the Reformed Confessions all allow war, and never taught Pacifism, and in a day when many nations, Britain included, are abandoning the practice of Capital Punishment, he shows that the punishment of murderers by death is according to the Law of God.

His treatment of marriage and divorce is somewhat unusual. He deals with marriage as a positive contract and affirms that the tie cannot be broken. For him, divorce is merely the separation of two people who have become unfaithful to one another. The tie cannot be dissolved, they are still married, so that the remarriage of the divorced parties, whether they have been innocent or guilty, is not possible. Hoeksema contends that there is no difference between the innocent and the guilty as far as divorce is concerned, and takes his stand with the Roman Catholic Church, against the majority of the Reformed Confessions, by declaring that remarriage of one who has been adjudged the innocent party in divorce, is just adultery.

In dealing with the tenth Commandment, the author shows that covetousness illustrates the corruption of man's whole nature. He denounces many modern views of Perfectionism and the Antinomianism that is prevalent in many evangelical circles.

Readers will be rewarded by a study of this volume in which the law of God is searchingly applied to human conduct and social relationships.

— Adam Loughridge

THESE ALSO SUFFER, by William Goulooze. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1955, pp. 86. \$1.75.

Here are ten short stories of men and women who have sought to glorify God in the midst of trial and sorrow. The author himself was, until his decease, a man who bore the cross of affliction, and who by the written and spoken word endeavoured to minister the consolation of the Gospel to troubled hearts. There is something in the little volume to cheer and encourage those who have burdens to bear. In it we meet Anna Marie Weidner, paralyzed, in great pain, bereft of parents, and sister Gabrielle in a European concentration camp, who sought not only resignation to God's will, but acceptance of it in humble faith. We are humbled as we hear the story of Carolyn Ghysels Ettervold, who finds joy and comfort in the presence of God though she must spend much of her life in an iron lung. We hear of Mrs. Marie Messinga, a child of God who lost her four children in a fire that destroyed her home, and who later became completely blind.

Here are stories, rich in interest and appeal, that should prove an encouragement to many. They give us a refreshing antidote on the one hand to present-day teaching on "divine healing", and on the other hand to that spirit of rebellion that questions God's purposes by asking, "Why do men suffer?" They illustrate clearly how "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose," and how the grace of God is sufficient for all His children who are sorely afflicted. The book is well written and neatly produced.

— Adam Loughridge

SEVEN WORDS OF LOVE, by G. Hall Todd. Baker Book House, Grand Rapid's 6, Mich. 1955, pp. 71. \$1.50.

The seven sayings of Christ on the cross have been the subjects of sermons by preachers through the ages. They have been the basis of much of our devotional reading, and it takes a bold man to add to the already long list of works from pens as famous as those of W. M. Clow, C. H. Spurgeon, A. A. Bonar, Hugh Martin and A. W. Pink. The seven brief studies in this volume, however, have a certain merit in that they are fresh and original and demonstrate in a rather striking way the Spirit of Christ our Saviour. They are well illustrated from events in history and from the author's personal experience, while his use of sacred poetry adds to the spirit and tone of the addresses.

Dr. Todd has interpreted the texts in a truly Scriptural and practical way, while, like all good preachers, he has enforced the truth he proclaims in a very personal and pointed way. It is evident as one reads the sermons that the author has a regard for the doctrines of the Reformed Faith for he makes regular quotations from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and in a manner that seems to indicate his approval of its teaching. The

studies are inspiring and suggestive material for the preacher and Bible student.

— Adam Loughridge

TAUGHT OF THE LORD: HELPS FOR JUNIOR LEADERS, by Anna P. McKelvy. Published by the Women's Synodical Missionary Society of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. Order copies from Chester R. Fox, 209 Ninth St., Pittsburg 22, Pa. 1954, pp. 60. 8½x11 inches, plastic binding, paper cover. \$1.25.

Here are fifty-two attractive and helpful Bible lessons for Junior classes of the Sabbath School. They have been used and already blessed by the Holy Spirit in bringing the children to Christ, and the author sends them out with the prayer that they may be so used again. The subjects are chosen in a very topical way and are appropriate to the seasons of the year. Scripture passages are selected to make a special appeal at the New Year, at spring-cleaning time, fishing, Synod, Thanksgiving Day, harvest, Communion, etc.

