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## BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

J. G. VOS, Editor and Manager

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# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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## *Sheep of His Hand*

By Esther Belle Heins

It may seem sometimes that the lambs  
Of pastures green and fair —  
Are favoured more than those who seek  
The Shepherd's daily care.

But no! For all the sorrowing  
Who bring to Him their woes —  
A table is before them spread,  
Each cup He overflows.

These are the sheep of His kind hand,  
They know and love His voice;  
He gathers them so close to Him  
Their very hearts rejoice!

---

## *Be Still and Know*

By Esther Belle Heins

Though perilous the outlook be —  
Thank Him who reigns above  
For skylights built in trusting souls  
That show His light and love.

The glory of His handiwork  
The Heavens surely tell;  
Be still and know that He is God  
Who doeth all things well.

## *The Unseen Hand*

By Esther Belle Heins

All nature must be governed and inspired,  
With wisdom balanced, moved, and nourished well;  
The elements are by a force required  
To operate, that man in comfort dwell.  
Unseen, the hand that checks an angry sea,  
And reins with might, the fury of the storm,  
It holds the mountain fast and feeds each tree;  
The earth lacks not in beauty or in form.

Can we see God, when He has made the sun!  
Intangible is He — not to be clutched;  
Immeasurable and infinite, the One  
Who gave the soul — still not beheld or touched!  
His Son has made Him known; tranquility  
Marks those led by the hand they cannot see.

---

## *Deity Bends Low*

By Esther Belle Heins

Divinity can never sink  
To level of humanity,  
Although through union made in Christ  
Man may have immortality.

The loneliness, the cross He bore,  
Complying with His Father's plan —  
Could only be because His all  
Reached out in tenderness to man.

When Deity has bent so low —  
Oh that all souls could plainly see  
The heart of God — exposed, laid bare,  
In utter love at Calvary!

Time is impatient in her flight,  
But God still hears the trusting cry;  
He will reach down to take your hand  
That you may dwell with Him on High!

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## *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.

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 25

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NUMBER 1

## *Studies in the Book of Genesis*

### LESSON 1

#### Introduction to the Book of Genesis

##### 1. Authorship of Genesis

Genesis is the first of the Five Books of Moses, commonly called the Pentateuch. The traditional Jewish and Christian view, which we believe to be correct, is that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, with the exception, of course, of the account of his own death which occurs in the last chapter of Deuteronomy.

This belief that Moses wrote the Pentateuch has always been the accepted belief among orthodox Christians, although it has been challenged by "higher critics" who hold that the Pentateuch is a composite made up of various documents put together in their present form long after the time of Moses. It is not proposed in this series of lessons to take up the theories of the critics. We believe that the critics are wrong and that there is sufficient reason to believe in the unity and integrity of the Pentateuch, and that Moses was the writer of it.

The common Jewish conviction that Moses wrote the Pentateuch has the sanction of our Lord Jesus Christ. Over and over again our Lord quoted from the Pentateuch and attributed it to Moses. (Matt. 8:4; 19:8; 23:2. Mark 1:44; 7:10; 10:3; 12:26. Luke 5:14; 16:29, 31; 20:37; 24:44. John 5:46; 7:19, 22, 23). Like the godly Jews of His day He referred to the Old Testament Scriptures as "Moses and the prophets" (Luke 16:19). And He specifically stated that Moses wrote concerning Himself (John 5:46). This witness of Jesus Christ cannot be set aside by the Christian. Either Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or Jesus was mistaken. And to say that Jesus was mistaken destroys His authority as the Son of God and the infallible teacher of truth. On the authority of Jesus Christ, then, as well as for other good reasons, we believe that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, including the Book of Genesis.

To affirm that Moses wrote Genesis does not imply that the entire content of Genesis was **directly** revealed to him by God, without any use of historical traditions or sources. The Biblical writers ordinarily used sources and documentary materials when these were available. The events narrated in Genesis took place long before the birth of Moses. Even the last events recorded in Genesis took place some 300 years before the time

of Moses. Consequently Moses could have obtained the information contained in the Book of Genesis only by oral or written historical tradition, or by direct revelation from God.

It is highly probable that oral or written tradition existed for most if not all of the contents of Genesis, and that Moses had access to, and availed himself of, such tradition. But in doing so, he was supernaturally controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit, so that the product of his writing was more than a mere human history book — it was inspired Scripture, the Word of God, and therefore infallible. Whatever traditions and sources Moses may have had and used, he was so controlled by the Spirit of God that nothing but truth was incorporated in the books which Moses wrote. No other view is compatible with the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There was once a time when unbelievers and scoffers asserted that the art of writing was unknown in the time of Moses, and therefore he could not have written the Pentateuch. No one is so foolish as to speak that way today. Through modern archaeology and the decipherment of the ancient writing of Egypt and Babylonia we now know that the art of writing was already hoary with age in the time of Moses. We have written documents from long before the time of Moses.

##### 2. The Language of Genesis

Like nearly all of the Old Testament, the Book of Genesis was written in the Hebrew language. Hebrew is a member of the Semitic family of languages (the language spoken by the descendants of Shem). This group of languages includes Arabic, Hebrew, Phoenician, Aramaic, Assyrian-Babylonian, and several others. Some of these languages are now dead. The principal living language of the Semitic group today is Arabic.

The fact that Genesis was written in Hebrew does not imply, however, as some people have supposed, that Hebrew was the language spoken in the garden of Eden and by the population of the world until the incident of the tower of Babel. There is no reason for holding such an opinion. The fact is that we know nothing whatever about the original language of mankind. Some of the names of people which occur in the early chap-

ters of Genesis are not Hebrew and have no known meaning; apparently they are of a different language from Hebrew, though in Genesis they are spelled out in Hebrew letters. It would be interesting if we could know what was the original language of the human race, but as with many other matters, God has not seen fit to satisfy our curiosity by providing this information for us.

### 3. The Name of Genesis

The name "Genesis" comes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It means "origin". This is a very appropriate name, as the book relates the origin of things. In Hebrew the book was called **B'reshith**, from its opening word. (In the Hebrew "In the beginning" is a single word).

### 4. The Purpose and Contents of the Book of Genesis

Genesis is the book of origins, or beginnings. It starts with God, who never had a beginning, and from this starting point the book proceeds to tell of the beginning of all else. Genesis gives the origin of the universe, the origin of life, the origin of the human race, and the origin of the chosen covenant people through whom the Christ should come into the world to redeem men to God.

Genesis also presents the origin of marriage and the family, the origin of the Sabbath, the origin of scientific investigation and discovery, and the origin of man's use of the creatures and the forces of nature for his own benefit and welfare. It also describes the origin of sin in the human race, the origin of death, and the origin of human government by which evil is partially checked. Genesis also describes the origin of religious worship and of the institution of sacrifice.

An understanding of the Book of Genesis is absolutely necessary for an understanding of the rest of the Bible. No one can have an adequate, sound theology who does not grasp the truths revealed in Genesis. All the rest of the Bible is based on Genesis. Every book of the Old and New Testaments presupposes the Book of Genesis. It is the foundation of the whole structure.

The tendency today is often to under-estimate the importance of the Old Testament. The old error that the Old Testament was for the Jews and the New Testament is for Christians is not dead by any means. Even those who admit that the Old Testament is for Christians as well as the New, often tend to neglect the Old Testament and regard it as comparatively unimportant. This is a wrong tendency and we should always oppose it.

The truth is, of course, that the Bible is a unity, and cannot be regarded as a loose collection of unrelated parts. The common attitude of undervaluing the Old Testament is like saying that the roots of an apple tree are not important, because we cannot eat the roots; therefore we might as

well saw through the trunk of the tree and sever the connection between the roots and the branches. If we do that, there will be no more apples produced by the tree. The Bible is an organism and must not be mutilated. Every part is important. The New Testament lies concealed in the Old; the Old Testament stands revealed in the New. In particular, the Book of Genesis is very important for a true understanding of the system of Christian truth.

Many of the common errors of our day arise from failure to grasp this principle. A prominent person has said that the Sermon on the Mount is all the religion he needs, and all the religion any man needs. He is wrenching the Sermon on the Mount out of its setting in the organism of the Bible, and treating it as if it could be isolated. But the Sermon on the Mount is organically connected with the rest of Scripture, and if torn apart from the rest, it will bleed to death. No one can grasp the true meaning of the Sermon on the Mount unless he takes the rest of the Bible into consideration.

Another man takes the parable of the Prodigal Son as the sum and substance of his religion. It is a favorite passage with modernists because it says nothing about Christ, nothing about the Holy Spirit, and nothing about the substitutionary atonement. It was told to emphasize the truth that God welcomes sinners who return to Him. But this parable was never intended by our Lord to be a complete textbook of religion and theology. He placed it in the setting of His total teaching, and that in turn fits into the setting of the total teaching of the Scriptures, including the Old Testament. To say that the parable of the Prodigal Son is all the theology we need is like saying that if an automobile has a carburetor it does not need a crankshaft. It needs both and much more besides. We need the parable of the Prodigal Son and the Sermon on the Mount, and we also need a great deal more besides.

The study of the Book of Genesis is a good antidote for the present tendency to underrate the importance of the Old Testament. It provides the foundation for a sound grasp of Christian theology. It provides the indispensable key to the understanding of the rest of Scripture. And it enables us to value and appreciate the New Testament much more highly than we otherwise would. For it is a strange paradox that those who underrate the Old Testament in favor of the New, do not value the New Testament nearly highly enough. Only by seeing the New Testament as the completion of the Old can we really value it as highly as we should.

The study of Genesis is also a good corrective for the "atomistic" tendency of American Fundamentalism — the tendency to regard the Bible as a collection of separate texts rather than as an organism. Those who go through the Bible as

they might go through a flower garden, picking out a "helpful" text here and there, without any real grasp of the plan and structure — the organic unity — of the whole, will do well to study the Book of Genesis. It will lead them to see how much they have been missing by not studying the Bible as an organism.

#### Questions:

1. What are the Five Books of Moses commonly called?
2. What is the traditional Jewish and Christian view as to who wrote the Pentateuch?
3. What is the view of the "higher critics" as to the authorship of the Pentateuch?
4. What is the bearing of the testimony of Jesus Christ on the question of whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch?
5. If Jesus was mistaken as to the authorship of the Pentateuch, what does this imply as to His authority as a teacher of truth?
6. About how long before the time of Moses did the closing events of Genesis take place?
7. How did Moses probably obtain most of the information contained in Genesis?
8. Why is Genesis more than a mere human history book?
9. What argument was once used by unbelievers to prove that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch?
10. How can it be shown that this argument of unbelievers was incorrect?
11. In what language was the Book of Genesis written?
12. To what family of languages does the language of Genesis belong?

13. What are some of the other languages of this family?

14. What language of the Semitic family is an important living language today?

15. Why is it incorrect to say that Hebrew was the language of the garden of Eden and of early mankind?

16. What is the starting point of the Book of Genesis?

17. What are some of the things that Genesis tells the origin of?

18. Why is the Book of Genesis important for an understanding of the rest of the Bible?

19. Why is it wrong to say that the Old Testament was for the Jews and the New Testament is for Christians?

20. Why is it wrong to regard the Bible as a loose collection of unrelated parts?

21. What is meant by the old saying that "The New Testament lies concealed in the Old; the Old Testament stands revealed in the new"?

22. Why is it wrong for anyone to say "The Sermon on the Mount is all the religion any man needs"?

23. Why is the parable of the Prodigal Son a favorite Bible passage with modernists?

24. What is the true point of the parable of the Prodigal Son?

25. Why is the study of Genesis a good antidote for the present tendency to underrate the importance of the Old Testament?

26. What is meant by the "atomistic" tendency of American Fundamentalism? Why is it wrong?

27. Why is it true that a study of Genesis can serve to correct the "atomistic" tendency to regard the Bible as a collection of separate texts?

## LESSON 2

### Introduction to the Book of Genesis, Continued

#### 5. The Divisions and Outline of the Book of Genesis

In order to grasp the structure of Genesis we must realize that is not the purpose of the book to give a complete history of the world from the creation to the time of Joseph. The purpose of the book is not to present world history in general, but the **historical unfolding of God's plan of redemption**. Consequently many subjects are mentioned and then dropped, as the book proceeds to develop its true subject.

Genesis starts with the creation of the universe, and constantly narrows its subject matter

down, until it ends with the people of Israel in Egypt. It deals with the universe, then with this world, then with the human race as a whole, then with the Semitic branch of the human race, then with one part of the Semitic branch, namely, the posterity of Abnanam: then with one part of the posterity of Abraham, namely, those descended from Abraham through Isaac; then with one part of the posterity of Isaac, namely, those descended from Isaac through Jacob. Other branches are mentioned, described briefly, and then dropped. The book constantly narrows its field down to that particular fraction of the human race which was all-important for the history of redemption, because from that fraction the Christ was to be born.

The Book of Genesis introduces each new section or subject by the expression: "These are the generations of. . .". The form of the introductory formula varies slightly in some cases, but the word "generations" is always the same. The Hebrew word is *toledoth*, a feminine plural form, which occurs 39 times in the Old Testament. 38 times it is translated "generations" and once "birth." The expression: "These are the generations of. . ." evidently means something like: "The following is an account of the origin and history of. . .". It is like a title or heading, introducing a new subject.

This expression, "These are the generations of. . ." serves to divide the Book of Genesis into an introduction and ten successive sections. The introduction is composed of chapter 1 and the first three verses of chapter 2. The sections start at 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27, 25:12, 25:19, 36:1, 37:2.

It is possible, however, to divide the Book of Genesis into three main parts, as follows:

1. The creation of the universe, the world and man. 1:1 to 2:3.
2. History of the human race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26.
3. History of the covenant people from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26.

In studying the Book of Genesis we shall see that in the early chapters, dealing as they do with very ancient times, the narratives are quite brief and only the most important facts are stated. Then in the later chapters of the book, from the time of Abraham onward, the narrative is much fuller and more detailed. The history of Noah, who lived 950 years, takes up just a little over four chapters, whereas the history of Joseph, who lived 110 years, takes up about 13 chapters.

There are many things about the earliest people, such as Adam and Eve, Cain, Abel and Seth, Enoch and Methuselah, Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth that we would naturally like to know, but concerning which the Bible does not satisfy our curiosity. It provides only the most essential and important facts concerning these early people. Two reasons can be assigned for this. First, undoubtedly the ancient records or traditions which Moses by divine inspiration used in writing the Book of Genesis must have been brief and concise. This would especially be true in the case of traditions at first handed down orally, before the art of writing was known. Historical tradition handed down by word of mouth from father to son would necessarily be limited to concise accounts, which could be repeated and remembered accurately. (We do not mean to imply that the accuracy of Genesis depended on the human memory of ancient people; we believe that Genesis is the Word of God, and therefore infallible; Moses was super-

naturally, infallibly guided and controlled in his selection and use of whatever traditions or documents he may have employed. We only mean to suggest that the comparative brevity of the narratives in the early part of Genesis reflects the necessary conciseness of very early historical tradition).

The second reason why only the most important facts about the early people are recorded is that the Bible was not intended to be a general encyclopedia of miscellaneous information. It is a book on a special subject, namely, the historical unfolding of God's plan of redemption. We might very much like to know what kind of clothes Noah wore, and what kind of houses Enoch and Methuselah lived in, but the Bible does not satisfy our curiosity, for such information would have been outside of the purpose of the Book. It gives us those facts about early mankind which are relevant for the development of the history of redemption. (The information given concerning the inventions and discoveries made by the descendants of Cain, chapter 4 verses 20 to 22, forms an exception to the foregoing statement. These verses give important information about early human civilization, apart from redemption. But it should be noted that the statements made are extremely brief, being limited to the barest facts, without any additional description or explanation).

#### **An Outline of the Book of Genesis**

##### **I. The Creation of the Universe, the World and Man. 1:1 to 2:3**

1. The creation of the universe as a whole. 1:1
2. The preparation of the earth for human habitation. 1:2-25
3. The creation of man. 1:26, 27
4. The first divine revelation to man. 1:28-30
5. The origin and divine authority of the Sabbath. 1:31 to 2:3

##### **II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26**

1. The original state of man. 2:4-15
2. The Covenant of Works. 2:16, 17
3. The creation of Eve. 2:18-25
4. The fall of mankind into sin. 3:1-24
5. The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. 4:1-26
6. The line of descent from Adam to Noah. 5:1-32
7. Human wickedness and the judgment of the Flood. 6:1 to 8:19
8. Divine revelation to and through Noah. 8:20 to 9:29

9. The repopulation of the earth from the family of Noah. 10:1-32

10. Arrogant humanism frustrated by divine judgment at Babel. 11:1-9

11. The line of descent from Noah to Abraham. 11:10-26

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

1. Abraham and his kindred in Ur of the Chaldees. 11:27-32

2. The history of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:10

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

4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:11; 25:19 to 35:29

5. Isaac's descendants through Esau. 36:1-43

6. The early life of Joseph. 37:1-36

7. The scandalous sinfulness of the family of Judah. 38:1-30

8. The history of Joseph continued. 39:1 to 50:26

### I. The Creation of the Universe, the World and Man. 1:1 to 2:3

#### 1. The creation of the universe as a whole. 1:1

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This sublime pronouncement forms the opening sentence of Holy Writ. It forms a concise statement of the **doctrine of Creation**, which is the most basic doctrine of our faith. It lays the foundation for all that follows in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Everything depends on this first verse of Genesis.

This verse gives the only true answer to the question of the origin of the universe — God created it "in the beginning." We may pause for a moment to mention the other answers that men have given to the question. They are false answers, but we ought to know what they are, so that we can distinguish the Bible truth clearly from them.

First, there is the answer of **materialism and atheism**, which holds that there is no God, and nothing exists except matter and force. The universe was not created, for there is no God who could have created it. The universe just exists of itself and always has.

Then there is the answer of **pantheism**, which is that God and the universe are identical. Everything that exists is divine; even sticks and stones are parts of God. Pantheism represents God as the soul of the universe, and the universe as the body of God. According to pantheism, the universe

was never created. Pantheists either regard God as just an aspect of the universe, or they regard the universe as just an aspect of God. They do not believe in God as **distinct** from the universe.

There is also the answer of **dualism**, according to which God and the universe have both existed side by side from all eternity. This false notion has been prominent in some kinds of false religion and philosophy.

All these answers are false. The answer given in Gen. 1:1 is the only true one. God existed from eternity; the universe did **not** exist from eternity. God never had a beginning; the universe had a beginning at a definite time.

What does Genesis mean by the expression "In the beginning"? Since God created the universe "in the beginning," clearly God Himself existed **before** "the beginning." Many people today deny that "in the beginning" refers to a definite time. They say it refers to something mysterious which has nothing to do with historical time and dates.

Orthodox Christians, on the contrary, hold that the phrase "in the beginning" refers to a definite point of historical time — the **beginning** of historical time. We do not know when "in the beginning" was — just how many thousand years ago it was — but it was a definite time. If we had the information in our possession, we could take pencil and paper and write down just how many years, months and days before the birth of Christ this "beginning" was. It could be expressed in figures as a certain date B.C.

Before that, there was no such thing as time. There was only God, who inhabits eternity. Time is a part of the created universe. God Himself dwells outside of time.

Many old Bibles, and some new ones, have the date 4004 B.C. as the date of the "beginning." Because this date has been printed in the margin of many Bibles, many people have come to think that this date is practically a statement of the Bible itself. But the fact is that the Bible does not tell us the date of the "beginning." The figure of 4004 B.C. is a part of Archbishop Usher's scheme of Bible chronology. Usher based his calculations largely upon the genealogies given in the Bible, but his reasoning is unsound, for it overlooks two important matters: (1) the Bible genealogies were not written in order to enable us to calculate the date of the creation, but for the purpose of showing the line of descent of the covenant people of God; (2) in Bible genealogies, minor links are often omitted, and a grandson spoken of as a son, etc. Thus in Matt. 1:1 the genealogy of Jesus Christ is given with only one link (David) between Jesus and Abraham. It is easy to prove that some generations were often omitted in Bible genealogies, by comparing one passage with another. In

other words, the Bible genealogies did not aim at mathematical completeness, but only at showing the true line of descent.