Important doctrines like Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Prayer, the Sabbath Day, are dealt with in an interesting way, while there are such striking titles as God's Jewel Case, The Golden Gloves and The Bible Squadron.

It is quite obvious that the author has a first rate grasp of the child-mind, and the stories that illustrate the lessons are carefully chosen and well told. The book contains a number of pictures and designs for the children to use and to cut out for use in class, while there are various suggestions as to how the children might be made to use their hands as well as their heads in preparing the lesson for the day.

Throughout the series of studies, the writer is diligent to commend the doctrine, the worship and the discipline of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and all the hints given to teachers should be most helpful in making the class work of a high and profitable standard. The key text is Isaiah 54:13, "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children."

— Adam Loughridge

THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A YEAR, by Amos R. Wells. W. A. Wilde Co., 131 Clarendon St., Boston 16, Mass. 1955, pp. 128. \$1.50.

The author makes an appeal to Bible lovers to read the Bible through at least once. "You should do it," he says, "if you care for your mind and if you care for your soul." The volume contains a course in Bible reading, completing the Bible in one year, with a portion for each day and with daily suggestions for meditation and for further study. It encourages the reading of the Word in a regular, systematic way. The plan suggests, on an average, two or three chapters a day according

to length. Genesis is covered in seventeen days. Each book of the Bible is introduced by a brief summary of its contents.

The plan has been found useful and practical by many Christians in all parts of the world, and the author, who lays no claim to scholarship, but who writes devotionally as a Bible lover, has summarised beautifully his own experience in the matter of Bible reading, in his well known poem, "When I Read the Bible Through."

(Editor's Note: We hope to be able to publish this poem, D.V., in the next issue of this magazine.)

— Adam Loughridge

THE LIVING BIBLE CHAPTER BY CHAPTER, by Amos R. Wells. W. A. Wilde Co., 131 Clarendon St., Boston 16, Mass. 1955, pp. 343. \$2.00.

This is a most interesting and most valuable book, and possibly the best value for the money available today. It covers the whole Bible, a chapter a day, with devotional meditation of a personal kind on each of the chapters. It was published originally in serial form, covering a period of three years.

The author has used the word "My" in the title for each chapter comment, and has thus related the teaching of the chapter to the be-

liever's experience in every day life. The chief aim of the volume is to promote communion with the Most High, and some illustrations drawn at random will show how well the author achieves his aim. The comment on Exodus 31 he entitles "My Sabbaths" and says, "They shall be a perpetual covenant, it seems. A token of my fidelity to God. A token of God's love to me, days of Communion, days of partnership, days of friendship. If I break away from them, am I not breaking away from God? Ah, let me make my Sabbath a delight! Let me love its every hour, because I love its God."

Isaiah 53 he calls "My Saviour," and he writes, "He was a man of sorrows, that I might be a man of joy. He was wounded and heavy laden, that I might walk unburdened and unhurt. He was dumb that I might speak. He was smitten that I might be healed. Ah, shall He not see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied in me?"

Or take a third illustration from Mark 12, entitled "My Mite." "Let me give as the poor widow gave. If I give as she gave, I shall have nothing left. If I give as she gave, I shall have all things gained. She entered bearing her whole livelihood. She went away, bearing life, which is better than livelihood."

— Adam Loughridge

Books Received

The announcement of the books listed below should not be construed as a recommendation. A review of those found in this list which we regard as having value for our readers will be given in a later issue.

Publications of Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich.

DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS OF JOHN CALVIN, ed. by Charles E. Edwards. 1954, pp. 120, pocket size. \$1.00.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS, by Robert Johnstone. 1875, reprinted 1955, pp. xii, 490. \$3.95.

PROPHECY AND HISTORY IN RELATION TO THE MESSIAH, by Alfred Edersheim. 1901, reprinted 1955, pp. xxiv, 391. \$3.75.

THE CHURCH IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE, by William M. Ramsay. 1954, pp. 510. \$4.20.

I AND II THESSALONIANS, by William Hendriksen. 1955, pp. 214. \$4.50.

THE SECRET OF THE LORD, by William M. Clow. 1955, pp. 353. \$2.95.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, by David Thomas. 1955, pp. 493. \$3.95.

LUKE THE PHYSICIAN, by William M. Ramsay. 1908, reprinted 1956, pp. 418. \$4.50.

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS, translated and edited by J. B. Lightfoot. 1891, reprinted 1956, pp. 288. \$3.95.

Publications of William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids 3, Mich.

OUR REASONABLE FAITH, by Herman Bavinck. 1956, pp. 568. \$6.95.

PHILIPPIANS: THE GOSPEL AT WORK, by Merrill C. Tenney. 1956, pp. 102. \$2.00.

MARK'S SKETCHBOOK OF CHRIST, by Helen J. Tenney. 1956, pp. 110, size 7x11 inches, paper cover. No price stated.

THE TRIUMPH OF GRACE IN THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH, by G. C. Berkouwer. 1956, pp. 414. \$4.95.

THE TEACHING OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS, by Geerhardus Vos. 1956, pp. 124. \$2.00.

WITH JESUS ON THE NAVAJO ROAD, by Jacob and Christina Bolt. 1956, pp. 120. \$2.00.

HOLY FIELDS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY LAND, by J. Howard Kitchen. 1955, pp. 160. \$2.50.

THE PARABOLIC TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE, by G. H. Lang. 1955, pp. 400. \$3.50.

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS AND TO PHILEMON, by J. J. Mueller. 1955, pp. 200. \$3.50.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE, by Bernard Ramm. 1954, pp. 368. \$4.00.

PHILOSOPHY OF REVELATION, by Herman Bavinck. 1953, pp. x, 349. \$3.50.

ANCHOR OF HOPE, by Preston J. Stegenga. 1954, pp. 271. \$3.50.

MAN OF SORROWS, by Herman Hoeksema. 1956, pp. 129. \$2.00.

THE SELF-DISCLOSURE OF JESUS, by Geerhardus Vos. 1954, pp. 311. \$4.00.

Publications of Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 147 North 10th St., Philadelphia 7, Pa.

WHAT PRESBYTERIANS BELIEVE: AN EXPOSITION OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFSSION, by Gordon H. Clark. 1956, pp. 130, paper cover. \$2.00.

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Publications of Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Belvidere Road, Phillipsburg, N. J.

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN? by Lawrence R. Eyres. 1954, pp. 38, paper cover. 25 cents.

THE FREE OFFER OF THE GOSPEL, by John Murray and Ned B. Stonehouse. 1955, pp. 27, pocket size, paper cover. 25 cents.

BIBLE DOCTRINE: UNIT ONE, BOOKS ONE AND TWO, by Dorothy Partington. 1955, two volumes, total about 325 pages, paper covers, plastic binding. Pupil's Workbook \$1.25. Teacher's Manual \$1.50.

Publications of Society for Reformed Publications, 1519 East Fulton St., Grand Rapids, Mich.

THE REFORMED PULPIT (SYMPOSIUM), VOLUME I. 1955, pp. 145. \$2.00

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN BAPTISM? by M. Eugene Osterhaven. 1956, pp. 59, paper cover. 50 cents.

Publications of Other Firms

THE KING JAMES VERSION DEFENDED! A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS, by Edward F. Hills. Christian Research Press, 5011 Hickman Road, Des Moines, Iowa. 1956, pp. 158, paper cover. \$1.50.

CLOSER TO CHRIST VIA THE QUIET HOUR, by Caroline K. Sapsford. Inter-County Leader Publishers, Frederic, Wisconsin. 1952, pp. 81, paper cover. 75 cents.

NEW TESTAMENT MANUAL FOR HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY, by W. C. Rarick and C. R. Maxam. Standard Publishing Co., Cincinnati, Ohio. 1927, pp. 61, paper cover. 40 cents.

SCHEEBEN'S DOCTRINE OF DIVINE ADOPTION, by Edwin H. Palmer. J. H. Kok, N. V., Kampen, Netherlands. 1953, pp. xi, 202, paper cover. Florins 5.90.

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES ON FIRST PETER, by John Brown. Sovereign Grace Book Club, 413 E. First St., Evansville, Ind. 1956, 3 volumes, total pages 1411. Per set \$11.95.

THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST, by Arthur W. Pink. Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, Pa. 1955, pp. 313. \$3.95.

PROTESTANT BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION, by Bernard Ramm. W. A. Wilde Co., 131 Clarendon St., Boston 16, Mass. 1950, pp. 197. \$2.50.