For these reasons Usher's date of 4004 B.C. for the creation has now been generally abandoned by orthodox Bible scholars. The fact is that the Bible does not provide sufficient data to enable us to calculate the date of the creation. Giving up Usher's date of 4004 B.C. does not mean, however, that we must accept the wild speculations and claims of unbelieving scientists, who speak in terms of millions and even billions of years. For example, George Gamow, in his book **Biography of the Earth** speaks of "the year 2,000,000,000 B.C." as "the Earth's birth date" (page 6). He adds that the earth's mother was the sun, implying, of course that the sun must be much older than two billion years. Such opinions are highly speculative. They involve assumptions which cannot be proved, just as truly as Usher's calculation of 4004 B.C. involves assumptions which cannot be proved.

After all, the date of the creation of the universe is not important to us, for if it were, God would have revealed it clearly in His Word. What is important, is the fact of the creation of the universe. For this fact establishes the most important distinction in the Bible, namely, the distinction between Creator and creature. If there was a divine act of creation, then Creator and creature are definitely distinct. Scripture always distinguishes them clearly. It draws a clear, sharp line of demarcation between the Creator, on the one hand, and all creatures, on the other hand. This boundary line can never be crossed. Even in Christ, who as God is the Creator, and as man is a creature, the boundary line remains sharp and distinct.

#### Questions:

1. What is the purpose of the Book of Genesis?
2. Why does Genesis not give a complete history of the world from the creation to the time of Joseph?
3. How does the Book of Genesis narrow its subject down as it proceeds? What is the broadest subject it deals with, and what the narrowest?
4. What fraction of the human race does Genesis finally limit itself to? Why was that part of the human race so important?
5. What expression is used repeatedly in Genesis as a heading to introduce a new subject?
6. How might we paraphrase the expression "These are the generations of . . . "?
7. Into how many sections is Genesis divided by the use of the expression "These are the generations of . . . "?
8. Into what three main sections can the Book of Genesis be divided?
9. What special characteristic may be noted concerning the narratives in the early chapters of Genesis, as compared with the later chapters of the book?
10. What two reasons can be assigned for the brevity of the narratives in the early chapters of the book?
11. Of what doctrine is the first verse of Genesis a concise statement?
12. What is the importance of the doctrine of Creation for the rest of the Bible?
13. What do materialism and atheism hold concerning the origin of the universe?
14. What is pantheism?
15. What does pantheism hold concerning the relation between the universe and God?
16. What is meant by dualism? What does it imply concerning the origin of the universe?
17. What do orthodox Christians hold concerning the meaning of the expression "in the beginning" in Gen. 1:1?
18. What is the source of the date 4004 B.C. which is printed in some Bibles as the date of the creation?
19. Wherein was Archbishop Usher's reasoning unsound?
20. What is the attitude of most orthodox Bible scholars of the present day to Usher's date of 4004 B.C. for the creation?
21. What do some scientists hold as to the age of the earth? Are we obliged to accept their opinions?
22. What can we conclude from the fact that God has not revealed the date of the creation in the Bible?
23. What is much more important for us than the date of the creation?
24. What is the most important distinction in the Bible?
25. What boundary line can never be crossed?

### LESSON 3

#### I. The Creation of the Universe, the World and Man. 1:1 to 2:3, Continued

##### 1. The creation of the universe as a whole. 1:1, continued

God's creation of the universe was a creation **out of nothing**. God created the universe by the mere word of His power. He willed that the universe should come into existence, and it came into existence. God used no previously existing ma-

terials or forces, nor did He employ any techniques, methods or laws. The creation of the universe is a sheer, absolute miracle. This truth is expressed in orthodox theology by saying that God created the universe "out of nothing."

Many present-day theologians reject the doctrine of creation out of nothing in the sense in which the Church teaches it. They assert that this concept is merely a signpost marking "the limits of rationality in dealing with the mystery of origin" (Reinhold Niebuhr). That is, the idea of creation out of nothing is said to be "the dividing line between intelligibility and mystery" (Niebuhr). We freely recognize, of course, that the creation of the universe is a mystery in the sense that human reason cannot explain it in terms of scientific laws. That is just another way of saying that God cannot be explained; in other words, that God is God and not man. But we accept the doctrine of creation out of nothing **literally**. We believe that the personal living God, by His almighty power, gave existence to the universe. This is taught not only in Genesis 1:1, but in the New Testament as well. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3). Modern theology says that the idea of creation out of nothing is the boundary between intelligibility and mystery; but the Bible says "through faith we understand. . .".

## **2. The preparation of the earth for human habitation. 1:2-25**

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (verse 2). We must now consider a common popular interpretation which holds that this verse ought to be translated "And the earth became without form and void. . .". The **Scotfield Reference Bible** places between verse 1 and verse 2 the caption "Earth made waste and empty by judgment." The theory is that after the original creation, mentioned in verse 1, this earth was the habitation of angels, and that when Satan and other angels fell into sin, God wrecked the earth in His righteous wrath, with the result that the earth "became" waste and void.

This is an interesting theory, but it is purely speculative. There is no real ground whatever for holding it to be true. Those of our readers who wish a fuller discussion of this peculiar interpretation are referred to the January-March 1949 issue of this magazine, pages 41-42, where the theory is discussed and answered in some detail. An excellent comment on it is also found in **Prophecy and the church**, by Dr. Oswald T. Allis, pages 268-9. Dr. Allis states that "There is no convincing reason for changing the first 'was' of Gen. 1:2 into 'became'." He adds: "The most natural interpreta-

tion of this verse is, we believe, that it describes the state of created and unorganized matter, when God began to fashion the cosmos by the eight creative fiat of vss. 3-27" (page 269).

We believe that Dr. Allis' interpretation of verse 2 is correct. Verse 1 states the creation of the universe out of nothing; verse 2 is a description of the created earth in its original condition, unordered and confused, as it existed prior to the acts of God which are described in the rest of the chapter.

Without form, and void, and moreover dark — such was the original condition of the created earth. But this was changed by the subsequent activity of God. "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." God is the author and source, not only of matter, but also of order and form. Specifically, the Holy Spirit is the source of the law and order, beauty and form, which exist in the universe. What is stated here is the **cosmic** activity of the Holy Spirit, His activity in the realm of nature. This is distinguished from the **moral and spiritual** activity of the Holy Spirit, by which He convicts men of sin, causes them to be born again, and sanctifies them. In the natural realm, as truly as in the moral and spiritual realm, the Holy Spirit is the source of form, order and beauty. The results of the Holy Spirit's moving upon the face of the deep are stated in the verses which follow.

We now come to the successive acts of God by which the earth was ordered and made ready for the habitation of mankind. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day" (verses 3-5).

The work of God on the first of the six days was to create light. Formerly this was much ridiculed in view of the fact that the sun does not appear until the fourth day (verses 14-19). This however does not present any real difficulty. There is more than one possible explanation. The following comments of Augustus H. Strong may be helpful: "The beginning of activity in matter would manifest itself by the production of light, since light is resultant of molecular activity. This corresponds to the statement in verse 3. . . Here we have a day without a sun. . .". Coming to the fourth day, Strong says: "The vapors which have hitherto shrouded the planet are now cleared away as preliminary to the introduction of life in its higher animal forms. The consequent appearance of solar light is described in verses 16 and 17 as a making of the sun, moon and stars, and a giving of them as luminaries to the earth. Compare Gen. 9-13 — 'I do set my bow in the cloud.' As the rainbow had existed in nature be-

fore, but was now appointed to serve a peculiar purpose, so in the record of creation sun, moon and stars, which existed before, were appointed as visible lights for the earth, — and that for the reason that the earth was no longer self-luminous, and the light of the sun struggling through the earth's encompassing clouds was not sufficient for the higher forms of life which were to come" (*Systematic Theology*, by A. H. Strong, one-volume edition (1912), pages 395-6).

Dr. Louis Berkhof points out that the word translated "lights" in verses 14-16 is not the common Hebrew word for "light" but the word (*ma'or*) which properly means not "lights" but "light-bearers". He adds: "In view of the fact that light is the condition of all life, it was but natural that it should be created first. God also at once instituted the alternation of light and darkness, calling the light day and the darkness night. We are not told, however, how this alternation was effected" (*Systematic Theology*, by L. Berkhof, one-volume edition (1949), page 155). That is to say, the sun *existed* before the fourth day, but was not effective as a light-bearer until the fourth day. The light created on the first day was not sunlight but came from some other source — as Strong states it, the earth was self-luminous. It is not necessary for us to speculate further into the source and nature of this primeval light, nor to try to explain the mystery of the original separation of light from darkness.

"And the evening and the morning were the first day." It is to be noted that "the days are not reckoned from evening to evening, but from morning to morning. After twelve hours there was evening, and after another twelve hours there was morning" (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 155).

We must now consider the question of whether the six days of Genesis 1 are to be considered as literal 24-hour days, or are to be regarded as long periods of time. The most natural interpretation, certainly, is that they are literal days. Indeed, it is safe to say that except for the pressure of desire to harmonize the statements of Genesis with the theories of geology, hardly anyone would hold that long periods of time are meant. For those interested in a rather complete summary of what can be said on both sides of this question, the reader is referred to Dr. Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*, one-volume edition (1949), pages 152-155. Both views have been held by orthodox Bible scholars, who believe in the plenary inspiration and infallibility of the Bible.

The repeatedly used expression "and there was evening and there was morning" strongly favors the view that the days were literal 24-hour days. If long periods of geological time were meant, each "day" would then have thousands or millions of evenings and mornings. According to

the view that the days were long periods of time, the terms "evening" and "morning" are merely figures of speech for "end of a period" and "beginning of a period." But such usage would be highly sophisticated and contrary to the simplicity of language used in the early chapters of Genesis.

Another strong argument for the literal 24-hour day interpretation is found in the institution of the Sabbath. God worked six days and rested on the seventh day. If the seventh day was an ordinary 24-hour day, then by implication the previous six days were also ordinary 24-hour days. We cannot suppose that the Sabbath was a period of thousands or millions of years. Yet it would be highly arbitrary to hold that only this one day was a 24-hour day and the previous six were geological periods.

Another argument for the literal 24-hour interpretation is based on the fact that on the first day, nothing was done but to create light and separate the light from the darkness. If this first day was a long period of time, the question arises why should it require thousands or millions of years to create light and divide it from darkness? In the case of this first day, the geological-period idea is very unnatural and forced.

Still another argument consists in the consideration that the fifth, sixth and seventh days must have been ordinary days of 24-hours each, because they were determined by the sun just as days are today. But if these last three days were ordinary days, then the presumption is that the previous four days were also days of 24 hours each.

Although neither view is without its difficulties, it would seem that on the whole the literal interpretation is to be preferred. Accordingly, in the subsequent lessons of this series, we shall regard the days of Genesis 1 as literal 24-hour days.

#### Questions:

1. What is meant by saying that God created the universe out of nothing?
2. Is the doctrine of creation out of nothing accepted by most "modern" theologians?
3. What does creation out of nothing mean to Reinhold Niebuhr?
4. What verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches the doctrine of creation out of nothing?
5. What special interpretation of verse 2 is taught by the *Scotfield Reference Bible* and many other writers?
6. Why do we not accept the *Scotfield Bible's* teaching that the earth "became" waste and void as a result of divine judgment on Satan?
7. What is the true interpretation of the first part of verse 2?

8. What kind of activity of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the second part of verse 2?

9. What other kind of activity of the Holy Spirit is set forth in the Bible?

10. Can science really explain the law and order in the world without belief in God?

11. Why has the statement of verse 3, that God created light on the first day, been ridiculed by some people?

12. How can we explain the fact that light was created on the first day, whereas the sun is not mentioned until the fourth day?

13. What is the exact meaning of the Hebrew word for "lights" in verses 14-16? Why is this exact meaning important?

14. Were the days of Genesis 1 reckoned from evening to evening or from morning to morning?

15. What is the most natural interpretation as to the length of the days of Genesis 1?

16. What pressure explains the desire of many people to interpret these days as long periods of time?

17. What argument in favor of literal 24-hour days is drawn from the expression "and there was evening and there was morning"?

18. What argument in favor of the literal 24-hour day interpretation is based on the seventh day, or the Sabbath?

19. What argument in favor of literal 24-hour days is derived from the fact that on the first day God did nothing but create light and divide it from darkness?

20. What argument in favor of the literal 24-hour day interpretation is derived from the obvious nature of the fifth, sixth and seventh days?

#### LESSON 4

We now wish to call attention to a remarkable article on this subject which was published in the January 1954 issue of **HIS**, a magazine of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. The article, which appears on page 6 ff. of the January issue, is entitled **Creation and Deluge**, by Dr. Henry M. Morris, a professional civil engineer and scientist. Following a very striking presentation of the evidence, Dr. Morris argues strongly in favor of the literal interpretation of the creation days. He holds that the literal interpretation is the only one which really fits the Biblical data, adding that all theories which attempt to harmonize the Genesis account with the doctrines of evolutionary geology require so much "juggling of the plain sense of the account as in effect to amount to its rejection."

Chapter 1 verses 2-25 describes the preparation and ordering of the earth for human habitation. Everything that is stated looks forward to the creation of man as the climax and crown of God's creation. All the lower creation is calculated to glorify God **indirectly**, by being used and enjoyed by the human race. Man, on the other hand, is to glorify God self-consciously and directly, for man alone was created in the image of God. The lower creation glorifies God through man. Man is the mirror by which the lower creation reflects the divine glory. This is beautifully suggested by Psalm 8.

Evolutionary science completely disregards the fact that the lower creation was deliberately planned and prepared for the benefit of man. According to the evolutionists, not only did the earth and living organisms exist for millions of years without man, but it is due to mere chance that man appeared and that he found the earth and its contents suited to his needs. Evolutionary

scientists scoff at the idea that the vast amounts of coal and oil which exist underground were planned and providentially prepared by God for the benefit of the human race. They hold that it is a mere coincidence that man can utilize coal and oil.

All theories of evolution which deserve to be called evolution are ruled out by the creation account of Genesis. Some people, it is true, have used the term evolution in an improper sense, as meaning the development of varieties within a single natural species, such as the many breeds and varieties of pigeons which have been produced from the original wild pigeon. This, however, is not properly called evolution. Real evolution involves the crossing of the boundary lines between species. It implies that there are no absolute, hard and fast lines between species, but that one species can gradually, in the course of time, develop into another. For example, birds are said to have developed from reptiles, and reptiles in turn from still more primitive organisms.

This theory of development cannot be reconciled with the repeated statement of Genesis 1 that God created distinct living organisms, each "after its kind." These "kinds" spoken of in Genesis 1 are the **true natural species**. There may be great development within any one "kind", but one "kind" can never develop into another "kind". The species as defined by scientists may often be artificial, being in reality only varieties of a single natural species. Thus the dog, wolf and coyote, for example, have been proved to be a single natural species, all of which can interbreed freely. The fox, on the other hand, is of a different "kind", and cannot interbreed with the dog, wolf or coyote.

When we say that God created definite "kinds" of plants and animals, we do not mean that everything called a species by modern scientists was specially created by God. We do mean, however, that God created definite natural species, each of which was distinct from all others and could never be any other species. How many "kinds" God created, we cannot say. Certainly the number must have been much less than the number of "species" recognized by modern scientists. Each "kind" created by God may have contained within itself the power to produce many varieties, some of which may be classified as "species" by scientists.

The words "after its kind" imply that there is a God-ordained barrier between true natural species. Each of the "kinds" was specially created by God.

Consistent evolution is atheistic; it does not take God into account. It holds that living forms developed of themselves, without divine plan or control. There is, however, a theory known as "theistic evolution" which holds that evolution was God's method of creation of living things. This is really a contradiction in terms, for "theistic" means "connected with belief in God", while "evolution" means "developing of itself without outside control." This idea of "theistic evolution" is not consistent, and it has been held chiefly by religious scholars who were embarrassed by the claims of unbelieving scientists. Really "theistic evolution" is ruled out by the Genesis account just as truly as atheistic evolution. Those who talk about "creation by evolution" do not understand the real meaning of the terms "creation" and "evolution." Creation is by definition supernatural; evolution is by definition a natural process. To speak of "creation by evolution" is like speaking of an honest thief, or a truthful liar.

The question of creation *versus* evolution is important for three reasons: (1) The language used in Genesis 1 requires the acceptance of creation and the rejection of evolution. (2) Only creation is in accord with the Bible teaching on the original righteousness and perfection of the human race. (3) Accepting evolution means rejecting or diluting the supernatural element in the Bible. Those who reduce the supernatural element in Genesis 1 will tend to do the same all along the line. They will too often minimize the supernatural in connection with prophecy, miracles, the virgin birth of Christ, His bodily resurrection, His second coming, etc. Once we start giving up the supernaturalism of the Bible it is hard to find a stopping place. The tendency is to seek consistency by giving up more and more of the supernatural.

### 3. The creation of man. 1:26, 27

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . ." The plural pronouns "us" and "our" which are used here are to

be regarded as one of the Old Testament suggestions of the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity — 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 — is fully revealed only in the New Testament, but there are a number of traces or suggestions of this doctrine in the Old Testament, of which verse 26 presents one.

Man was made in the image and likeness of God. Some have tried to make a distinction between the image and the likeness of God. This is possible but not certain. Such parallel expressions of the same idea are common in Hebrew literature. For example, in Psalm 14:7 we read: "Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad." Here "Jacob" is identical with "Israel", and "rejoice" means the same as "be glad."

What is meant by the "image" and "likeness" of God? Many people have stumbled over this verse because they wrongly took for granted that a **physical** resemblance to God must be meant. Some have even supposed that the verse teaches that God exists in the physical form of man, and have ridiculed the Bible because of this supposed teaching. As God is a pure Spirit, having no body or form, a physical resemblance to God cannot be meant. Yet there is a sense in which man resembles God.

Alone of all the creatures, man was created in the image of God. The "image of God," then, not only indicates man's resemblance to God, but also marks man off as different from all other creatures in this world. Because he possesses the image of God, man is like God and different from the animals.

Orthodox theology holds that the image of God in man consists of knowledge, righteousness and holiness (**Westminster Confession of Faith, IV.2. Larger Catechism, 17. Shorter Catechism, 10**). Man resembles God, then, in the possession of a rational nature and in the possession of a moral nature. Man, unlike the animals, can think and reason; man, unlike the animals, is capable of distinguishing between right and wrong. Or we might say that man, unlike the animals, possesses personality and character. When man was created by God, his personality and character were perfect. Man was then capable of perfectly reflecting the glory of God. It is even correct to say that man as created was a perfect, though finite (limited) replica of the Godhead.

All this has been sadly changed, of course, by man's fall into sin. Today man exists in a state of sin and misery. He still possesses the image of God, but only in a damaged and broken form. It is only by grace, through divine redemption in the plan of salvation, that the image of God in man can finally be fully restored.

As created, man was to have dominion over all other creatures in this world. This also marks man as the bearer of the image of God. In a limited and subordinate sense man was to be the ruler of the world. He was to be God's representative in ruling over the creatures. Man as created was perfectly in harmony with the will of God; therefore he was qualified to hold dominion, as God's representative, over the creatures. When man was created, the whole world was subject to him. Nature and the world of nature was man's friend and servant, not man's enemy. It was only through sin that man partially lost his dominion over the creatures, and nature became man's foe through the curse which God pronounced (3:17-19).

Man was created male and female (1:27). This is stated in greater detail in chapter 2. We shall discuss it in that connection instead of here.

#### Questions:

1. What is the view taken by Dr. Henry M. Morris as to the days of creation?
2. What is the climax and crown of God's creation?
3. What is the difference between the way man glorifies God and the way the lower creation glorifies God?
4. What fact about the lower creation is disregarded by evolutionary scientists?
5. What is the difference between evolution and the development of varieties within a single species?
6. What is implied by the phrase "after its kind" in Genesis 1?
7. Are the "kinds" spoken of in Genesis 1 the same as the species recognized by modern scientists? If not, what is the difference?