WHITHER ISRAELI? MOSAIC RESTORATIONISM EXAMINED, by Cecil J. Lowry. The Tabernacle Book Room, 425 10th St., Oakland, Calif. 1955, pp. 69, paper cover. 50 cents.

Reminder to Book Reviewers

Since publishing a "Reminder to Book Reviewers" in the July-September issue, we have received a considerable number of book reviews, making it possible to publish reviews of 29 books in the present issue, and reducing the backlog of unreviewed books from 56 to 41. We appreciate

this cooperation and wish to express thanks to those who responded to the appeal in the last issue. In particular we wish to express hearty thanks to overseas reviewers who have helped most generously in this department of Blue Banner Faith and Life.

We still have a large backlog of reviews to be published. All of the books in the foregoing list have been assigned to reviewers who have (with one or two exceptions) kindly promised to review them. Some of the books, however, have been in the hands of reviewers for many months, and in some cases as long as two years. It would be

much appreciated if those who have had books a long time would make a special effort to review them soon so that this backlog can be cleared. Brief notices will be very acceptable in case reviewers prefer not to attempt longer reviews.

— Editor

Thanks for Financial Help

In response to the appeal published on page 119 of the July-September issue we have received to date (September 7) 18 contributions totalling \$382.50. Some money was also received from subscriptions and sales of back issues. About \$50.00 is still needed to complete publication for 1956 without a deficit. We wish to express hearty thanks to all who have helped in this matter.

Contributions are always welcome, whether the amount is large or small. Numbered receipts are sent promptly to all donors. In sending contributions please make remittances payable to Blue Banner Faith and Life and mail them to 3408 7th Avenue, Beaver Falls, Pa.

— J. G. Vos, Editor & Manager

Blue Banner Question Box

Readers are invited to submit Biblical, doctrinal and practical questions for answer in this department. Names will not be published with questions, but anonymous communications will be disregarded.

Question:

A pastor of another denomination said that Calvinism and Arminianism are both true. He held that each of them is half of the truth and you have to take them together to get the whole truth. What should be thought of this idea?

Answer:

The type of thinking suggested in the above query is often met with. Those who hold such an idea are obviously unfamiliar with the history of the controversy between Calvinism and Arminianism, and do not have a clear understanding of what the teachings of Calvinism are.

The differences between these two systems were sharply defined at the Synod of Dort in 1618-19. At the points of difference between them, each of these systems is a flat contradiction of the other. It is therefore very foolish and misleading to say that they are BOTH true and must be taken together to get the whole truth. The famous "Five Points of Calvinism" are contradictions of the five Arminian doctrines against which they were framed. When two propositions are mutually contradictory, one or the other must be true, but they cannot both be true. Columbus discovered America in 1492, or he did not discover America in 1492. Who would be so foolish as to hold that these contradictory statements must be combined to get the real truth about Columbus? Similarly. God either is or is not absolutely

sovereign over His creatures, man either is or is not totally depraved, Christ's atonement either is or is not intended by God to save every human being that ever lived, the saving grace of God either is or is not irresistible, and those who are truly in Christ either are or are not sure to persevere unto eternal life. Calvinism holds one side of these alternatives, Arminianism holds the other. But who can hold both at the same time?

The person who says that Calvinism and Arminianism are both true — that they are mutually complementary aspects of truth — is always a person who does not have a clear and correct understanding of what the teachings of Calvinism are. The argument is put up in some such form as the following: Calvinism teaches the sovereignty of God, and Arminianism teaches the responsibility (or freedom) of man. We should follow Calvin in his emphasis on God's sovereignty, and Arminius in his stress on man's responsibility.

This type of statement, however, overlooks the fact that Calvinism stresses the responsibility of man just as strongly as Arminianism does — indeed, more strongly. The Arminian stresses the responsibility of man alone; the Calvinist stresses the sovereignty of God AND the responsibility of man. Everything that is true in Arminianism is also taught by Calvinism. What really distinguishes the Arminian is not his stress on the responsibility of man but his denial of the sovereignty of God.