8. What is meant by the statement "Consistent evolution is atheistic"?

9. Why is "theistic evolution" not a consistent theory?

10. What is wrong with speaking of "creation by evolution"?

11. Give three reasons why the question of creation **versus** evolution is important.

12. What is the effect of accepting evolution on people's attitude toward the supernatural element in the Bible?

13. What is suggested by the plural pronouns "us" and "our" in verse 26?

14. In what part of the Bible is the doctrine of the Trinity fully revealed?

15. Is there a difference between the "image" and "likeness" of God?

16. How can we be sure that the terms "image" and "likeness" do not mean a physical resemblance between God and man?

17. What fact marks man off from all the animals?

18. Of what does the image of God in man consist?

19. How does the image of God in man today differ from what it was when mankind was created?

20. How can the image of God in man be fully restored?

21. Why was man appointed to have dominion over all the other creatures?

22. What was the original relation between nature and mankind?

23. What has been the effect of sin on man's dominion over the creatures?

## LESSON 5

### I. The Creation of the Universe, the World and Man. 1:1 to 2:3, Continued

#### 4. The first divine revelation to man. 1:28-30

In these verses we have the first divine revelation to the human race, that is, the first direct or special revelation of God to man. God is revealed to man in two ways, namely (1) through nature, and (2) by His Word. Divine revelation through nature includes two parts, namely (1) nature outside of man, and (2) nature inside of man, or human nature.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). The whole realm of nature outside of man

reveals the true God. Everything in heaven and earth speaks to man of the true God. This is divine revelation through nature outside of man. This revelation, the apostle Paul declares in Romans 1:20, speaks to man of God's eternal power and divinity. It is only because of human sin that many people today fail to see God in nature clearly. At the creation of the human race, all nature spoke to man clearly of the true God.

But there was also revelation of God in nature **inside** of man, that is, through human nature. The knowledge and law of the true God was written on the human heart and conscience (Romans 2:14, 15). This too has been dimmed and distorted by human sin, as is very evident from the many false ideas of God which exist in the world. But

at the creation man found a clear revelation of the true God in his own constitution. The Word of God was written into his being.

We should realize that revelation through nature was never sufficient for man's needs. There never was a time when revelation through nature did not need to be supplemented by revelation through God's Word. From the very beginning of his life, man needed and received God's special revelation, God's Word.

This needs to be emphasized today because there is a very common misunderstanding of this matter. Many people seem to have the idea that it was only after man sinned that special revelation by God's Word became necessary. It seems to be a common idea that before the Fall the revelation through nature was sufficient, but after man's fall into sin, special revelation through God's Word became necessary.

This common idea is, however, contrary to the clear facts in the case. The facts show that man needed and received special revelation by God's Word **even before he fell into sin**. Special revelation — the direct Word of God supernaturally revealed — did not first become necessary when man became a sinner needing salvation. It was necessary for man's life in the state of innocence, even before the Fall. In short, God's revelation through nature was never intended to stand alone. It was never intended to be sufficient of itself. From the very beginning it was intended only as the background for God's direct revelation by His Word. This is brought out in 1:28-30, and even more clearly in chapter 2 where the Covenant of Works was revealed to man.

So in 1:28-30 we have the first direct Word of God to man. When we call this a direct Word of God to man, we do not of course mean **Scripture**. It was not a written Word but only a spoken Word of God. Not until long afterwards, in the time of Moses, did a **written** Word of God come into existence. But the spoken Word was as truly the Word of God as the later written Word was.

We have in these verses God's mandate or commission to the human race concerning man's relation to the earth. Man as God's representative is to rule as king over the earth. He is to have dominion over all the creatures lower than himself.

God blessed mankind. Man, being perfect, could properly receive the blessing of his Creator. We must remember that this was before the entrance of sin.

God's commission to the human race includes three elements: (1) A command to multiply and fill the earth with people; (2) a command to subdue the earth and hold dominion over the creatures; (3) an appointment concerning human

food. To these there is added in verse 30 an appointment concerning the food of the creatures lower than man.

"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." The word "replenish" here simply means "fill"; it does not convey the meaning which is suggested by the King James Version of **refilling** an earth which had previously been filled and later emptied. The Hebrew word contains no such idea; it simply means "fill." Mankind existed in an empty, unpopulated world which God had prepared that it might be filled with people.

The second part of God's commission to man was: subdue the earth, and have dominion over the creatures. The realm of nature was to be material for man's workmanship. Nature was a package wrapped up by God, which man was to unwrap and utilize for his own life and welfare. We must remember that before sin entered, nature was entirely favorable to man. The curse on nature had not yet come. The harsh features of nature as we know them today did not exist. Man was not at the mercy of wild beasts, devastating storms, extremes of cold and heat, floods and droughts, thorns and thistles, as he came to be after he sinned against God. Before he sinned, man faced a ideal environment. It was a world perfectly suited to his habitation and his needs.

This perfect world was to be subdued to man's needs. That is, it was to be taken advantage of and used. This divine mandate includes the whole range of scientific discovery and technology. Nature with its materials and its laws was there awaiting man's study and use. Rightly understood, Genesis 1:28 includes the harnessing of Niagara Falls to generate electric power for man's use and comfort; it includes such inventions as steamships, aircraft and radio, by which great distances are bridged and nature more fully reduced to man's service. In short, man's conquest of nature with its forces and laws, is included in this divine mandate of Genesis 1:28. Think what a wonderful story this would have been if sin had not entered in to mar and soil everything human!

With regard to the third part of the divine commission, we note that at the beginning God appointed vegetable food for the human race. At a later period (Gen. 9:3) animal food was permitted, but in the beginning vegetable food was appointed for man's needs. Similarly, vegetable food was appointed for the animals. This brings us to the end of the sixth day of creation — the end of God's work of creation. Looking upon His completed creation, God pronounced it very good.

##### 5. The origin and divine authority of the Sabbath. 1:31 to 2:3

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the sev-

enth day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."

This passage of Scripture shows that the Sabbath as an institution existed long before the time of Moses. Those who regard the Sabbath as merely a part of the Old Testament ceremonial law and who hold that it has been abrogated and is not binding on Christians, forget that the Sabbath is as old as the human race. It is one of two institutions that have come down from before the Fall (the Sabbath and marriage). The passage we have before us implies that the Sabbath was the subject of an early revelation of God to mankind. We should note that in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:10, 11) the requirement of Sabbath observance is specifically based on the fact that "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." "The Sabbath is not only the most venerable, it is likewise the most living of all the sacramental realities of our religion. It has faithfully accompanied the people of God on their march through the ages" (G. Vos, **Biblical Theology**, p. 155; copyright 1948 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.).

When we read that God "rested" on the seventh day from His work, we should not think of rest as relief from weariness or fatigue. God, being almighty and unchangeable, cannot become tired as man does. In the Bible the word "rest" has a more positive meaning than we attach to it today. Here in Genesis 2:2 the meaning is that a great work had been accomplished, and God paused in joy and satisfaction over this. Man is to imitate God in the succession of work and rest. This is not only true of the weekly Sabbath — a day of rest following six days of work — but it is true of the history of the world as a whole. God's resting on the Sabbath following His work on the six days of creation is a type of the course of human history. There is to be an age-long history of toil and effort, followed by an eternal Sabbath of rest. Human history will not go on indefinitely. It is to have a consummation; it is to be followed by the Sabbath rest of eternity. This idea of history is brought out by the New Testament (Hebrews chapters 3 and 4, with Psalm 95) — "There remaineth therefore a rest (a sabbath rest, ARV) to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). Human life is not aimless and meaningless; it is directed toward a goal.

It is a mistake, therefore, to regard the Sabbath as grounded primarily in considerations of practical usefulness. We have seen many tracts and articles on the Sabbath which make this mistake. They argue that we should observe the

Sabbath because of the practical benefits that accrue from a weekly day of rest, and the advantages to the Church and religion that come from a weekly day of worship. It is true, of course, that Sabbath observance brings great benefits of physical and mental rest to man; indeed, this feature is stressed in the Sabbath commandment as found in Deut. 5:12-15. It is true, also, that faithful Sabbath observance tends greatly to advance the cause of the Church and religion. In fact, it would be hard to over-emphasize the real benefits that result from faithful observance of the Sabbath. Yet, in spite of all this, it should be realized that these practical benefits do not constitute the sole reason, nor even the main reason, for Sabbath observance. It is quite possible that the prevalent neglect of the Sabbath which exists at the present day may be due, at least in part, to regarding the Sabbath only in terms of practical benefits, while losing sight almost entirely of the typical or sacramental meaning of the Sabbath.

"The Sabbath is not in the first place a means of advancing religion. It has its main significance apart from that, in pointing forward to the eternal issues of life and history. . . It is a serious question whether the modern church has not too much lost sight of this by making the day well-nigh exclusively an instrument of religious propaganda, at the expense of its eternity-typifying value" (G. Vos, **Biblical Theology**, p. 157; copyright 1948 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.).

Every week we are reminded by the return of the Sabbath that human life has eternity for its goal. Every week we are reminded by the return of the Sabbath that human history will have a consummation; that there will be an end of the world, followed by eternity. Perhaps if the Church in its teaching of the duty of Sabbath observance had stressed this primary meaning of the Sabbath more strongly, Christian people would have been inclined to take Sabbath observance more seriously. No discussion of the Sabbath which places the emphasis on the idea that it **pays to keep the Sabbath** can do justice to the Sabbath. The main emphasis should be placed upon the religious meaning and importance of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a weekly recurring sample of eternity. It should always recall to the believer's mind the truth that eternity is the goal of human life and of world history.

#### Questions:

1. In what two ways is God revealed to man?
2. What two parts are included in God's revelation through nature?
3. Why is it that people fail to see God clearly in nature today?
4. What did man at his creation find within himself?

5. What common false notion exists concerning the relation of God's two ways of revelation to mankind?

6. How can it be shown that God's revelation through nature was never sufficient for man's needs?

7. What was the true purpose or function of God's revelation through nature?

8. Does "the Word of God" always mean Scripture?

9. When did Scripture first come to exist?

10. What was man's position with reference to the earth?

11. What three elements are contained in God's mandate to the human race?

12. What is the meaning of the word "replenish" in 1:28?

13. What was involved in God's mandate to man to subdue the earth?

14. What was the difference between the world of nature as it was then, and nature as it exists today?

15. What kind of food did God originally appoint for the human race? When was this appointment changed?

16. How old is the Sabbath institution?

17. What institutions have come down from before the Fall?

18. How can we prove that God did not need to rest because He was tired?

19. What is the real meaning of God's "rest" in Genesis 2:2?

20. In what respect is man to imitate God?

21. How does the Sabbath typify human history as a whole?

22. Is the Sabbath based primarily on reasons of practical usefulness?

23. How could the Church make its teaching on the Sabbath more Biblical?

24. Of what should the weekly return of the Sabbath remind us?

25. What is meant by saying that the Sabbath is a sample of eternity?

## LESSON 6

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26

#### 1. The original state of man. 2:4-15

"These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens" (2:4). This is the first occurrence of the word "generations" (*toledoth*) in the book of Genesis. This term marks the beginning of a new section of the book, wherein the subject matter is narrowed down to something more specific than what had preceded. The part of the book preceding this dealt with the universe, the world and man. Now the subject matter is to be narrowed down to the history of the human race.

Some critics have claimed that chapter 2 presents a second account of the creation, different in some respects from that in chapter 1. The idea of these critics is that these were originally distinct accounts, which later were both incorporated in the book of Genesis. This theory of the critics is without proof, however. The true explanation is that the account in chapter 2 is by the same writer as that in chapter 1, and that chapter 2 gives additional details, especially about the creation of man and the relation of God to the human race. There is no need to suppose that the two accounts are by different authors; far less is there any contradiction between them.

Verse 5 is a continuation of the sentence be-

gun in verse 4. It describes a condition of the earth prior to the creation of man. It had not yet rained, yet there was moisture in the form of a mist from the earth which "watered the whole face of the ground." Thus there existed favorable conditions for the growth of vegetation, even without rain.

In verse 6 we have a definite account of the creation of man: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." In this verse we learn of (1) the origin of man's physical body; (2) the origin of man's soul or life.

Man's body was formed by God out of "the dust of the ground," that is, the substances existing in the soil or in nature. Thus in the creation of man's body, God used material which was already in existence. This does not imply, however, that man is descended from animals which existed before him. The theory of organic evolution holds, of course, that man's physical body developed from the body of some kind of animal; usually it is held that man and the higher apes have a common ancestry. Some evolutionists have held that only man's body was developed by evolution from a brute ancestry, while his soul was directly created by God. Some Roman Catholic scholars have favored this view.

We believe, on the contrary, that man's body was specially created by God and not derived from

a brute ancestry. The expression "the dust of the ground" cannot mean living animals nourished by plants which originally came from the ground. Of none of the other creatures does the record say that they were formed of "the dust of the ground." Rather, it uses such languages of them as "let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that hath life" (1:20) and "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind" (1:24). But of man it says "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." Genesis 3:19 also shows that "the dust of the ground" does not mean living animals; there God tells Adam, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." If "the dust of the ground" in 2:7 means living animals from which man was descended, then the terms "dust" and "ground" in 3:19 must imply that Adam would return to a former animal state — something which is obviously absurd and contrary to the meaning of 3:19, which is simply that Adam would die and his body would decay, thus returning to dust.

Another Scripture text which disproves the theory of an animal origin of man's body is 1 Cor. 15:39, "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." This certainly implies that the flesh of man is different from that of the beasts, and could not have been derived from them.

Nor does the structural similarity between man and animals prove that man's body is descended from an animal ancestry. Man has blood and bones, stomach and liver, teeth and hair, brain and nerves, as the animals have. But this does not prove his descent from them. It only shows that in forming man's body, God followed the same general plan that He used in the case of the animals, since man was to live in the same environment with them. Man would be exposed to the same sunlight, would breathe the same air, eat the same food, drink the same water, as the animals; therefore God wisely formed man's body on the same general plan as that of the animals. All this proves is that man and the animals were made by the same God, and were intended to live in the same world. Steamships, houses and blast furnaces all have chimneys, but this does not prove that they were developed one from another; it only proves that they all burn fuel.

We conclude, then, that "the dust of the ground" in 2:7 means inorganic material substance which already existed, and was used by God to form the physical body of man; it does not and cannot mean the living bodies of lower animals.

God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." This describes the creation of the spiritual part of man. Un-

like man's body, his soul was created out of nothing. It was the creation of the spirit or soul that made man alive: he "became a living soul," that is, a living being. The Hebrew words for "a living soul" in 2:7 are identical with the words translated "living creature" in 1:24. But of man alone it is said that God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Clearly, the principle of life which man received from God was different from that received by the animals. From other parts of the Bible we know that man received a spirit or soul that can never die. Compare Eccles. 3:21, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" Modern materialism teaches that man dies like the beasts, and death ends all. The Bible, on the contrary, teaches that man has a living spirit or soul that can never die.

It is a common idea at the present day that the original state of mankind was a state of savagery, from which human civilization has slowly developed. This idea, however, is quite contrary to the account of early mankind given in the Bible. According to the Biblical record, mankind originated in a state of simple civilization and of moral uprightness. From this original condition the great majority of the human race **degenerated** to the condition of crime, violence and lawlessness which existed just before the Flood (Gen. 6:5, 11-13). This degenerate civilization was wiped out by the Flood, and humanity had a new start with the family of Noah. After the Flood, large sections of the human race again degenerated as they rejected the knowledge of the true God (Romans 1:20-32). "The savage and primitive" peoples which have existed in ancient and modern times are to be explained as products of retrogression. They are branches of the human race which have deteriorated from the original civilization and moral uprightness of mankind. The head-hunters of Borneo are not really "primitive people"; they are really people far advanced in their degeneration. Evolutionists take for granted that man originally was a savage and has gradually developed into a gentleman; the truth is that man originally was a gentleman, and rapidly degenerated into a savage in many parts of the world. It cannot be denied, of course, that there have been, and still are, peoples which exist in gross ignorance, savagery and lawlessness; there have been "cave men" and men with a "stone age" culture. These facts are well known. But such peoples are not really "primitive"; rather, they are **degenerate**.

Dan Crawford, the famous missionary to Africa, found African tribes with languages so complicated that no living member of the tribe could understand the structure of the grammar; they used the language as it had come down to them from their ancestors. In his book **Thinking Black** he tells how some of these languages can express subtle distinctions which can be expressed

in English only by a clumsy detour. Where did these "primitive" people get their highly complex language, which they themselves did not and could not analyze? If the story of mankind has been a steady upward climb from savagery to civilization, as evolution implies, such facts cannot be explained. The true explanation must be that these tribes at one time in their history must have had a much higher civilization and intellectual activity.

So the Bible portrays the home of the earliest people not as a jungle but as a garden. "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and he put there the man whom he had formed." The exact location of the garden of Eden cannot be determined, but it was certainly in the Near East, as shown by the mention of the Euphrates River. The name "Eden" means "pleasantness" or "delight." When we think of the garden of Eden, we should not think in terms of modern gardens consisting of perhaps half an acre of land. The reference to the great rivers shows that Eden was a large tract of country. Davis' **Bible Dictionary** states that "The site of the garden of Eden is most probably to be sought about the head of the Persian Gulf." This is the region which later became known as Babylonia.

This home prepared by God for the first people was an ideal environment. Today that region of the earth is mostly an arid desert, owing to the progressive drying up of that part of the world. It was evidently quite different in the period before the Flood. The Bible pictures it as a very fertile and productive region. It is highly probable that the climate was mild and pleasant at all seasons of the year. In this garden God made to grow "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food."

Of the rivers that are mentioned, only two can be identified today with certainty, namely the Euphrates and the Tigris (Hiddekel). Note that the account speaks of **one river** which "went out of Eden to water the garden" (2:10), and then "parted, and became into four heads." A glance at a map will show that the Tigris and the Euphrates become a single river some distance before they reach the Persian Gulf. Presumably, then, the statement about the river parting and becoming four heads means that **as one goes upstream** the river had four branches or sources, which finally merged in one channel for the last part of the journey to the sea. As to two of these there is no doubt; they are the Tigris and the Euphrates. The other two rivers named (Pison and Gihon) must have been other tributary streams which drained into the Tigris or the Euphrates. We should realize that the great Flood of Noah's day may have greatly altered the drainage and topography of the region. In view of this fact, it is remarkable that we can identify even two of the rivers named with certainty today.

The land of Havilah (2:11) is regarded as a region of Arabia. The Ethiopia mentioned in verse 13 could not have been the country of Africa commonly known as Ethiopia, for the connection with the Euphrates requires a location in Asia. The Hebrew word translated "Ethiopia" is **Kush**. Evidently a region of southwestern Asia was called **Kush**, as well as the more commonly known country in Africa.

#### Questions:

1. What is the importance of the word "generations" in 2:14?
2. What should we think of the theory of some critics that chapter 2 presents a distinct account of the creation from that in chapter 1?
3. How was the earth watered before there was rain?
4. What two elements in the creation of man are described in 2:7?
5. What is the theory of organic evolution of man's body?
6. How can it be shown that "the dust of the ground" does not mean the living bodies of animals?
7. How can we explain the similarity of bodily structure which exists between man and the animals?
8. How did the physical body of man become alive?
9. How can it be shown that the principle of life in man is different from that in the animals?
10. What does materialism teach about man's death? What does the Bible teach over against this?
11. What is the common idea today concerning the original state of mankind?
12. What is the Biblical teaching as to the original state of mankind?
13. How can the existence of "primitive" and savage peoples in the world be explained?
14. What fact did Dan Crawford observe concerning certain languages of Africa? What does this imply as to the history of those peoples?
15. In what region of the world was the garden of Eden located?
16. What is the meaning of the name "Eden"?
17. How did the region of the garden of Eden differ from that part of the world today?
18. Of the rivers mentioned in the Genesis account, which can be identified today?
19. How has the topography of the region probably been altered since the days of Adam and Eve?
20. Where was the land of Havilah located?
21. How can it be known that the Ethiopia mentioned in 2:13 was in Asia, not in Africa?

## LESSON 7

## II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

### 1. The original state of man. 2:4-15, continued

Besides the trees that were pleasant to the sight, and good for food, in the garden of Eden, there are two special trees mentioned, namely, the tree of life, which was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. What trees these were we do not know, nor is this important. What is important is the symbolic or sacramental meaning which was attached to these two trees. These two trees were symbols of two religious principles. The tree of life was a symbol of the principle of life. The tree of knowledge of good and evil was a symbol of probation.

The garden of Eden was "the garden of God" (Ezek. 28:13). Thus the first man was placed in **the garden of God**, and in the center of the garden of God was the tree of life, standing for the principle of life. This implies that man's true life can only come from nearness to God. "The truth is thus clearly set forth that life comes from God, that for man it consists in nearness to God, that it is the central concern of God's fellowship with man to impart this" (G. Vos, **Biblical Theology**, p. 38; copyright 1948 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.).

The tree of life symbolized not merely the life which man already possessed, but the highest kind of life to which man could ever attain — it symbolized what is called in the New Testament **eternal life**. This highest kind of life man did not yet possess. For this, he must first pass through a probation or test. We see from Gen. 3:22 that before he sinned man had not yet eaten the fruit of the tree of life. Although there is no record of any command not to eat of it, it seems clear that the right to do so had not yet been given. This is also in accord with the fact that when Adam and Eve sinned, they were barred from the garden of Eden lest they attempt to eat the fruit of the tree of life (3:22, 24).

The other symbolic tree was the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which stood for the principle of probation or testing. As is shown by Gen. 3:3, this tree also was in the center of the garden of Eden. We shall learn more about this tree when we come to the study of verses 16 and 17. For the present, we shall only consider why it was called the "tree of knowledge of good and evil." The wording in the Hebrew implies that the tree stood for the knowledge of good and evil as opposed to each other — good as the opposite of evil, and evil as the opposite of good. Man was created in the image of God and thus had the capacity for moral experience. He was created good, but he had not yet attained the moral maturity of choosing good over against evil. The

probation or test represented by the tree of knowledge of good and evil would bring man to the experience of moral goodness in strong contrast to evil rejected (if he stood the test, by obeying God); or it would bring man to the experience of moral evil in strong contrast to good rejected (if he failed the test, by disobeying God). Either as righteous or as a sinner, man would come to moral maturity through the test symbolized by the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (2:15). Here we see that Adam had work to perform, even before he fell into sin. After the Fall, work became man-killing toil (3:17-19) But before the Fall, work did not have this laborious character. Rather, it was wholesome and beneficial. We should realize that work itself is not a consequence of sin; only the laborious, life-destroying character of work is a consequence of sin. Adam in his sinless condition was not to spend his days in idleness, but in useful activity. And as mankind had work to do before the entrance of sin, so the redeemed will have work to perform in the glory of eternity, after all the consequences of sin have been abolished. The popular notion of heaven as a life of pure idleness, with no other activities than playing harps or waving palm leaves, is utterly unbiblical. Heaven is the Sabbath rest that remains to the people of God. But heaven will also be a state of the most intense activity. For in the sinless, supernatural life of heaven, activity and rest will not be contrary to each other as they are in this sin-cursed world. "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him. . . ." (Rev. 22:3). What that service will include, no one can say on this side of the veil. But that it will not be a state of unbroken idleness we can be sure.

### 2. The Covenant of Works. 2:16, 17

In the preceding section we considered the symbolic meaning of the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We should realize that there was nothing magical about these two trees in themselves. What was important was what they symbolized — the religious meaning attached to them by God. The fruit of the tree of life had no power of itself to confer eternal life on man, nor was the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil poisonous or harmful in itself; on the contrary, it was good for food (3:6).

We have seen that these two trees symbolized two religious principles: the principle of life, and the principle of probation. We must now consider the command which God gave Adam con-

cerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This command is found in 2:16, 17. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Concerning this command, we should note first of all that it was not a harsh or unreasonable command. It did not in the least interfere with man's life, health, or comfort. It did not reduce man to a semi-starvation diet, as Satan insinuated later (3:1). On the contrary, it left abundant provision for the satisfaction of man's needs and desires: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat." If God had permitted man to eat the fruit of only one tree, while forbidding him to eat the fruit of all the rest, perhaps some color might have been given to Satan's insinuation that God was unreasonably harsh in His treatment of man. But such was not the case. Man was permitted to eat the fruit of all the trees, with the exception of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (and, of course, the tree of life).

Why did God command Adam not to eat the fruit of the tree? It is evident from chapter 3 that the fruit of this tree was not evil or harmful in itself; on the contrary, it was "good for food." If the fruit had been poisonous or obviously harmful, then the test would not have been the kind of test God planned. For this test, everything had to depend upon the will of God. If Adam could have discerned other reasons — reasons which appealed to him as sensible and prudent — for leaving the fruit alone, then it would not have been a real test of obedience to the will of God. For an adequate test of obedience, it was necessary that Adam should leave the fruit alone **simply because God had forbidden the eating of it.** This was not to be a test of Adam's sanity, or his intelligence, but of his willingness to obey the will of God. He was called upon to choose good and reject evil, not because he considered it reasonable or beneficial to do so, but out of sheer loyalty and devotion to the nature of God.

In the New Testament (Romans 5:12-21) we have the Holy Spirit's infallible interpretation of the meaning of the test which took place in the garden of Eden. This passage shows that Adam was constituted a "federal" or covenant head of the human race. When he acted, it would be in a representative capacity, not only for himself, but for the human race. Adam was not only the first man and the ancestor of the human race; he was also by the appointment of God the representative of the human race. His conduct in the garden of Eden was thus fraught with consequences for all mankind of all ages. If he stood the test, it would bring deathless, eternal life to

all mankind. If he failed the test (as he actually did), the result would be the reign of sin and death in the human race.

A question arises as to the duration of this test. By its very nature a test or probation cannot be permanent; it must be temporary. The fact of a test implies a time limit. What this time limit would have been, if Adam had not sinned, we cannot say. We do not even know how long Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden. The common notion that it was only a few days is without foundation in the Bible. It may have been quite a long time. But in any case, it seems clear that if Adam had not sinned, a time limit would have been reached, and man would have been given the right to eat the fruit of the tree of life. With that, both sin and death would have become forever impossible to Adam and all his posterity. They would have been confirmed in righteousness as the redeemed saints in heaven are confirmed in righteousness.

God attached a penalty to the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil: "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This statement did not mean that if Adam ate the fruit he would die within 24 hours. It was simply an emphatic way of saying that death would surely follow the eating of the fruit of the tree. For a similar usage, compare 1 Kings 2:37, 42.

"In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" implies not merely the death of the body, but death in the fullest, most awful, absolute sense — death as the penalty of sin (Rom. 5:12). The immediate and obvious reference of the statement is of course to the death of the body. What God said to Adam meant at least that his body would die (compare 3:19). But it must have meant more than that. Life, as symbolized by the tree of life, meant not only physical life but the highest life, life in union with God. Sin brought exclusion from the garden of Eden and from the tree of life which represented the highest life. Since death is the opposite of life, it must follow that the threatened penalty of death included more than merely physical death. It included death in the sense of separation from God, which is sometimes called "spiritual death," and which issues in eternal death, or the second death.

This probation or test in the garden of Eden is called the Covenant of Works, or more properly, the Covenant of Life. It is not spoken of in the Genesis account as a covenant, yet it contains all the features and elements of a covenant. The parties were God, and Adam as the representative of the human race. The test of obedience was the command not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The penalty threatened for disobedience was death. The re-

ward for obedience would be life. This covenant was an arrangement made by God and imposed on man by which man had the opportunity to attain the highest life by obedience to the will of God. The distance between Creator and creature is so great that man could never attain the highest religious communion with God **except by God condescending to approach man and bridge the gap by a covenant.** God took the initiative and built a bridge between Himself and His creature, man, in order that man might have a way of fully glorifying and enjoying God. We should realize that in the Bible God's covenant is not an agreement or compact between God and man as equal negotiating parties; God and man are not equals; God is sovereign and man is subject; God by His absolute authority ordains and **establishes** the covenant, imposing it on man. Man has no part in determining the terms of the covenant arrangement; his part is only to obey.

#### Questions:

1. What two special trees existed in the garden of Eden?
2. In what way are these two trees important?
3. What is the garden of Eden called in Ezek. 28:13?
4. What truth was brought out by the fact that the tree of life was in the midst of the garden of Eden?
5. What kind of life was symbolized by the tree of life?
6. What was necessary before man could possess the highest life?
7. What was symbolized by the tree of knowledge of good and evil?
8. Where was the tree of knowledge of good and evil located? What verse proves this?
9. How was man to attain moral maturity?
10. What two possible kinds of moral matur-

ity were represented by the tree of knowledge of good and evil?

11. How can it be shown that God's command to Adam was not a harsh or unreasonable command?
12. What did Satan later insinuate concerning this command?
13. What verse shows that the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was not in itself harmful or poisonous?
14. What was necessary for an adequate test of man's obedience?
15. What New Testament passage gives the Holy Spirit's infallible interpretation of the probation in the garden of Eden?
16. Besides being the ancestor of all mankind, what relation did Adam have to the human race?
17. What would have been the result if Adam had stood the test?
18. What would be the result of Adam failing the test?
19. What can be said about the duration of the probation in Eden?
20. What was meant by the statement: "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"?
21. What kind of death was meant by the statement "thou shalt surely die"? How can this be shown?
22. What two names are given in theology to the test in the garden of Eden?
23. Why was a covenant necessary for man to attain the highest life?
24. Who took the initiative in establishing the covenant?
25. Why is it incorrect to speak of God's covenant with man as an "agreement"?

### LESSON 8

#### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

##### 3. The creation of Eve. 2:18-25

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him" (2:18). Although Adam was created first, it was not the divine intention that he should remain single and alone. First the personality of Adam is brought out in contrast to the non-personality of the animals. The animals were created for the service and benefit of man-

kind, but they are not on a par with man, and cannot meet his need for personal companionship.

In verses 19, 20 we have the beginning of human science. Adam, in obedience to God and as God's representative, gave names to all the living creatures. "And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field . . .". This is the beginning of scientific classification and research — a project which has contin-

ued to the present day, and is not yet completed. We note that Adam had work not only for his body (2:15) but also for his mind. He was not only to be a gardener, but also a scientist. All this is part of God's original mandate to man to "subdue the earth." The first step in subduing the earth and having dominion over the creatures is to give names to the creatures.

Real scientific investigation and research is not contrary to true religion. Rather, it is a God-given task which is incumbent on the human race. If man had not fallen into sin, scientific inquiry would have developed without any conflict between science and religion. It was only because of man's fall into sin, which had the effect of darkening man's mind so that he could not think straight (Rom. 1:21,22). The result of this darkening of the human mind was the rise of false science.

The animals afforded material for Adam's intellectual activity, but since they lacked personality, they could not meet his personal and social needs. "But for Adam there was not found a help meet for him." This brings us to the account of the creation of Eve.

The creation of Eve from a bone taken from Adam's body has long been a butt of ridicule on the part of scoffers against the Bible. Even among the more serious-minded this incident is often represented as a myth comparable to the myths of ancient Greece. We should realize, however, that there is nothing incredible or even improbable in the story. Moreover there was an adequate reason why God created Eve in this way.

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man."

Adam was created, as to his physical body, out of "the dust of the ground" (2:7). Why was not Eve created in the same manner? And why did not God create both Adam and Eve at the same time? As to the last question, perhaps the reason why God did not create Eve at the same time as Adam was that Adam should learn his need of Eve through the process described in verses 18-20. It was only after Adam had become aware of the failure of the lower creation to provide a help meet for him, that God created Eve and brought her to Adam.

As to the question why Eve was not formed of the dust of the ground as Adam had been, the most probable explanation is that the organic unity of the human race required the derivation of the entire race from a single individual, who would

thus be not only the source of the life of all, but the official representative or "head" of all in the Covenant of Life. If Eve had been created separately of "dust from the ground", the human race would have had two origins instead of one, and two heads instead of one. It was God's plan that the human race should all spring from a single origin (Adam) and all be represented by a single covenant head (Adam). Hence the creation of Eve from a bone of Adam instead of from the dust of the ground.

The organic unity between Adam and Eve is brought out by Adam's statement: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man." In God's plan Adam was the fountainhead of all humanity, as he was also the official representative of the human race.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (2:24). As this verse stands in Genesis, we might suppose the words to be a continuation of Adam's statement in verse 23. But from our Lord's statement in Matthew 19:4,5 we learn that the speaker of verse 24 was God. It is possible, of course, that the truth given in verse 24 was first revealed by God to Adam, and then spoken by Adam as a continuation of the statement of verse 23.

Here we see the divine origin and authority of marriage and the family. Marriage is one of the two institutions of divine authority which have come down to the present day from before the fall (the Sabbath and marriage). Monogamous marriage — the marriage of one man and one woman — is not a product of human social evolution. It was God's ordinance **at the beginning** (Matt. 19:4).

The fact that Adam was created before Eve is adduced by the apostle Paul (1 Tim. 2:13) as one of the grounds of man's headship over woman. Compare also 1 Cor. 11:8,9. The feminist or "woman's rights" movement of the present day haughtily rejects this idea, but it is sanctioned by the Word of God. We should note that according to Scripture man's headship over woman is not based merely upon the fact that Eve sinned and led Adam into sin, but also on the prior creation of Adam and on God's plan and purpose in the creation of man and woman (1 Cor. 11:9).

#### 4. The fall of mankind into sin. 3:1-24

We have seen that two great religious principles were symbolized by the two special trees in the garden of Eden. The tree of life symbolized the principle of life; the tree of knowledge of good and evil symbolized the principle of probation. Now as we enter chapter 3 we find two more great principles symbolized. The **principle of temptation and sin** was symbolized by the serpent; the **prin-**

**principle of death** was symbolized by the return of the human body to dust.

The Covenant of Life (or Covenant of Works) involved both the principle of probation and also the principle of temptation. The same situation involved both probation and temptation. What from God's standpoint was a probation, or testing of man, was from Satan's standpoint a temptation of man.

God cannot tempt anyone with evil (James 1:13). From God's standpoint the experience through which Adam and Eve passed was a probation. The design was not to seduce man into sin, but to lead man to a point where his character would be stabilized and confirmed. Even if there had been no devil, it would have been necessary for man to pass through some kind of a period of probation before he could gain the right to eat the fruit of the tree of life.

From Satan's standpoint, on the other hand, the whole affair was a deliberate attempt to seduce mankind into committing sin. In the Bible Satan or the devil is represented as sinning from the beginning (1 John 3:8) and as being the original liar (John 8:44). The origin of sin **in the universe** is of course an unexplainable mystery. But the origin of sin **in the human race** is plainly attributed in Scripture to the temptation of our first parents by Satan.

Chapter 3 opens with a statement about "the serpent": "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." We are to understand that a real serpent was the tool of Satan in the temptation of Eve. The subtleness — the crafty character — of the serpent fitted this creature to be Satan's instrument in the temptation of Eve. In the process of the temptation we see evidence of this subtle or crafty character which was employed by Satan.

Why did the serpent tempt Eve instead of Adam? Adam was the head and official representative of the human race, and to involve the race in sin it was necessary that Adam be brought to commit sin. Yet the tempter very cleverly approaches Eve instead of Adam. Perhaps the reason was that the command not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil had been given by God to Adam directly, whereas Eve knew of this command only indirectly, by the word of Adam. It should be remembered that the command was given to Adam before the creation of Eve (2:16,17). From the apostle's statement in 1 Tim. 2:14 we learn that Adam was not deceived; that is Adam ate the fruit with full understanding that he was doing wrong. But Eve, says the apostle, was deceived. The devil succeeded in confusing and bewildering her until she was persuaded to eat the fruit. From the moral point of view, Adam's sin was worse than Eve's. Yet it was

through Eve being deceived that Adam was induced to commit sin.

Satan's temptation of Eve proceeded in two stages. In the first stage, doubt is insinuated and instilled into her mind. In the second stage the tempter uses a bare faced lie to induce her to commit sin.

In the first stage, the tempter raises the question of God's treatment of Adam and Eve. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Of course, God had not said that. The divine prohibition concerned only the tree of knowledge of good and evil. As a matter of fact God had said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (2:16,17). Thus there was only a small element of truth in what the tempter suggested. The prohibition attributed to God was a gross exaggeration. Yet it served the tempter's purpose of insinuating a doubt concerning the goodness and favor of God. Satan here suggests the thought that God is far too strict in his dealings with Adam and Eve. The thought it suggested to Eve's mind that God is unreasonably harsh and unkind.

The form of the tempter's suggestion was also calculated to insinuate doubt into the mind of Eve. "Yea, hath God said . . .?" This introductory question was calculated to suggest doubt as to the reality of the revelation from God about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as much as to say, "How do you know that God really said that?" Satan is the original liar, and he obviously realized that a cleverly spoken half-truth is the most effective kind of lie. Something wholly false is easier to discern as false than a subtle mixture of truth and error. A subtle half-truth is a truly devilish lie.

Eve's reply to the tempter went beyond what God had really revealed. She added the words "neither shall ye touch it," which God had not commanded. By making this addition to what God had said, Eve seems to have begun to accept Satan's idea that God had been too strict. We should realize that it is as bad to add to God's Word as to subtract from it or doubt its truth.

The temptation now entered its second stage. Now the tempter boldly denies the truth of what God had said. God had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Now the devil boldly denies this, saying "Ye shall not surely die." Here is a direct, outright contradiction of the Word of God.

Satan follows this denial with an imputation of base and unworthy motives to God: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." The idea here is

that God has forbidden Adam and Eve to eat of the tree in order to keep from them a wonderful experience which they ought to enjoy.

Satan's work of tempting Eve was done. All that remained was for Eve to consider the inherent desirability of the forbidden fruit, Satan had prepared the way. Now Eve looks at the fruit and considers first, that it is good for food; second, that it is beautiful to look at; and third, that it is desirable to make one wise. Then she took of the fruit, ate it, and gave it to Adam, who also ate it.

We should note that in deciding to eat the fruit, Eve really put Satan in the place of God. As a matter of fact God's design was for the benefit of mankind, while Satan's design was to bring about man's ruin. Since Satan directly contradicted what God had said, Eve had to choose between the two. Should she believe God or should she believe Satan? Before this temptation she had believed God. But now when confronted with Satan's contradiction of God, Eve chooses to believe Satan. This involved, of course, regarding God as a liar. It involved believing that God was the enemy of the human race and Satan was the true friend of the human race. Thus in Eve's thinking, God and the devil exchanged places.

#### Questions:

1. How was the personality of Adam brought out?
2. Why could the animals not meet Adam's need for personal companionship?
3. What verses in chapter 2 describe the beginning of scientific effort?
4. Is real science contrary to true religion?
5. How can we explain the fact that many scientists have held views which are contrary to the Word of God?
6. What has been the usual attitude of unbelievers and scoffers to the Biblical account of the creation of Eve?
7. What is the meaning of the word "myth"? Why have some people called the account of the creation of Eve a myth?
8. What was the probable reason why God did not create Adam and Eve at the same time?
9. Why did God create Eve from a bone of Adam instead of from dust of the ground?
10. What great truth is brought out by Adam's statement in 2:23?
11. Who was the original speaker of 2:24? What verse in the New Testament proves this?
12. What statement of Jesus Christ proves that marriage was a divine institution from the beginning of the human race?
13. What principle was symbolized by the serpent?
14. What principle was symbolized by the return of the human body to dust?
15. How can it be said that the Covenant of Works involved both the principle of probation and the principle of temptation?
16. What Scripture text proves that God cannot tempt anyone to commit sin?
17. What was the devil's aim in tempting Eve?
18. What is meant by the subtleness of the serpent?
19. What may have been the reason why the tempter approached Eve instead of Adam?
20. What statement in Paul's epistles proves that Eve was deceived but Adam was not deceived?
21. From the moral point of view, which was worse, the sin of Adam or the sin of Eve?
22. How many steps or stages did Satan use in tempting Eve?
23. How did the tempter first suggest doubt to the mind of Eve?
24. How did the form of Satan's suggestion insinuate doubt?
25. In replying to the serpent, how did Eve go beyond what God had actually said?
26. What may this addition to God's Word indicate, as to Eve's state of mind at the time?
27. How did Satan flatly contradict the Word of God?
28. What did Satan suggest as to the reason why God had forbidden the eating of the fruit?
29. In deciding to eat the fruit, how did Eve change her previous belief as to God?
30. What was Eve's first act after eating the forbidden fruit?

### LESSON 9

#### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

##### 4. The fall of mankind into sin. 3:1-24, continued

"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (3:7). Their commission of sin had an immediate effect upon the consciousness of Adam

and Eve. Their previous innocence is immediately replaced by a sense of guilt and sinfulness. Before committing sin they had not been conscious of being unclothed, nor was there any reason for feeling ashamed of this (2:25). But as soon as they had sinned against God, they realized their sinfulness, of which their nakedness was symbolic. Instinctively they proceeded to prepare some makeshift clothing, using fig leaves for this purpose.

As we see later, the clothing which Adam and Eve made of fig leaves was not adequate, for God clothed them with coats of skins (3:21). It has been aptly observed that all man-made religious systems are in reality only fig leaves which man has sewed together to cover his guilt. Only the true, God-given religion of redemption by the shedding of the blood of a Mediator can really clothe man with righteousness.

Another result of the sin of Adam and Eve was their alienation from God. "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden" (3:8). Evidently before the fall there had been close fellowship between God and man. It should be noted that Adam and Eve knew and recognized the voice of God when they heard it. That God regularly spoke with them, using an audible voice which they could hear with their ears, is not to be doubted. Before they fell into sin, Adam and Eve must have enjoyed and delighted in this close communion with God.