Arminians can be Christians and be saved only because they are inconsistent and do not really believe in Arminianism all the way. If they followed Arminian principles consistently to the end of the road they would have to believe that man is his own saviour. But by a happy inconsistency they are kept from this. An Arminian will say insistently that everything depends on the sinner. A famous evangelist is quoted as having said, "God's hands are tied. He can only wait for you to make the decision." If consistently believed, this would be faith in autonomous man and a limited God. But the Arminian evangelist does not really believe it. Immediately after finishing his sermon he will pray fervently for the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of the people that they may be saved. We approve of such prayer, but we should realize that it is inconsistent with Arminian principles. If "God's hands are tied" and if everything depends on a decision of man which God does not control, what can be the use of praying to God for the salvation of sinners? It would seem that the prayer should be addressed to the sinners, on whose free will everything is said to depend.

What we are trying to show is that the Arminian does not really believe his Arminian principles. He does not believe them consistently, for however much he may say that everything depends on man's free will, if he is a Christian, he still realizes in the bottom of his heart that after all everything depends on the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Calvinism is simply Biblical Christianity. It accepts the whole teaching of God's Word. It is not guilty of the denial of man's moral responsibility which is often charged against it.

— J. G. Vos

Question:

Who decided what books should be included in the New Testament, and on what basis was the decision made?

Answer:

God the Father gave all authority in heaven and earth to the God-man, His Son Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus Christ appointed the twelve apostles and delegated authority to them for the establishment and organization of the Visible Church (Matt. 18:18; John 20:21). The apostles and some men associated with them wrote the books which form the New Testament. These writings were imposed on the Church by the apostles. They are divinely inspired and therefore they are "Scripture" (see Rev. 1:1-3; 22:18, 19; 2 Peter 3:15, 16; 1 Cor. 14:37). The Early Church decided, on the basis of the evidence, which books had been written or sanctioned by the apostles. Because these books were known to be apostolic, the Church recognized them as inspired Scripture.

Because the Church recognized them as inspired Scripture, the Church included them in the "canon" or list of books of the New Testament. The only question that the Church had to answer concerning a particular book was: "Was this book either written or sanctioned by an apostle?"

The 27 books in the New Testament were able to pass this test, and accordingly they were admitted to the canon; a number of other books failed to pass the test, and accordingly were rejected. The Church had no choice of its own in the matter; its function was simply to pass judgment on the evidence for or against the apostolic authorship or sanction of the books.

It should not be supposed, of course, that this function of the Church in connection with the New Testament books was exercised wholly at one definite time and place. Rather, the process of sifting the evidence took place over a period of many years. There was doubt about a few of the books in some sections of the Church for some time. In the course of time, however, the Church as a whole came to agreement as to which books had been written or sanctioned by the apostles, and therefore should be included in the New Testament.

— J. G. Vos

What Hath God Wrought!

By Christina G. Rossetti

The shout of a King is among them.

One day may I be

Of that perfect communion of lovers

Contented and free

In the land that is very far off, and

Far off from the sea.

The shout of the King is among them.

One King and one song,

One thunder of manifold voices

Harmonious and strong,

One King and one love, and one

Shout of one worshipping throng.

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Announcement

You can share in the wide witness of Blue Banner Faith and Life to Bible truth by contributing to the expense of publishing the magazine. Less than half of the amount required is obtained from subscriptions and sales of back issues. For the balance we are dependent on contributions. Numbered receipts are sent promptly for all contributions. Financial reports are submitted to the Board of Publication of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America quarterly.

Sets of back issues for the years 1955 and 1956 are available at \$1.00 for each year, postpaid. The supply of back issues of all other years is exhausted. Pressboard binders which will conveniently preserve two years' issues are available at 75 cents each, postpaid. Subscriptions for 1956 are \$1.50 for single subscriptions and \$1.00 for each subscription in clubs of 5 or more to be mailed to one address. All subscriptions must be-

gin with a January-March issue and run to the end of a calendar year. We regret that we cannot do the extra clerical work involved in having subscriptions start and stop at different times during the year. When subscriptions are received during the year, the back issues beginning with the January-March issue of that year will be sent.

The Agent for Britain and Ireland is the Rev. Adam Loughridge, B.A., Glenmanus Manse, Portrush, County Antrim, Northern Ireland. Annual subscription rate for Britain and Ireland is 7s. 6d.

The Agent for Australia and New Zealand is the Rev. Alexander Barkley, B.A., 20 Fenwick Street, Geelong, Victoria, Australia. Annual subscription rate for Australia and New Zealand is 10 shillings.

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