But now that they have sinned, there is a spiritual barrier between them and God. They feel this in their own consciousness, and when they again hear the voice of God in the garden, they instinctively attempt to hide from Him. It was a foolish and futile attempt, of course, for no one can hide from God. Yet the fact that Adam and Eve attempted it reveals their state of mind at the time. Their communion with God had been broken off. No longer do they look forward to fellowship with God; on the contrary, they have become afraid of God and they seek to avoid His presence. Here in this early history we see the true character of sin. Sin inevitably causes separation from God. For those who are not redeemed by Christ, sin causes separation from God eternally, in hell.

Even before God pronounced judgment on Adam and Eve, they stood judged and convicted by their own conscience. The aprons of fig leaves, the effort to hide from God among the trees of the garden, betray only too clearly that an awful barrier had come between them and God and that they felt guilty in relation to Him. Note that it did not require a long period of time for sin to produce this result; this state of mind followed

immediately upon their eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

We see another characteristic of sin in the attempt of Adam and Eve to evade responsibility for what they had done. That their own conscience condemned them was evident from the fig leaves and the hiding. Yet neither Adam nor Eve is willing simply to accept the blame and admit having done wrong. Each tries to shift the blame to someone else. First Adam attempts to shift the blame to Eve: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." There is here perhaps even a suggestion that God Himself is to blame: "The woman whom thou gavest . . .". The suggestion seems to be that since it was God who gave Eve to Adam, God is to blame for what Eve did, and for what Adam himself did at Eve's behest. Actually, of course, God was in no sense to blame for Eve's sin; when created by God Eve was morally upright and free from all tendency to evil. Actually, too, Adam had not been forced to sin by Eve. He had acted of his own free will. He had not even been deceived and bewildered as Eve had been (1 Tim. 2:14). He had sinned with his eyes open, clearly realizing that he was disobeying God. Now he tries to shift the blame to Eve, and perhaps even to God.

Eve, too, attempts to shift the blame: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." This was true, of course, but it did not remove the blame from Eve. For after all, the serpent had not forced her to eat the fruit. The decision had been her own (3:6).

It is a common thing for those who have committed some sin to try to shift the blame. It is not seldom that people will even try to blame God for their own sins, in one way or another. And there are those who will blame the devil for their own sinful decisions. Also there are many who try to shift the blame to circumstances, environment, or other factors — anything except their own sinful heart. It is true, of course, that the devil has something to do with human sinning. It is true, too, that circumstances may be a factor. But man is a free agent and is morally responsible for what he does. And in his deepest consciousness he realizes that he is guilty before God, but he hates this thought and so tries all kinds of ways to suppress it. Adam and Eve realized that they were guilty before God, as witness the fig leaves and the attempt to hide from God. But at the same time they hated the thought of personal responsibility for their sin, so they tried to suppress this by their weak effort to shift the blame to someone else.

We come now to the judgment which God pronounced upon the serpent, upon Eve and upon Adam. Punishment is primarily **retribution**; only in a subordinate sense is it directed toward the

reformation of the offender or the protection of others. Many people today regard punishment as having no other purpose than the reformation of the offender and the protection of society; in other words, many people today no longer believe that such a thing as justice exists. When this denial of the existence of justice infiltrates and infects the Church, the result is that religious teachers come to deny (a) that man is guilty before God; and (b) that Christ's atonement is a substitutionary bearing of the penalty of sin. The denial of the orthodox doctrine of the atonement, which is so prevalent today, is rooted in the denial of the existence of such a thing as justice anywhere, in heaven or on earth.

Punishment of sin is required by the nature of God. By His nature God is righteous. God is almighty, but there is one thing that even God cannot do: He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13). If God were to leave sin unpunished, He would be denying Himself. Since it is impossible for God to deny Himself, it follows that it is impossible for God to leave sin unpunished. God is righteous by nature; His righteous nature requires that sin be punished justly, as it deserves.

Another false idea about punishment which is very common today is the notion that punishment follows sin automatically as a sort of natural consequence, just as a person who touches a hot stove will feel a painful burn. It is true, of course, that **sometimes** God partly punishes sin by the natural consequences of that sin, as when a drunkard or a glutton suffers the broken health which results from his intemperance. But this is not the full punishment of the sin, nor is this God's universal and only way of punishing sin. The punishment of sin is not merely a natural consequence; it is a judicial penalty. It pertains to the **moral** realm.

Accordingly God in His perfect justice pronounced a judicial sentence. He imposed a judicial penalty upon the serpent, upon Eve, and upon Adam. First of all, God pronounced judgment upon the serpent. Even though the literal serpent was not a moral agent, being only the instrument of Satan in what had been done, still a curse was pronounced upon the serpent. All the creatures, including serpents, had been created for the benefit of mankind, and when one creature had been instrumental in bringing harm to mankind, it must come under the judgment of God. Compare Gen. 9:5; Ex. 21:28.

"Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. . .". Of all the creatures, the serpent exists closest to the ground. Some scoffers have raised the question of whether serpents had legs and feet before man sinned, and were deprived of these as a penalty. The Biblical account does not imply this, nor are we to suppose that before man sinned serpents stood up-

right. Rather, the serpent's closeness to the ground is now made a penalty; a new meaning and significance is attached to it. Similarly, in Gen. 9:13 God declares that the rainbow shall be a token of His covenant. This does not imply that the rainbow had never been seen before; it only implies that at that particular time God attached this special religious meaning to the rainbow; it became a symbol of God's covenant.

"In the curse upon the serpent lies a promise of victory over the serpent and his seed. His being condemned to go on his belly enables the woman's seed to bruise his head, whilst the serpent can only bruise the heel of the seed of the woman" (G. Vos, **Biblical Theology**, p. 53; copyright 1948 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.).

Going on to verse 15, the thought of the literal serpent falls into the background, while the idea of Satan, the real tempter, comes into the foreground. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (3:15). This is the first promise of redemption from sin, and it is one of the great texts of the Bible. Note that the same statement of God is both a sentence of judgment pronounced on Satan, and a promise of redemption to mankind.

In this text, "thee" refers to Satan, who had used the serpent as his instrument. The seed of the serpent may be regarded as that part of the human race which sides with Satan in the great conflict of human history. This however involves a difficulty, because if so understood, the seed of the serpent would include part of the seed of the woman, whereas the text seems to regard these two classes as quite distinct. Therefore it seems more probable that the seed of the serpent means the demons or evil spirits of which Satan is the head. It is true that the demons are not descended from Satan as mankind is from Eve; yet the demons derive their evil nature from Satan. The seed of the woman is the human race regarded as an organism; not every individual, of course, but the human race as an organism, and especially, pre-eminently the One Great Seed of the woman, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. Compare Revelation 12:1, 2, 5, 17.

This text forms a brief announcement of the future history of the world. There is announced an age-long conflict between opposing forces: the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, and back of these — behind the scenes, as it were — Satan and God. The outcome of this conflict will be two-fold: (a) the seed of the woman will be wounded; (b) the seed of the serpent will be totally defeated and destroyed. These words, spoken by God so long ago, reach forward through the ages to Calvary, and on from Calvary to the Judgment Day.

**Questions:**

1. What was the immediate effect of sinning on the consciousness of Adam and Eve?
2. How did they instinctively try to deal with their feeling of guilt?
3. What verse proves that the clothing which Adam and Eve made of fig leaves was not adequate?
4. How can the garments made of fig leaves be compared to man-made systems of religion?
5. What fellowship with God had Adam and Eve enjoyed before they sinned?
6. What was the effect of sin on their fellowship with God?
7. What was their attitude to God after they committed sin?
8. Why was it foolish for Adam and Eve to try to hide from God?
9. How soon after Adam and Eve sinned did a barrier come between them and God?
10. What characteristic of sin is shown by the attempt of both Adam and Eve to evade blame for what they had done?
11. What thoughts are suggested in Adam's reply to God, 3:12?
12. Why was this reply of Adam incorrect in its implications?
13. Why was Eve wrong in trying to shift the blame from herself to the serpent?
14. How do people of the present day attempt to escape blame for their sins?
15. What does sinful man realize in his deepest consciousness?

16. Why do sinners try to suppress the thought of their own guilt?

17. What is meant by the statement "Punishment is primarily retribution"?

18. Why is it incorrect to say that the only purpose of punishment is the reformation of the offender and the protection of society?

19. What is the result when the denial that there is such a thing as justice infects the Church?

20. What is it impossible for God to do?

21. Why is it impossible for God to leave sin unpunished?

22. Why is it incorrect to say that punishment is merely the natural consequence of sin?

23. In view of the fact that the serpent was not a moral agent, but only a tool of Satan, why should a penalty be imposed on the serpent?

24. How should we explain the statement "Upon thy belly shalt thou go"? Does this imply that serpents had legs and feet before man sinned?

25. What is the first promise in the Bible of redemption from sin?

26. What is the seed of the serpent?

27. What is meant by the seed of the woman?

28. What does Gen. 3:15 tell about the course of world history?

29. How far into the future does the statement of Gen. 3:15 reach?

30. What chapter in the book of Revelation clearly reflects the promise of Gen. 3:15?

31. What does Gen. 3:15 show as to the real message of the Bible? Why is it wrong to regard the Bible as a source of moral teachings apart from redemption?

**LESSON 10****II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued****4. The fall of mankind into sin. 3:1-24, continued**

In considering the first divine promise of redemption from sin (Gen. 3:15), we should further realize that the initiative in the struggle against evil is with God. God does not say "There shall be enmity . . ." but "I will put enmity. . ." The emphasis is on the "I". The text is therefore not a mere exhortation to man to contend against evil; it is a divine promise that God will take the initiative in waging war against evil. This emphasis on the divine sovereignty and the divine initiative in redemption is consistently carried out through

the whole Bible. Many people seem to think that Calvin invented the notion of the sovereignty of God in salvation; or they may grudgingly concede that Calvin found this idea in some of the epistles of Paul. The truth is, of course, that the sovereignty of God, in man's salvation as in all other things, is consistently taught throughout the whole Bible. Where it is not expressly taught, it is assumed or implied. Here at the beginning of the Bible, in the very first promise of redemption, the divine sovereignty and initiative is stressed: "I will put enmity. . .". Calvin's recognition and emphasis of this principle only shows how truly Biblical is the system of theology associated with the Genevan Reformer's name.

We should also consider the idea of **enmity**.

The soft, sentimental idea of religion which is so common today is not taught in the Bible. The Bible teaches that evil is real, and that redemption from evil involves utter enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. This enmity, or hatred, continues throughout history, but it reaches its climax at the cross of Calvary. Then and there Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman, crushed the serpent's head, though in doing so He Himself suffered grievously — His heel was bruised. The sufferings and death of Christ were for the satisfaction of the justice of God, but at the same time they formed the climax of the bitter enmity which went back to Gen. 3:15.

Many people have regarded this text, with its reference to the seed of the woman, as containing a prophecy of the virgin birth of Christ. In the light of the virgin birth of our Lord, as we know it from the New Testament, we can see how fitting it was that the One who would destroy the serpent should be spoken of as the seed of the woman. Still the language used in Gen. 3:15 can hardly be regarded as a prediction of the virgin birth of Christ. There is a distinction between the **meaning** of a prophecy and its **fulfilment**. There is much in the fulfilment which we can see clearly today, which was not included, strictly speaking, in the prophecy itself.

Also we do not mean to imply that Adam and Eve, who heard these words of God addressed to the serpent, understood them as fully as we can today in the light of the completed Bible, nor that Adam and Eve realized that a single individual seed of the woman would be the Messiah and Redeemer who would defeat and destroy the serpent. "The promise is, that somehow out of the human race a fatal blow will come which shall crush the head of the serpent. . . . It sufficed for fallen man to know that through His divine power and grace God would bring out of the human race victory over the serpent. In that faith could rest. The object of their faith was much less definite than that of ours, who know the personal Messiah. But none the less, the essence of this faith, subjectively considered, was the same, viz., trust in God's grace and power to bring deliverance from sin" (G. Vos, **Biblical Theology**, pp. 52, 53; copyright 1948 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.).

Next we must consider the judgment pronounced on Eve and that on Adam. In the case of Eve, the penalty consists in a great increase of pain and suffering in bringing children into the world, and subjection to the rule of her husband. "The true subordination that belongs to the origin of woman from man now becomes subjection. One of the blessings of the gospel to women in western lands is the mitigation of this subjection" (**The New Bible Commentary**, p. 80). There is, however, an element of grace implied in the judgment pronounced on Eve. It implies that the propagation of the human race will be possible, in spite of

hardships and sufferings; and this in turn implies that the human race will continue to exist until the seed of the woman shall come who shall destroy the serpent.

In the case of Adam, the penalty is a curse on the ground which involves man in the necessity of a laborious struggle for existence. Work itself is not a curse, but rather a blessing and gift of God, as shown by 2:15. But now as a penalty for sin, work is changed into man-killing toil. From this time on, work will be a laborious, difficult struggle for existence. Nature has become man's enemy rather than his friend, and only reluctantly yields him a living. In the end nature will win and man will die; his body will return to the dust from which it was taken.

In verse 17 there is a strong implication that Adam should have refused to eat the fruit even after Eve had done so. "**Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife**, and hast eaten of the tree. . . .". Eve was not the covenant head of the human race. Her sin did not of itself alone involve the entire race in sin. It is idle, of course, to speculate as to what would have happened if Adam had refused to follow Eve in eating the forbidden fruit. But at any rate we gather from verse 17 that Adam could and should have refused to disobey God, even after Eve had already committed sin.

A curse is pronounced on the ground because of man's sin. Henceforth it will be only by bitter, man-killing toil that a living can be obtained. Life will become a struggle for existence. The cause of this is not a decrease in man's strength, but a change in the realm of nature. The ground will not be so productive as formerly. It will be in the sweat of his face that man eats bread. And in the end nature will win; man will die, and his body will return to the ground from which it was taken.

Yet there is an element of grace which accompanies the curse. Though with difficulty, still bread can be obtained from the soil. It will sustain human life. The life of the human race can continue. "As the woman is enabled to bring new life into the world, so the man will be enabled to support life by his toil" (G. Vos, **Biblical Theology**, p. 55).

"And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living" (3:20). Eve means "life." Adam's naming his wife "Life" is an evidence of his faith in the promise of God to provide salvation, by which the highest kind of life would finally become man's possession. Just as death, in its fullest sense, comes through sin, so life, in its fullest sense, comes through the fulfilment of the promise about the seed of the woman. This does not mean that Adam understood this as fully and clearly as we can today, but it implies that Adam had a true faith that

man's real life would come through the seed of the woman. This is the essence of what is called "saving faith." And it implies that Adam had truly repented of his sin of disobedience to God, for without repentance there can be no true faith.

Some people have raised the question as to whether Adam and Eve were saved. It has even been stated that there is no evidence whatever that they were saved. It would seem, however, that Adam's act of naming his wife "Life" involved real repentance and true faith. As we have seen, the sentence which God pronounced upon the serpent, Eve and Adam, involved not only elements of judgment but also elements of grace. Intertwined with the penalties, there were expressed or implied promises, namely: (1) the seed of the woman would finally destroy the serpent; (2) it would be possible for the woman to bring forth children, thus making possible the birth of One who would destroy the serpent; (3) it would be possible for man, by arduous toil, to produce bread from the soil, thus rendering the continuous support of human life possible.

To these elements of grace Adam's faith attached itself, as is evidenced by his act of naming his wife "Eve" or "Life." This would seem to be a sufficient answer to the question of whether Adam was saved.

"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (3:21). The aprons of fig leaves which Adam and Eve had made were not adequate. God therefore made coats of skins of animals for Adam and Eve. This may mean that God Himself made the garments of skins, or it may be understood to mean that God instructed Adam and Eve as to how to do this for themselves. As to the reason why garments of skins were used, instead of some other kind of garments, this may have been because garments of skins would be the simplest and most quickly prepared.

Many Bible scholars have held that this verse (3:21) suggests the origin of the institution of sacrifice. The preparing of garments of skins involved, of course, the shedding of the blood of the animals concerned. It is possible, of course, that the institution of sacrifice was established by God at this time, yet the record does not say that it was. The thought of God providing a covering for man's body naturally suggests to our minds the idea of God providing a covering for the guilt of man's soul. Yet the verse we are considering does not actually teach this. We are unable to say with certainty that the slaying of beasts to provide garments involved the religious ordinance of blood sacrifice.

Whether or not 3:21 marks the origin of sacrifice, it is very probable that the offering of sacrifices to God began at some time before the events related in chapter 4 verses 3 to 8. For the bring-

ing of offerings to God by Cain and Abel is not described as something absolutely new; rather, the impression given is that the brothers were doing something which was a well-known and accepted practice. If 3:21 does not mark the origin of sacrifice, then we must assume that at some point between 3:21 and 4:3 mankind received a revelation from God commanding the offering of sacrifices. It should be borne in mind that many years may have elapsed between these two verses.

#### Questions:

1. Who takes the initiative in the struggle against evil?
2. Where did Calvin learn the truth of God's sovereignty in salvation?
3. What is the meaning of "enmity"?
4. When and where did the enmity between God and Satan reach its climax?
5. Is the virgin birth of Christ definitely predicted in Gen. 3:15?
6. How fully did Adam and Eve need to understand the promise of Gen. 3:15?
7. What element of grace was included in the judgment pronounced on Eve?
8. What was included in the judgment pronounced on Adam?
9. What was the effect of the curse pronounced on the ground?
10. What does 3:17 imply as to the responsibility and sin of Adam?
11. What curse was pronounced on the ground because of man's sin? Is this curse still in effect today?
12. What element of grace was implied in the curse on the ground?
13. What is the meaning of the name "Eve"?
14. What attitude toward God is shown by Adam's naming his wife Eve?
15. What does the naming of Eve imply concerning the future life of mankind?
16. How can it be shown that Adam had saving faith?
17. Why did God make garments of skins for Adam and Eve?
18. Is the origin of blood sacrifices reported in 3:21?
19. What thought is suggested by God's providing a covering for man's body?
20. When did the institution of sacrifice probably originate?

## LESSON 11

## II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

## 4. The fall of mankind into sin. 3:1-24, continued

Having disobeyed God and fallen into sin, Adam and Eve could not continue to live in the garden of Eden, where they would have access to the Tree of Life. They must be driven out of the garden which God had prepared as the original home of the human race.

Verse 22 states God's attitude toward man's sin. The words of this verse are not addressed to Adam and Eve. God is speaking to Himself: "And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us . . ." Here we have a suggestion of the doctrine of the Trinity which is more fully revealed in later Scripture. The "us" does not refer to God and the angels, but to the Persons of the divine Trinity. This verse does not teach the doctrine of the Trinity; it only suggests that doctrine. The full revelation of the Trinity is not found in the Old Testament, but only in the New.

"Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." In a sense, man had become as God. By his eating of the forbidden fruit, man had indeed come to the knowledge of good and evil. But he had come to the wrong kind of knowledge of good and evil. God knows good and evil by absolutely loving the good and absolutely hating the evil. But man had come to know good and evil by actually experiencing the evil, thereby himself becoming evil. Henceforth, apart from special divine grace, man would hate the good and love the evil.

Satan, we will recall, had promised Eve, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (3:5). In a sense, this had come true, as God Himself declares in verse 22. Yet what a terrible and tragic sense of knowing good and evil! Man had become as God in the fact of knowing both good and evil, but he had become utterly unlike God in his attitude toward the good and toward the evil. And man had himself become identified with the evil, he had become corrupted by the evil so that, apart from God's saving grace, he would only grow more and more evil.

Therefore it was necessary that man be excluded from access to the tree of life which was in the midst of the garden of Eden. Man had forfeited the right to eat the fruit of this sacramental tree. Remember that this tree represented the principle of life — the highest life, or eternal life. If man had not sinned, he would in due course have received the right to eat the fruit of the tree of life. At that point it would have become forever impossible for him to die.

What the tree of life was we do not know,

any more than in the case of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We are not to suppose that the fruit of the tree of life had in itself any power to bestow endless life on man. It did not contain any marvelous chemical compound which possessed the power of preventing old age and death. No such idea is implied by the sacred record, any more than the record implies that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil could of itself cause death. Rather, the tree of life possessed, by divine appointment, a sacramental character. God had attached this meaning to the tree of life. He had ordained that the partaking of the fruit of this particular tree should be followed by endless, deathless life.

Clearly, then, when man had fallen into sin he could no longer be permitted to remain in the presence of the tree of life, for he had forfeited the right to eat it. "The effort to obtain the fruit after the fall would have meant a desperate attempt to steal the fruit where the title to it had been lost. (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 39).

"And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever . . ." (3:22b). "After the fall God attributes to man the inclination of snatching the fruit against the divine purpose" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 38). This sinful inclination of man, which is implied in the narrative, God proceeds to frustrate by His divine power.

"Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken" (3:23). The Hebrew word here translated "sent forth" may accurately be translated "expelled." Man was expelled from the beautiful garden of Eden, to earn his living in a hard world. Henceforth his life would be a struggle for existence.

"So he drove out the man . . ." (3:24a). Here the Hebrew word is a stronger one. It means that God not only ordered Adam and Eve to leave the garden of Eden, but forcibly drove them out. Just how this was done, we do not know, but the fact is clear. Adam and Eve were actually driven out of their first home, the garden of Eden.

What a contrast between the original state of Adam and Eve, and their condition now. Then they enjoyed fellowship with God; now they are driven out of the garden of Eden by God. To emphasize the fact that they were excluded from access to the tree of life, and to guard against any attempt on their part to eat its fruit, God placed cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, between them and the garden.

"Cherubim" is the plural form of the Hebrew noun "cherub." The form "cherubims" in the King James Version is incorrect, just as it is incorrect to say "oxens" for the plural of "ox." But

what are cherubim? After Genesis 3:24, the next mention of cherubim in the Bible is in Ex. 25:19, where Moses is commanded to make two cherubim of gold for the two ends of the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. These "symbolized the presence and unapproachability of Jehovah" (**Davis Dictionary of the Bible**), and are "throne attendants of God. . . to give expression to the royal majesty of Jehovah" (G. Vos **Biblical Theology**, p. 167). Elsewhere in Scripture the cherubim are described as "living creatures" or living beings." Thus suggests that the cherubim must represent the highest type of living beings (Leupold). It is remarkable that God simply instructed Moses to make two cherubim, without describing their appearance. Evidently the appearance of the cherubim seen by Adam and Eve was remembered and the description handed down by tradition among the God-fearing portion of the human race. We may conclude that no one who had seen the cherubim could ever forget their appearance.

Besides the cherubim, God placed between man and Eden the flaming sword which turned every way. Pictures in children's Bible story books often portray this as a sword in the hand of the cherubim, but there is nothing in the Bible record to warrant this idea. The flaming sword which turned in all directions was distinct from the cherubim; it was an additional barrier between man and the tree of life. Evidently it was a flame with the appearance of a sword, constantly moving, perhaps like darts of lightning. The natural effect would be to terrify man and prevent any attempt to pass this divinely established barrier and gain access to the tree of life.

How long did the garden of Eden continue to exist on this earth? Many have asked this question, but none can answer it confidently. Only God knows the answer; it is one of His secrets. It is clear that the garden of Eden continued for a period of time, and that the cherubim and flaming sword continued during the time to bar entrance to it. Beyond that we cannot affirm. It is possible that it continued until the Flood, but this cannot be proved.

##### **5. The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. 4:1-26**

We now come to the fourth chapter of Genesis, which records the double development of the human race — Cain and Abel, the wicked and the godly, the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. From the time of Cain and Abel there have been two kinds of people in this world, namely, those who are children of the devil and those who are children of God. We hear much at the present day about the brotherhood of man. We should realize that as commonly advocated, this idea of the brotherhood of man is a false teaching. Apart from redemption through Christ,

human brotherhood is the brotherhood of Cain and Abel.

As we enter this fourth chapter of Genesis we see early mankind, not in the blissful existence of the garden of Eden, but still in a condition of simple civilization. Although not living in the garden of Eden, mankind is not living in the jungle either. He is not a savage or "primitive", scarcely human creature; he is human and he is civilized. The chapter proceeds to inform us of the development of human civilization and culture. We find recorded here a number of early inventions and discoveries.

First of all, we learn of the birth of Cain. It would be interesting to know how long after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden Cain was born. We must bear in mind that Adam lived 930 years. But the Bible does not tell us when Cain was born; we only know that it was after the expulsion from Eden.

Eve called her son Cain. The name "Cain" means "fabrication, forged instrument, smith" (**Davis Dictionary of the Bible**). Eve added, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." In the Hebrew the word for "gotten" sounds similar to "Cain" although it is a different word. It seems that Eve wanted to give her son a name that would sound like the word for "gotten," so that her son's name would call to mind that she had "gotten" him from the Lord. We do not know whether Eve thought that this son would be the one who would crush the serpent's head. But it is clear that she regarded the birth of Cain as an evidence of God's faithfulness. Eve's statement is to be regarded as an evidence of her personal faith in the Lord.

Next, we are told of the birth of Abel. The name "Abel" means "breath", "vapor," or possibly "son." Nothing is told of the childhood of Cain and Abel. The record immediately proceeds to state their different occupations. Abel was a keeper of sheep, whereas Cain was a tiller of the soil. There is no suggestion that one of these occupations was better than the other. Very possibly both had already been pursued by Adam. Contrary to the confident statements of evolutionists, early mankind practiced agriculture and animal husbandry. Therefore wherever there is evidence of "primitive" man living entirely by hunting and fishing, without agriculture and domestic animals, this is to be regarded as the result of retrogression. Such "primitive" people are examples of the deterioration caused by sin.

"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof" (4:3, 4). Note that there is no record here of a command of God to offer sacrifices to Him. There must have been such a command at some time,

but the record of it is not given. What is described here may, or may not, be the first offering of sacrifices to God. However, it is not necessary to suppose that this was the first time even in the lives of Cain and Abel that sacrifices were offered. It is entirely possible that they had done so on previous occasions.

The Hebrew word here used for "offering" is a broad term including any kind of gift that man may bring to God. These offerings were brought to the Lord "in process of time." The Hebrew means literally "after the end of days." This is an intentionally vague statement. It means at the end of a period of time, but how long a period is not stated. Some have thought that "after the end of days" means on the Sabbath, that is, the last day of the week. But the record does not imply this. Others have supposed that the autumn season, the end of the year, is meant. This also cannot be proved.

Cain's offering consisted of "the fruit of the ground," that is, a portion of his agricultural products. Abel's offering, on the other hand, consisted of "the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." Cain merely brought some of his produce; Abel brought the best of what he possessed. This seems to indicate that Cain's offering was brought in a merely formal spirit, whereas Abel's was brought in a spirit of true devotion to God. The New Testament (Heb. 11:4) informs us that it was "by faith" that Abel "offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." That is, Abel had a true faith in God and God's promise of redemption; Cain lacked such a faith. We see here a contrast between a merely formal religious worship and one which proceeds from a true faith.

#### Questions:

1. What New Testament doctrine is suggested in verse 22?
2. How did man's knowledge of good and evil differ from God's knowledge of good and evil?
3. In what sense had man become like God? In what sense had he become utterly unlike God?

4. What was the special character of the tree of life?

5. What right did man forfeit when he sinned against God?

6. In what two ways did God prevent man from approaching the tree of life after he had sinned?

7. What is known about the cherubim?

8. What may we conclude from the fact that God commanded Moses to make two cherubim of gold, but did not give him a description of their appearance?

9. Was the flaming sword held in the hand of the cherubim?

10. What can be said about the question of how long the garden of Eden continued to exist on this earth?

11. What two kinds of people have lived in the world since the time of Cain and Abel?

12. What is the condition of early mankind as pictured in the fourth chapter of Genesis?

13. How long did Adam live?

14. What is the meaning of the name "Cain"?

15. What is shown by Eve's statement about the birth of her son?

16. What is the meaning of the name "Abel"?

17. What does this chapter show of the occupations of early mankind?

18. What should we think about "primitive" peoples who live entirely by hunting and fishing?

19. Does the record indicate that 4:3, 4 was the first time that sacrifices were offered?

20. What is the literal meaning in the Hebrew of the expression translated in our Bible "in process of time"?

21. What difference existed between Cain's offering and Abel's?

22. What difference in attitude existed between the two worshippers?

## LESSON 12

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

#### 5. The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. 4:1-26, continued

It has often been held that the superiority of Abel's offering over Cain's consisted in the fact that Abel's was a sacrifice which involved the shedding of blood, whereas Cain's was merely a

vegetable offering. It is possible that this interpretation is correct, but we cannot assert it positively, because the Bible record does not state that it was the shedding of blood which made Abel's sacrifice more acceptable than Cain's. The record in Genesis merely states the fact that the one was acceptable to God while the other was not. The Epistle to the Hebrews adds to this the explanation that it was "by faith" that Abel of-

ferred unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain (Heb. 11:4).

In favor of the interpretation that Abel's sacrifice was acceptable because it involved shedding of blood is the central truth of the Bible that sin cannot be forgiven without the shedding of the blood — that is, the death — of a Substitute. It is certainly true that neither Abel's sin, nor Cain's, nor anyone else's, could ever be forgiven except on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Still, this does not prove that the reason Cain's offering was not acceptable was the lack of blood. We must bear in mind that we are dealing with a very early period of God's revelation to mankind. Many truths which we know, in the light of the completed Bible, had not yet been revealed to men.

We should note that in the record the worshippers are mentioned before their offerings, as being acceptable or not acceptable to God. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering" — not just respect unto Abel's offering, but "respect unto Abel and to his offering." And again, "unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect" — and just "unto Cain's offering," but "unto Cain and his offering." This manner of speaking indicates that the difference was not merely in the offerings, but first of all in the offerers. The attitude of the worshipper determined God's response to the worship. This of course does not imply what some people think, namely that if we have an attitude of reverence and faith we can worship God in any way that we may please. On the contrary, if we have an attitude of reverence and faith, we will take care to worship God in the way that He has appointed in His Word.

The question has often been raised as to how God signified his acceptance of Abel and his offering and His rejection of Cain and his offering. We have all seen pictures in children's Bible story books showing smoke rising from Abel's offering, indicating the idea that God by a miracle kindled fire to burn the acceptable offering. Others have suggested that the fire was ignited by the worshippers themselves, but the smoke of Abel's offering rose up toward the sky whereas the smoke of Cain's offering hung low near the ground. All of this is pure speculation. The record simply does not state how God's pleasure and displeasure were signified.

An interesting possibility is suggested by Leupold in his excellent commentary on Genesis. He suggests that if the garden of Eden still existed on earth, with the cherubim — mediators of God's presence — barring the way to its entrance, this entrance may have been a spot where God's will was revealed to men. Possibly the offerings were brought and offered near the entrance to

the garden of Eden. Then God's attitude to the offerers and their offerings might have been manifested through the cherubim in some way that would be understood by Cain and Abel. Leupold admits that this too is speculation. He says that no man knows whether the garden of Eden continued to exist on earth until the time of the Flood.

The one fact that we can be sure of is that Cain and Abel recognized how God regarded them and their offerings. After all, this is what we really need to know. It might satisfy our curiosity to know just how God's attitude was signified, but we must remember that the Bible was not given to satisfy our curiosity, but to meet our religious need.

We are next told of Cain's reaction to God's rejection of his offering. "And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell" (4:5). This was a double reaction: first, he became furiously angry; second he showed this anger in his facial expression.

God's rejection of Cain's offering should have served as a warning to him, and led him to repentance. Instead, it made him violently angry. Cain adds to his former sin of improper worship, the new sin of anger against God. Here the real character of Cain is manifested.

Many people have become angry against God since Cain's day. When a faithful servant of God has told them of their sins and urged them to repent, they have become angry. The present writer once refused to baptize a Chinese "convert" until the latter could show evidence of genuine separation from idolatry. The "convert" became violently angry and cursed the name of Jesus Christ. His loss of face in being refused immediate baptism caused him to become bitterly opposed to Christianity, and as far as known, he never repented.

People have also become angry against truths of God's Word which they do not like. The writer has known of people who were really angry at the doctrine of predestination, or the doctrine of total depravity, or the doctrine of eternal punishment. They not only refused to believe these doctrines — they were roused to anger against them. Such people should realize that their quarrel is with God, not with ministers of the Gospel or creeds of the Church. They should beware of hardening their hearts and perishing in their sins.

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Why are thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door: and unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (4:6, 7). When Cain became angry, and his countenance fell, God spoke to him. This means much more than that Cain's conscience

accused him. The expression "And God said" means just what it says. There was an actual communication from God to Cain, which was entirely distinct from Cain's own conscience and Cain's own thoughts.

God calls Cain's attention to his sin by asking him why he is angry and why his countenance has fallen. If Cain will only stop and think about the reason for his anger and his fallen countenance, he will realize that he himself is at fault and ought to repent and pray for God's forgiveness. Cain ought to stop being angry with God, and to start blaming himself for his own sin. If he does well, he will be accepted by God. But if he does not do what is right, the reason is sin.

"Sin lieth at the door. . .". This is the first occurrence of the word "sin" in the Bible. The Hebrew word is **chattath**, which means "missing the mark." God speaks to Cain and tells him that sin is like a wild beast crouching at his door, ready to spring on him and destroy him. "Unto thee shall be his desire" — sin will never stop with just a slight or mild injury to man; it will seek for complete mastery over man; it is like a bloodthirsty man-eating tiger, dangerous and untameable.

What a vivid, realistic description of sin God gave Cain! How different from many modern toned-down ideas of sin! In this early revelation, God tells Cain that sin is treacherous and destructive, and once it enters the life of man, it will never let him alone. How different from the weak idea that sin is merely a defect of human nature left from an animal ancestry, or a mere matter of habits and attitudes easily changed by the use of human free will! The Bible, right here at its beginning, represents sin as something utterly terrible. The struggle between man and sin will be a life-and-death struggle.

Sin will strive to rule over Cain, but Cain's duty is to rule over it. This warning by God could easily be misunderstood. It does not imply that Cain can gain control of sin by his own human power. It does not mean that man can save himself from sin by his own efforts. It is Cain's duty to rule over sin, instead of letting sin rule over him. But how is this to be done? Not by human power, but by the grace of God which was promised in the curse upon the serpent in 3:15. Cain must rule over sin by means of faith in the divine promise that the seed of the woman would finally destroy the serpent.

What was Cain's response to God's solemn warning? As far as we know from the record, his response was only a sullen silence. It is not recorded that Cain made any reply to God. No thanksgiving, no repentance, no faith, no prayer for forgiveness is attributed to him. It seems that having heard the voice of God, Cain decided to

face it out. His attitude was one of stubborn rebellion against God.

When sin entered the human race, it worked fast. Cain's sin soon led to murder. The fact that God had accepted Abel and his offering rankled in Cain's heart; he brooded over it. This developed into a bitter hatred of his brother Abel. Because Abel's deeds were righteous, while Cain's own deeds were evil, Cain murdered his brother Abel (1 John 3:12). "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). The godly living of Abel no doubt irritated Cain, in fact, the lives of godly people are a constant rebuke and irritation to the wicked. We may wonder why the elders and magistrates of Jezreel were so ready to carry out Jezebel's instructions to murder Naboth. No doubt Naboth's practical godliness irritated them every day, making them glad for an excuse to get rid of their neighbor whose daily life was a rebuke to their own wickedness. Similarly, we may conclude, Abel's God-fearing life of faith irritated and provoked Cain in his sin.

"And Cain talked with Abel his brother. . ." (4:8). In the Hebrew the sentence seems abruptly broken off at this point. It does not tell us what it was that Cain said to Abel, although the Hebrew reads literally "And Cain said unto Abel his brother. . .". Apparently we are to infer what was said by what follows, namely, that the two brothers went together into the field. The language used indicates that Cain deliberately planned to get rid of his brother Abel.

"And it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (4:8b). The expression "rose up against" means "attacked" or "assaulted." The result of the assault was the death of Abel. The first human being born into this world has killed the second. It is now clear that Cain was of the seed of the serpent whereas Abel pertained to the seed of the woman. These two brothers pertained to Satan's kingdom and God's kingdom. This reminds us that the so-called "brotherhood of man", apart from the redemptive work of Christ, is in fact the brotherhood of Cain and Abel.

#### Questions:

1. What opinion has often been held as to the reason why God accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's?

2. What can be said in favor of this interpretation?

3. Why can we not be sure that Cain's offering was rejected because it did not involve the shedding of blood?

4. What fact is brought out by the mention of the offerers before the offerings, as being acceptable or not acceptable to God?

5. Are we justified in worshipping God in any way we please as long as we have an attitude of reverence and faith?

6. What ideas have been held as to how God signified His attitude toward Cain and Abel and their offerings?

7. What interesting possibility does Leupold's commentary suggest as to how God manifested His attitude?

8. What one fact can we be sure of in connection with God's attitude toward the offerings of Cain and Abel?

9. What was Cain's reaction to God's rejection of his offerings?

10. How was Cain's mental attitude outwardly manifested?

11. What should Cain have done when his offering was rejected?

12. How do people become angry against God at the present day?

13. What should we reply to the claim of some that the statements of 4:6, 7 were only the voice of Cain's own conscience?

14. If Cain had been willing to stop and think about the reason for his own anger, what would he have realized?

15. In what chapter and verse of the Bible does the word "sin" first occur?

16. What is the literal meaning of the Hebrew word used here for "sin"?

17. To what did God compare sin in speaking with Cain?

18. What is the difference between sin as described by God to Cain, and modern ideas of sin?

19. Did God imply that Cain could rule over sin by his own human power?

20. What was Cain's apparent response to God's warnings?

21. What development took place in Cain's own heart, and to what attitude toward his brother did this lead?

22. What does the New Testament say concerning "whosoever hateth his brother?"

24. What was the probable effect of Abel's godly life on Cain's personality?

25. What is meant by the expression "rose up against"?

26. What does Cain's murder of Abel indicate concerning the popular modern doctrine of the brotherhood of man?

## LESSON 13

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

#### 5. The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. 4:1-26, continued

This history which we are studying is evidently intended by the Holy Spirit to impress us with the rapidity of sin's destructive work in the human race. "We have here a story of rapid degeneration, so guided by God as to bring out the inherent tendency of sin to lead to ruin, and its power to corrupt and debase whatever of good might still develop" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 57). Cain murders his brother Abel with premeditation, after having been warned by God. Having murdered him, his attitude is one of sullen defiance and continued rebellion.

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not; Am I my brother's keeper?" (4:9). Of course God knew where Abel was. The question was not asked because God needed information, but rather as a method of dealing with Cain. God knew where Abel was, but Cain must be made to face his responsibility and to see his guilt.

When charged with sin by God, Adam and Eve had tried to shift the blame, but still their

attitude had been a humble one. But with Cain it is different. He not only admits no responsibility; he manifests a haughty, defiant, irreverent attitude toward God. His reply is actually impudent in its bold irreverence.

Cain first told a flat lie: "I know not." He just before had killed Abel, and doubtless knew exactly where the dead body of his brother lay. Very possibly he had actually hidden the dead body of Abel. Then he impudently adds: "Am I my brother's keeper?" — as if to say "Am I supposed to keep track of him all the time?" The form of Cain's question in the Hebrew implies that he expected a negative answer. Certainly Cain was his brother's keeper; he had a responsibility for the welfare of his brother, as truly as for his own welfare. But we should note that Cain's insolent question implied not only that he was not responsible for his brother's welfare, but also that his killing his brother was none of God's business. He utters this impudent question as an evasion of the guilt of killing his brother. It is a brazen repudiation of moral responsibility. Cain dares to throw the moral law back in God's face; he dares to stand on his own feet and be a law unto himself.

"And he said, What hast thou done? the

voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (4:10). "What hast thou done?" — the implication of this question is that Cain has done something utterly horrible and dreadful. Then God directly charges Cain with the guilt of murder: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." In the Hebrew the word "blood" is plural ("bloods"), suggesting shed blood or spilt blood. God says the spilt blood of Abel cries to Him from the ground. That is, there has been a disturbance of the divinely-ordained moral order which demands divine judgment; the sin that has been committed calls for punishment on God's part. According to popular modern views, sin does not call for punishment; the only thing necessary would be to get Cain to change his attitude and come to have a better personality. But according to the Bible sin involves a disturbance in the moral order which demands a penalty. It is an affront to the righteousness of God. God must punish sin, for He cannot deny Himself. If God were to allow sin to remain unpunished, He would cease to exist (which is of course impossible), and the universe would vanish into nothingness. Every sin always receives its just punishment, either in the person of the sinner himself, or in Christ the sinner's Substitute.

Modern religion, in so far as it deals with sin at all, is mostly concerned about the effect of sin on the sinner himself. The Bible, on the other hand, is mostly concerned about sin as a disturbance of the moral order which God has established. The Bible does not regard sin primarily as something which had a bad effect on the sinner, but as something which is a violation of the holiness and righteousness of God. Modern religion is mostly concerned about the consequences of sin; the Bible is mostly concerned about the sin itself. Modern religion mostly takes a man-centered view of sin; the Bible presents a God-centered view of sin, it views sin in relation to God.

"And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand" (4:11). This is the third curse in the Bible. Before this the serpent had been cursed (3:14), and the ground had been cursed because of man's sin (3:17). Now Cain, a member of the human race, is cursed by God. This reveals God's earnest abhorrence of sin. The curse which God pronounced upon Cain did not of itself bar the door to future repentance and possibility of salvation. It was a penalty visited upon Cain's sin.

The curse pronounced upon Cain consisted of two elements. First, he was "cursed from the earth," that is, from the tillable soil, which had been wet with the blood of Abel. "When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength" (4:12a). Cain would be

forced to leave the more easily cultivated land, and seek his living under difficult circumstances in other surroundings. Only with great difficulty would he be able to sustain his life.

The second element of the curse on Cain was that he was condemned to be a wanderer in the earth: "a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth" (4:12b). The word "vagabond" here does not mean "tramp" but rather "wanderer."

God has pronounced a two-fold curse upon Cain. We shall now consider Cain's reaction to this sentence. The important thing to note is that Cain is not in the least concerned about his sin itself; he is only concerned about the consequences of his sin.

"And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me" (4:13,14). There is in this speech of Cain not the slightest indication of any true sorrow for sin. He is concerned only with the punishment of his sin, not with the sin itself. Cain is not sorry he has sinned; he is only sorry that he is going to have to suffer on account of his sin. In this respect Cain manifests the true pattern of impenitent sinners throughout human history. Apart from the special grace of God, sinners are not sorry for their sins; they are only sorry about the consequences of their sins.

Cain has, however, come to realize that he cannot resist God. His bold impudence of a moment before now changes to "a whining fear and complaint" (Leupold). From his bold front of brazen confidence in the face of God, he now lapses into a hopeless despair. Herein, too, Cain manifests the typical pattern of unrepentant sinners. First they are bold against God, but in the end they fall into a cringing terror and despair.

Cain complains that his punishment is greater than he can bear. In view of the fact that he had murdered Abel, the penalty imposed on Cain was quite mild. God did not take his life, but only condemned him to isolation and hard labor. But Cain says that it is greater than he can bear. He fears that whoever finds him will kill him. This statement of Cain does not imply that there were in the world people other than those descended from Adam and Eve. It only means that he feared that his own younger brothers who would be born would kill him in retaliation for his murder of Abel. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. 28:1). A guilty conscience makes a coward of a man. Cain had no real repentance, but it is evident that in the depths of his heart he realized that he was guilty, and therefore had reason to fear.

"And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken upon him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him" (4:15). The words "the Lord set a mark upon Cain" may be more accurately translated "the Lord gave Cain a sign" The Hebrew says, literally, "the Lord gave a sign to Cain"; it does not say that the sign was "in" or "on" Cain. What the "sign" was, we do not know. The word translated "sign" does not mean "mark" but rather some event by which Cain would be reassured that his life would be spared. We may recall the sign God gave Gideon (Judges 6:36-40), and that granted to Elisha at the time when Elijah was taken from him (2 Kings 2:9-12). There is no reason for thinking that Cain spent the rest of his life with some brand or symbol on his forehead.

Whatever the sign given to Cain may have been, it evidently served its purpose of reassuring Cain. Moreover, the fact of this sign having been given, and what God had said about it, would become generally known. Men would fear to violate this warning of God, lest the sevenfold vengeance" overtake them. Cain's life would henceforth be a hard and bitter one, but his life would be spared.

The question may be raised why God spared Cain's life. We might perhaps suppose that God would exact the death penalty in the case of the first murder of human history. Yet we know that God is infinitely wise, as well as just, and must have had the best reasons for sparing Cain's life, though those reasons have not been revealed to us. Leupold's commentary mentions quite a number of reasons which have been suggested, some of them very plausible ones. The present writer would only suggest that God, in His sovereignty, wished to use this period of history (from Cain to the Flood) to show what sin will do when God lets it alone so that it can go to seed. In this period of history God gave the human race an object lesson in what the real tendency of sin is when it is unchecked by the restraining hand of God. This tendency of sin to become worse and worse developed principally among the descendants of Cain. If God had exacted the death penalty in the case of Cain, the history recorded between Cain and the Flood would have been quite different. So God in His wisdom chose to let Cain live.

As a matter of fact the death penalty for murder was not commanded by God until after the Flood (9:5, 6). Since the Flood, human governments are under obligation to put the murderer to death. But God was under no such obligation Himself. No sinner ever suffers the full punishment of his sin in this life. The full punishment of sin comes after death and continues to all eternity. If Cain died without repenting — and

there is no reason to think that he ever did repent — he eventually suffered the full penalty of his sin. God's sparing his physical life over a period of years did not mean that he would escape just and full retribution for his sin.

#### Questions:

1. What does this portion of the Bible specially show us concerning sin's destructive work in the human race?

2. Why did God ask Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?"

3. When charged with sin, how did Cain's attitude toward God differ from that of Adam and Eve?

4. What was the character of Cain's statement "I know not"?

5. What was implied by Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper"?

6. What was Cain's attitude toward the moral law of God?

7. What is implied by God's question, "What hast thou done?"

8. What is implied by God's statement that the blood of Abel cried unto Him from the ground?

9. What does sin involve, according to the Bible?

10. Why can God not leave sin unpunished?

11. How does the attitude of popular modern religion toward sin differ from the Bible's attitude toward sin?

12. What was the third curse in the Bible? What two curses had preceded this one?

13. What was the first element in the curse pronounced on Cain?

14. What was the second element in the curse upon Cain?

15. When God pronounced sentence upon Cain, what was Cain concerned about?

16. How does Cain's reaction to God's sentence manifest the common pattern of impenitent sinners?

17. What change did take place in Cain's attitude between verse 9 and verse 13?

18. What was Cain's complaint about his punishment?

19. Why did Cain fear that he would be killed?

20. What does a guilty conscience do to a person?

21. How did the Lord safeguard Cain from being killed?

22. What is the true meaning of the expression "set a mark upon Cain"?

23. Name two Old Testament characters to whom God granted a special sign.

24. Why did God spare Cain's life instead of exacting the death penalty?

25. Was God's allowing Cain to live a violation of divine justice?

(To be continued)

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## *Religious Terms Defined*

**CALVINISM.** Consistent Biblical Christianity, called "Calvinism" because it received its classic doctrinal formulation in the writings of the Reformer John Calvin. Calvinism is that system of Christian doctrine which fully recognizes the absolute, unlimited sovereignty of God, and man's complete dependence on God for every factor of his faith, life and salvation.

**CALVINISM, FIVE POINTS OF.** Five truths of the Calvinistic system of theology which were affirmed by the Synod of Dort (Netherlands, A.D. 1618-19), in contradiction to the five articles of the Remonstrants or Arminians. The "five points of Calvinism" are: 1. Unconditional election; 2. Limited or particular atonement; 3. The total depravity of the sinner; 4. The irresistibility of saving grace; 5. The final perseverance of the saints. These "five points" are NOT a brief summary of Calvinism, as they are often wrongly said to be; they are merely five truths by which Calvinism is distinguished from Arminianism.

**CANON OF SCRIPTURE.** The list of the books which are recognized as Holy Scripture.

**CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE.** The universal Church of God, as distinguished from a particular branch, congregation or denomination of that Church. The Church of Rome has wrongly appropriated to itself the term "Catholic"; it is self-contradictory to call a body "Roman" (which is particular) and at the same time "Catholic" (which means "universal").

**CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH.** The universal character of the Church, as a body not limited to particular times, places or denominations, but including all who profess the true religion and their children.

**CELIBACY OF THE CLERGY.** The sectarian requirement of the Roman Catholic Church that its ordained officers abstain from marriage. This requirement, which is without Scriptural warrant, was not generally enforced until more than 1,000 years after Christ.

**CENSURE.** The act of judging or blaming others for their faults. Censure may be private or official, and it may be just or unjust.

**CHANCE.** An event which comes to pass by the divine foreordination and providence, which is of such a nature that the human mind cannot calculate or predict its occurrence, or assign a definite cause to it. Proverbs 16:33.

**CHARACTER.** The moral quality of a person's inner nature or "heart", from which the issues of life spring, and by which decisions and conduct are determined.

**CHEERFULNESS.** A state of mind free from gloom or dejection. It is the duty of every Christian, by faith in the goodness, power and love of God, to cultivate a cheerful frame of mind.

**CHILIASM.** The doctrine of a thousand year reign of Christ; commonly used as equivalent to Premillennialism, or the doctrine of a thousand year reign of Christ on earth after His second coming.

**CHRISTIAN.** One who believes on Christ as his Saviour from sin, and obeys Christ as the Lord of his life. It is improper to speak of Jesus as a Christian.

**CHRISTIAN ETHICS.** That branch of theological science which deals with what the Bible teaches concerning the motive, standard and purpose of human action.

**CHRISTIANITY.** The system of faith and practice revealed in the Word of God, in which Jesus Christ occupies the position of Mediator between God and sinners.

**CHRIST'S ESTATE OF HUMILIATION.** "Christ's humiliation consisted in His being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time." (S.C. 27)

**CHRIST'S ESTATE OF EXALTATION.** "Christ's exaltation consisteth in His rising again from the death on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day." (S.C. 28)

**CHRISTOLOGY.** That branch of Christian doctrine which sets forth the truth about Christ, His Person and work.

# *The Westminster Confession of Faith in Modern English*

Prepared by Dr. James A. Hughes

(Continued from last issue)

## Chapter XI. Of Justification

I. Those whom God effectually calls He also freely justifies, not by infusing righteousness into them but by the pardoning their sins and by reckoning and accepting them as righteous; not because of anything wrought in them or done by them but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other gospel-obedience to them as their righteousness but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ to them — their receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith (which faith they do not have of themselves; it is a gift of God).

II. Faith, by which one receives and rests on Christ and His righteousness, is the only means of justification; yet it is not by itself in the person justified but is always accompanied by all other saving graces, and is not a dead faith but works by love.

III. Christ, by His obedience and death, fully paid the debt of all those who are justified by faith and made a proper, real and full satisfaction to His Father's justice in their behalf. Yet, because He was given by the Father for them and His obedience and satisfaction were accepted in their stead — and freely, not because of anything in those justified — their justification is solely of free grace, that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.

IV. God decreed from all eternity to justify all the elect; and Christ, in God's appointed time, died for their sins and rose for their justification; nevertheless they are not justified until the Holy Spirit actually applies Christ to them in God's own time.

V. God continues to forgive the sins of those who are justified; and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may by their sins fall under God's fatherly displeasure and not have the light of His countenance restored to them until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg for pardon and renew their faith and repentance.

VI. The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.

## Chapter XII, Of Adoption

All those who are justified, God vouchsafes (in and for His only son, Jesus Christ) to make partakers of the grace of adoption by which they are received into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges, of the children of God; have His name put upon them; receive the Spirit of adoption; have access to the throne of grace with boldness; are enabled to cry out, Abba, Father; are pitied, protected, provided for and chastened by Him as by a father; yet they are never cast out but are sealed until the day of redemption and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.

## Chapter XIII, Of Sanctification

I. Those who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are also sanctified really and personally by virtue of Christ's death and resurrection by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them; the domination of the whole corrupt nature is destroyed and the various lusts of the corrupt nature are more and more weakened and mortified and the just are more and more enlivened and strengthened in all saving graces resulting in the practice of true holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

II. This sanctification is pervasive in the whole man; yet it is imperfect in this life: there still abide some remnants of corruption throughout from which arises a continual and irreconcilable war: the corrupt nature warring against the Spirit and the Spirit against the corrupt nature.

III. In this war, although the remaining corruption may greatly prevail for a time, yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part overcomes; and therefore the saints grow in grace, progressing toward perfect holiness in reverence to God.

(To be continued)

# *The Lord's Great Controversy*

By the Rev. John C. Rankin

## Conclusion

**Note:** The following final portion of Mr. Rankin's material on "The Lord's Great Controversy" was written by him as a Preface to the entire series, which began in our January-March 1965 issue. As the Preface was not published at the beginning of the series, we are presenting it here as a concluding statement by the author. We wish to express great appreciation and hearty thanks to Mr. Rankin for his painstaking and truly timely and relevant work. — Editor.

**The Lord's Great Controversy** professes to be no more than a study of the subject matter involved. God in his wisdom has instituted a great moral and spiritual division among men and ever presses his own controversy which issues in the age-long conflict. This is our theme.

God is one with all those that are his and the believers are one with one another. They are all for God and for his Son, their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, his cause and kingdom and the honor and glory of his name. And they are ever with and for each other.

All others, however, are not with us, at least until brought over to our side to share with us the Christian life, experience and conflict. Until such a time they are inwardly and basically antipathetic, or at least unsympathetic to all that the true believers know and love, are and hope to be and endeavor to promote.

To be for God, his word of truth and for the truth of his Word, is to be against all that is against him. So the conflict rages, and at the root and foundation of it all is the very presence, power and life of God actively engaged in the conduct of his own great controversy.

As we have said, the present work is only a

study. We freely acknowledge that the discussion presented is only suggestive. It is anything except exhaustive. And considering the vastness of the subject, what else could it be? Who can say how many volumes would be required for full-scale coverage?

Even a single volume treatment, however, does seem to be unique; the only one of its kind to our knowledge. And surely something of the sort is needed and may well be regarded as timely, as renewed attention to "the antithesis" appears to be on the way in conservative circles. As far as it goes, we trust it will be found faithful to the Word of God.

The Lord's Great Controversy is in effect a plea for Christian controversy. It will be worthwhile if it helps believers to be resigned and reconciled to controversy since in the nature of the case all men are inextricably involved.

Let us be careful not to condemn controversy. Let us not be averse to it as such. Only let us be zealous for all engagement in it that it be truly Scriptural and Christian; speaking the truth always and only in love even though at times it be the love of stern reproof and correction. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (II Tim. 2:24-26).

Having heard let us heed the call to "war a good warfare," to "fight the good fight" of the old but true and everlasting faith.

The End

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# *The Church a Covenant Community*

By the Rev. E. Clark Copeland, D.D.

(Continued from last issue)

## **The Covenant with Abraham**

The call of God to Abraham is painted in brilliant colors against the panorama of God's sovereign direction of the kingdoms of this world. After the flood the descendents of Noah went about their pleasure of making a name for themselves (Gen. 11:4) and establishing rival king-

doms (Gen. 10:10) to the kingdom of the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth. But the Lord "scattered them" (Gen. 11:9) as it pleased Him in relation to His purpose of world blessing through Israel.<sup>45</sup>

The call comes to Abraham in the same terms in which God had approached Adam:

when the Sovereign Redeemer speaks it is in the imperative (Acts 17:30) just as when the Lord God spoke in Eden. Obedient response to the Divine command is encouraged by a four-fold promise of blessing; a great nation, a land, a great name, and protection. The goal of the blessing reaches beyond Abraham and his seed to "all the families of the earth." Abraham is both the object of God's blessing and the instrument of its extension; he is caught up with God in His purpose of blessing all nations. "Every facet of the blessing implies a mission."<sup>46</sup> In remarking that the blessing "was to be shared as well as received," John Milton comments that the passives, "shall be blessed," put the emphasis upon Abraham and his seed as the **medium** by which the nations will receive the blessing; and the reflexives, "shall bless themselves," put the emphasis on "the effect of the witness of the blessing of God on Abraham and his seed, in that others are drawn to seek a share in it."<sup>47</sup> A result of the blessing of God on Abraham and his seed, they are assured, is that they will be effective as "God's fellow workers."<sup>48</sup>

"He looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). Thus the New Testament witnesses that Abraham did not see the material things promised as the heart of the blessing. Abraham left country and father's house to cross the earth for an unknown land because of what was implied in the words, "I will show you." The breaking of old ties, affections and ways was separation to eternal companionship with God who had called him and was taking him by the hand to lead him into His kingdom. In this practical example we are introduced to the Divine method of the accomplishment of His holy will, His eternal purpose of universal redemption. God led Jacob (Gen. 48:15). He led Israel through the wilderness (Ps. 136:16). It is the universal experience and prayer of God's people (Ps. 23:2; 139:24). God with His people in all their experiences is a covenant promise and reality. He was with Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:19-20), in the wilderness (Is. 63:9), in the land (2 Chron. 5:13-14), in captivity (Ezekiel's visions of the Spirit) and in the renewed city (Ezek. 48:35). He was recognized in the incarnation (John 1:14). The promise of His presence confirmed the Great Commission: "I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20). The covenant is God's instrument for bringing man into closest union, fellowship and identity with Himself. This is the most significant thing about a covenant. The reality of it is seen in God's description of Abraham, "My friend" (Is. 41:8; James 2:23).

The material aspects of the covenant were necessary for the realization of the covenant by the "whole man" God had created, (Gen. 2:7). A nation must have land, food, neighbors, protection. The nation was organized as an army of

fighting men as she marched through the wilderness and into the Promised Land. As God's temporal kingdom Israel was necessarily concerned with conquest, dominion, national boundaries, kings, palaces, international agreements. But inasmuch as they were the external manifestations of God's rule in the hearts and lives of men, they must be identified with that spiritual work of God which is the core of the promise. The land is Yahweh's mountain, the place of His abode, His sanctuary where Israel dwells with Him, "and the Lord will reign for ever and ever" (Ex. 15:17-18). For their worship of Him, God gave them material ordinances of altar, sacrifice, priesthood, and tabernacle. Circumcision, equated with the covenant, the outward sign of the flesh, the seal of the faith which Abraham had in advance of it, must be "seen and understood in the light of the central idea of the covenant, the universal promise of blessing."<sup>49</sup> Even the promise of a son to Abraham goes beyond Isaac and Israel, whom God calls, "My son,"<sup>50</sup> to God's only Son made flesh, that He may do what Isaac could not do, for they were necessarily recipients as well as channels of blessing.

It should not seem strange that out of the matrix of such a promise there comes finally an **individual**, Jesus Christ, who fulfills both the aspect of lineal and of spiritual descent from Abraham, and who in a unique sense fulfills also the vocation of Abraham's seed, whether viewed individually as when Isaac was born or collectively as in the history of the people of Israel . . . The New Testament, of course, goes further and gives to this promise of a seed a pure religious application; first, to Christ, and then to those who are Christ's because they share the faith of Abraham (Gal. 3:7,16,29).<sup>51</sup>

These elements are, then, to be seen as the temporal terminology and media providing the basis for the conclusions of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem that the coming of the Gentiles to faith in Christ was the rebuilding of the kingdom of David. "Within the promise, 'to be God to you and to your descendants after you' (Gen. 17:7) lies hidden the whole mystery of the Gospel."<sup>52</sup>

The covenant with Abraham is not given complete in any one pericope. Genesis 12:1-3 is the basic structure to which elements are added, particularly in chapters 15 and 17. In the former Yahweh bound Himself by a self-maledictory oath to bring the blessings of a numberless seed already promised.<sup>53</sup> Yahweh would Himself bring this to pass; Abraham was a witness only to the passing between the parts of the sacrifice. In circumcision, chapter 17, God showed Abraham that the natural seed was not the covenant seed, but the circumcised alone could be counted of the

covenant (v. 14). Thus it spoke of a work God would do in removing their uncleanness and affecting their hearts towards Himself.<sup>54</sup> God equates circumcision with the covenant (v. 10). It stands for the reality of the spiritual life of the covenant people, the life that is not by natural generation, but is of God (John 1:13).

Circumcision was a seal of an already existing covenant relationship and a covenant blessing already experienced. It belonged to the human response to the divine covenant. It did not change the spiritual character of the covenant blessing. It did not substitute a ritual law for the righteousness of faith. It added something to the covenant observance, but the addition did not contradict the spirit of the covenant: it, too, had a spiritual significance.<sup>55</sup>

With the establishment of circumcision God made plain the character of the response expected from those in covenant with Him, "Walk before me and be complete."<sup>56</sup>

#### Notes

45 Cf. Gen. 10:32 with Deut. 32:8, 9. The latter is the song of God's kingdom in Israel in the midst of the nations among whom He would be glorified by Israel.

46 Milton, p. 52. He has a very informative and stimulating discussion of the call of Abraham, pp. 37-62.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55. The Hebrew passives are found in Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 28:14; the reflexives, 22:18; 26:4. See chapter I, note 47 above.

48 *The Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version, Verse Reference Edition, *Holman Study Bible* Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1962), p. 1070, footnote.

49 Milton, p. 112.

50 Ex. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 32:5, 6; Is. 45:11; Hosea 11:1.

51 Milton, p. 44.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

53 Cf. Heb. 6:13-20, especially, "he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us" (17b-18).

54 See John Murray, "Covenant," *The New Bible Dictionary*, organizing editor, J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), p. 265. Cf., "Circumcision obviously presupposes that the natural life is tainted by impurity, which must be removed in those who are called in covenant fellowship with God. . . . Thus it is a symbol of the renewal and purification of heart." R. F. Weidner, *Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (Chicago: F. H. Revel, 1886), pp. 78-79. In view of these statements it is difficult to understand the assertion that circumcision does not operate as an individual means of grace, is no vehicle of sanctifying forces, does not constitute an immediate personal relation with God, but secures the individual's place as a member of the nation and his share in the promises and saving benefits guaranteed the nation as a whole.

55 Milton, p. 111. Milton recognizes that "it became for many an external substitute for the inner experience," but "there is no evidence it was so with Abraham" nor "that the addition of the law in the renewal of the covenant with Israel as a nation at Sinai altered the original spiritual purpose of the divine covenant of blessing," p. 112.

56 Gen. 17:1. *Tamim* is defined, "Complete, sound, whole, wholesome, unimpaired, innocent, having integrity, what is complete, entirely in accord with truth and fact." W. Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, edited by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 1071. Hereafter this lexicon will be identified by **BDB**.

(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 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 for books to the manager of this magazine.

ESSAYS PRESENTED TO CHARLES WILLIAMS, edited by C. S. Lewis. Wm. B. Eerdmans

Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1966, pp. 145. \$2.45.

These essays are collected in honor of Charles Williams, a close friend of C. S. Lewis, Dorothy Sayers, J. R. R. Tolkien and the other authors. Each essay deals with the scholarly interest of each writer. Dorothy Sayers tells of her introduction to and her love of the "Divine Comedy". The Tolkien essay is his final definition of the fairy tale and its place in English literature. Other essays are by A. O. Barfield, Grevasse Mathew and W. H. Lewis. The essays by Miss Sayers and Mr. Tolkien are of the greatest interest to the general reader.

— Margaret Wallace

PHANTASTES and LILITH: TWO NOVELS BY GEORGE MACDONALD, with an Introduction by C. S. Lewis. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1964, pp. 420. \$2.45.

Many Christians have read C. S. Lewis's spiritual autobiography, **Surprised by Joy**, but few are familiar with the fantasies by George MacDonald which were very influential in bringing Lewis to Christianity. This edition is a reprint of these nineteenth century fantasies and includes an introduction by Lewis.

**Phantastes** is the narration of young Andros as he enters into the world of Fairy. Gradually his disbelief in fairies fades and he can see them as they live in the forests. His journey through Fairyland is filled with encounters with various evil trees and women. In the conclusion, Andros awakes from a dream where he has been killed as he battled with a huge wolf. Lilith was, according to ancient Hebrew legend, the first wife of Adam. In this fantasy, MacDonald again has a young narrator, Mr. Vane, tell of his journey away from Father Adam and Vane is allowed to return only when he has learned to give up his own will.

Lewis points out that MacDonald is a writer who "does best fantasy-fantasy that hovers between the allegorical and the mythopoeic." The reader who looks for the Christian allegory as expressed in the Narnian Chronicles will be disappointed. At the same time spiritual truths such as selflessness, self-sacrifice for others, and the world of spirits are easily found.

— Margaret Wallace

THE BIBLE: THE LIVING WORD OF REVELATION, edited by Merrill C. Tenney. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1968, pp. 228. \$5.95.

This monograph has been produced by the Evangelical Theological Society. The doctrinal statement of this organization describes the Bible as "the Word of God written, and therefore inerrant in the autographs." Ten distinguished evangelicals have contributed to the volume in an effort to advance the doctrine of inerrancy against

its modern detractors. The book has been edited with the layman in mind.

Kenneth Kantzer and John W. Montgomery have penned the most comprehensive essays in the volume. Montgomery clearly shows the philosophical roots of higher criticism, while Kantzer carefully investigates modern concepts of revelation. The latter's section on natural or general revelation is excellent. Marten Woudstra and Clark Pinnock discuss, respectively, the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments. E. J. Young examines the concept of inerrancy. John Gerstner investigates the case for one message throughout Scripture. R. Laird Harris contributes an essay on communication of revelation. J. I. Packer concludes that Scriptural revelation is necessary for fallen man. John Walvoord considers the pragmatic effects of verbal inspiration. Merrill Tenney contributes an essay on the meaning of "word" in the Old and New Testament.

This volume makes one thing very clear: modern theology cannot define revelation in a metaphysical manner. This is the direct result of irrationalism and hostility to metaphysics. Rational theism alone is able to deal with the objective facts of reality — the most important of which is that there is a God and that He is the God who has spoken in Scripture.

— James T. Dennison, Jr.

INTRODUCTORY STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY, by Robert L. Reymond. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 185, Nutley, N. J. 07110. 1968, pp. 242, paperback. \$4.50.

This book is largely a summary and review of select portions of John B. Cobb, Jr.'s **Living Options in Protestant Theology** (1962). Reymond has selected six (Mascall, Wieman, Brunner, Barth, Bultmann and Tillich) of the nine theologians (the preceding plus the Boston Personalists and the Niebuhrs) discussed by Cobb in order to criticize them from the standpoint of Protestant orthodoxy. Reymond's book judges each of the six theological systems against the standard of the absolute authority of God's Word. He is not primarily concerned with contradictory elements within each theologian's system; rather he endeavors to show each theologian's contradiction of the absolute truth of God's Word.

The stated purpose of the author is to present a volume to "collegian and layman" which will clear the "imponderably dense" jungle of modern theology. That is an admirable goal, especially from a Reformed standpoint. Yet Reymond's path through the jungle is, in many cases, as dense as the sources which he criticizes. Consequently, a layman, or collegian for that matter, with no foundation in post-Kantian philosophy, will find this "guide" equally imponderable.

Reymond simply assumes too much philosophical expertise on the part of his intended readers. This criticism should not obscure the fact that this book will be beneficial to those initiated in empiricism, pantheism, phenomenology and existentialism. Reymond's contention at this juncture is precise: modern theology is incomprehensible apart from its philosophical roots. The initiated reader will find excellent chapters on Wieman (he is closer to classical liberalism than classical natural theology), Brunner, Barth, Bultmann and Tillich.

The chapter on Mascall attempts to demolish the structure of classical Thomistic natural theology from the standpoint of Dutch presuppositionalism. In the opinion of this reviewer, it is to be lamented that, especially in Reformed circles, natural theology has fallen on evil days. Theistic proofs are implicit in all the Reformers' writings; simply because they demonstrated the facts of objective reality and, thus, a point of contact between regenerate and unregenerate men. Criticism or denials of the truth of the theistic proofs assume the cogency of the natural man's position, i.e. that he may flagrantly deny what he knows to be true. When Reymond criticizes the theistic proofs, he is assuming them (if for no reason than the fact that he is a Biblical theologian) in order to criticize them. Strange apologetics indeed!

— James T. Dennison, Jr.

**THE CANONS OF DORT: A STUDY GUIDE**, by Henry Peterson. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506 1968, pp. 115, paperback. \$1.50.

In answer to Dutch Arminians (Remonstrants), the Synod of Dort (1618-19) set forth what have become the famous five points of Calvinism. Petersen fully expounds total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints (TULIP) in such a way as to sharpen the wits of Reformed pastors vis-a-vis their Arminian counterparts. However, one note of imprecision exists in his treatment of man's will. He retains the term "free will" to describe the lack of constraint toward a course of action. Such a definition of freedom fits man as a free moral agent; it does not describe the will, which, strictly speaking, is not "free" because it is incapable of being constrained. The will is determined always by that which pleases it; the will chooses what seems best to it and never chooses otherwise. Thus, freedom is not an attribute of the will; it is an attribute of the agent who possesses a will — namely man. The will cannot be constrained or restrained — man can.

— James T. Dennison, Jr.

**TOURIST IN ISRAEL**, by S. M. Houghton.

The Banner of Truth Trust, 73b Chiltern Street, London W. 1, England. 1968, pp. 220, paperback. \$1.25.

Houghton is joint-editor of England's **Bible League Quarterly** — a publication dedicated to resisting attacks on the inspiration, infallibility and sole sufficiency of the Bible. Scripture alone was Houghton's guidebook in his May, 1967 tour of Israel. His delightful account of fifteen days in the Holy Land takes the reader to Jerusalem, Samaria, Bethlehem, Petra, Jericho and various Galilean cities. The book is appropriately spiced with historical and archaeological delectations, so that the reader's appetite is constantly whetted. Houghton makes no apology for his futuristic interpretation of selected Old Testament prophecies. In his description of Jerusalem, he often refers to the visible return of Christ to the City of David.

— James T. Dennison, Jr.

**THE SYSTEM AND THE GOSPEL: A CRITIQUE OF PAUL TILLICH**, by Kenneth Hamilton. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1967, pp. 244, paperback. \$2.45.

The author's purpose is stated in his preface — to compare Tillich's system with historic Christianity. His conclusion — "to see Tillich's system as a whole is to see that it is incompatible with the Christian gospel (p. 227)." Tillich, a philosophical theologian, has applied the phenomenological tools of modern existentialism to reality; but with a significant difference, i.e. speculative ontology. His *logos* philosophy (defined as human reason united with being) is divine reason (a Platonic concept). Thus, man is the constitutive source of all meaning; for human consciousness alone is available to operate upon the phenomenal realm. Despite his lip service to "ultimate concerns", Tillich's method makes metaphysics impossible. Tillich's Christology is sadly unbiblical. Jesus of Nazareth is not the incarnate, pre-existent Son of God. He is the one who shows us God in man; he shows us the really real (true being) in man. The New Testament writers use mythical and symbolic language to convey the fact that the answer to man's being and meaning was in "Jesus as the Christ". This will be a difficult book for the uninitiated reader. It is not however an impossible book. With slow, deliberate study, one will be rewarded with an understanding of a difficult theologian.

— James T. Dennison, Jr.

**THE LOG COLLEGE**, by Archibald Alexander. The Banner of Truth Trust, 73b Chiltern Street, London W. 1, England. 1969 (reprint), pp. 251. \$4.00.

When George Whitefield first came to America in 1740, he found a land ripe for harvest. Calvinists such as Jonathan Edwards and the Tennents

had ploughed men's hearts with God's Word in preparation for the revivals of the Great Awakening. Persons indifferent to revealed religion or enslaved by a dead, formalistic orthodoxy were mightily stirred by the gospel of Christ. Poor sinners became distressed by their dangerous condition; miserable souls were urged to earnestly seek Christ and grace; burdened consciences were warmly comforted by the saving mercies of Jesus. This book records the history of some of the men through whom God poured out His Spirit. They were trained by William Tennent at his Neshaminy "Log College" which was founded in 1726. This crude log cabin was succeeded in 1745 by the College of New Jersey (later called Princeton). Of more than historical interest, these revivals and the men responsible for them were the product of sound Biblical preaching and teaching.

— James T. Dennison, Jr.

**ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE ANCIENT TESTAMENT**, by James L. Kelso. Zondervan Pub. House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. 1968, pp. 214. \$4.95.

Dr. Kelso has written for the layman, but I judge the book to be too sketchy. It does emphasize one point that many more complete O. T. studies omit: the Old Covenant looked to the coming of Jesus the Messiah.

— Edward A. Robson

**THE PERSON AND THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**, by R. A. Torrey. Zondervan Pub. House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1968 Reprint (1910), pp. 262. \$3.95.

Torrey's study of the Holy Spirit does not adequately present the doctrine of the Spirit. It does not have an index, and the longest discussion in the book deals with the filling or baptism with the Spirit.

— Edward A. Robson

**PERIL BY CHOICE**, by James Hefley. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1968, pp. 225. \$4.95.

This is the story of John and Elaine Beekman, Wycliffe Bible Translators, in Mexico. One may wonder where peril may be in such a scholarly undertaking as translation of Scripture. In order to put a people's language into writing one must live intimately with them, which in many instances means going into forbidding areas. In sharing the Gospel, the Beekmans' heroic efforts to produce the New Testament for Chol Indians reads like a chapter from Acts. Theirs is a testimonial that human frailty dedicated to God can bring about changes in everyday living as well as in the hearts of men.

— Eleanor C. Robb

**VITAL WORDS OF THE BIBLE**, by J. M. Furness. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1966, pp. 128, paperback. \$2.25.

Mr. Furness is a Britisher. The book is a summarized study of how certain N. T. words are used in secular history, religious writings, the Greek O. T., and the N. T. It gives the chosen word in English letters and then defines it by copious references to Scripture. The book has 51 words, from "love" to "life" and concludes that "covenant" is the key word.

There are two criticisms. The major one is that the author apparently holds an evolutionary view of O. T. doctrine by his habit of pitting earlier O. T. verses against later. Second, there are FOUR Greek words meaning love, not three — the one in Rom. 1:31 and II Tim. 3:3 ("without natural affection") customarily being omitted.

— Robert More, Jr.

**THE ECUMENICAL MIRAGE**, by C. Stanley Lowell. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1967, pp. 205. \$4.95.

The Rev. Lowell is a minister in the Methodist Church and presently connected with Americans United For Separation of Church and State. This book is an astute evaluation of the ecumenical movement up to recent days, the newest footnote in the 1967 book being in 1967! It quotes many newspapers and authoritative documents, and paints the ecumenical movement for what it really is, a quasipolitical ideology under the guise of religion. One possibly misleading statement is on p. 43 where it would seem the United Church of Canada was formed in 1939. On the next page he repeats but then confusingly, but accurately, says it was formed in 1925.

— Robert More, Jr.

**WE SPOKE FOR GOD**, by J. C. Reid. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1967, pp. 122. \$3.50.

The price is too dear for its talk! "Talk" it is, for dedicating it "to all who seek to know the truth", Dr. Reid, a Presbyterian preacher in Pittsburgh with an earned doctorate, proceeds to tell us that Is. 37:36-38 is a "less scientific account" than "bubonic plague"; that Jeremiah's name means "God hurls, or shoots" instead of "Jah is high"; that Hab. 2:4 means, "let the righteous, however perplexed in faith because of trial and affliction, hold on in loyalty to God and to duty, and he shall live", not even bothering with Paul in Romans, Galatians, and the book of Hebrews; and that an "unknown prophet" living in the Babylonian Exile penned Isaiah 52:8, 9. Both as compliment and criticism, don't let "the speaker of smooth things beguile you."

— Robert More, Jr.

**MORE NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES**, by C. H. Dodd. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1968, pp. 157. \$4.50.

C. H. Dodd is widely known as an English, modernistic former professor, and general editor of the "New English Bible." This book is a collection of essays previously printed elsewhere. It is deep and cites numerous Biblical verses. It displays some open modernistic tendencies in certain word choices and statements (as concerning the number 153 in Jn. 21:11, etc.) It quotes many valuable extra-biblical sources. Concerning the previous book too, the reviewer wonders why Eerdmans, the "evangelical publisher," is now giving circulation to writers of suspicious orthodoxy if not known error?

— Robert More, Jr.

**CHRIST AND HIS CHURCHES**, by R. J. Graham. Sovereign Grace Union, Redhill, Surrey, England. 1967, pp. 56, paperback. \$60.

Mr. Graham is minister of Highgate Road Chapel in London. The booklet was originally preached as a series. Its purpose is not to draw out millennial implications, or find dispensational (historical) types, but rather to place Rev. chap. 2 and 3 in contemporary church life. He gives a very acceptable historical sketch of the Scriptural churches, and cites Scripture often and pertinently. Finally, his treatment of Rev. 3:20 should convince "evangelistic" misquoters of their error.

— Robert More, Jr.

**JESUS**, by Dr. John Kennedy of Dingwall, Scotland. The Religious Bookroom, Inchvannie Court, Dingwall, Ross-shire, Scotland. 1967, pp. 11, paperback. 9 pence per copy, 3 pence postage.

Recently I became an admiring reader of Dr. Kennedy (1819-1884). Indeed he is THE Scottish evangelist of note in recent times — Charles Spurgeon's beloved contemporary too. Elsewhere the nonsense of "promoted" revival and evangelism he scored in their inescapable consequences.

This sermon was preached on November 26, 1882 from Matt. 1:21 and amounts to a systematic theology of Jesus the Saviour. Scripture is cited practically every line. It is articulately Biblical, convictingly Calvinistic. It is thrilling!

Two criticisms might be lightly offered. Rev. 3:20 is allegorized to accommodate evangelism. Second, an occasional sentence is as long as a paragraph (shades of the Apostle Paul though!)

— Robert More, Jr.

**MOODY**, by John Pollock. Zondervan Pub-

lishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1967, pp. 336, paperback. \$1.95.

Mr. Pollock also authored Billy Graham's biography and is a Church of England minister. This book evidences concentrated research in original documents and is thorough. It also espouses modern bias by heaping encomiums on Moody while scorning his theological and methodological opponents. Dr. John Kennedy of Dingwall is simply pilloried, being labeled by such words as "damn", "dour", "blasted", "diatribe", "poisoned", "cast around", "cramp" in only three short paragraphs! Whether Moody in Scotland (and elsewhere) was such a God-send, the non-partisan, discerning reader will want to read Kennedy's own words, reprinted in the May 1957 **Banner of Truth** (78b Chiltern Street, London, W1, England.)

— Robert More, Jr.

**THEY CALLED HIM MISTER MOODY**, by Richard K. Curtis. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 49502. 1967, pp. 378, paperback. \$2.45.

Mr. Curtis has written a popular account of Moody. While heavily documented (in a queer arrangement!), the account has lots of chinks. Mr. Moody is assumed perforce as the power of God, while, for instance, Jonathan Edwards is in one place described with Asahel Nettleton as "emotional busts with . . . hysterical antics that convulsed" hearers (is that history, or really myth?) while in another place Moody is said to be the authentic successor of Edwards! Moody's lack of theological acumen, hence strange theological flaws, is shown in many places. Even Mr. Curtis has a funny combination in his "Wellhausen-Schleiermacher Higher Criticism." Many historical facts, though, are valuable.

— Robert More, Jr.

**SOURCEBOOK FOR SPEAKERS**, by Eleanor Doan. Zondervan Pub. House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1968, pp. 407, \$5.95.

This book is funny, really funny, a big joke. Blow your top over it. It's old, new, fresh, sober, and grand. Celsus, the pagan anti-Christian in the 3rd century would say, "these Christians love each other (and this book) even before they are acquainted!"

— Robert More, Jr.

**COMMUNISM VERSUS CREATION**, by Francis Nigel Lee. Craig Press, Box 13, Nutley, N.J., 07110. 1969, pp. 252, paperback. \$3.95.

James D. Bales' attack on Communism from Biblical grounds (reviewed in **Blue Banner Faith and Life**, July-September 1969, pages 118-119) concentrated fire on the weakness of Commun-

ism's artificial "guilt" propaganda, in view of its rejection of any absolute moral law as a standard of judgment.

Dr. Francis Nigel ("Nik") Lee of South Africa probes Communism's errors by a comparison of the Christian and Communist views of the ultimate origin of things. Christianity believes that God created all things. Communism's theory of cosmic and social origins is materialistic, evolutionary and atheistic. Dr. Lee defends the Biblical view of God's sovereign creation and refutes the Communist explanations.

The author was born in England in 1934 but grew to manhood in his father's native country, South Africa. He is both a licensed preacher in the Dutch Reformed Church and also a Barrister-at-law of the Supreme Court of South Africa. He has a rich background of academic training and achievement.

Chapter I of Dr. Lee's book is an introduction to the historical background and origin of Communism. In this chapter is an interesting table of classic works by Marx, Engels and Lenin showing the various stages which may be distinguished in the development of the philosophy of Communism, phases of growth such as "philosophical humanism," "dialectical revolutionism," "classical economics," "socialistic eschatology" . . . "atheistic revolutionism" and "dialectical partisan basis" (pp.15.16). This table is unique, and quite helpful.

Dr. Lee summarizes Communism in this manner: "The Communist philosophy is an integrated and totalitarian world-view. It is the result of the combination of Hegelian dialectics with Darwinian evolutionism and with the materialistic atheism of Engels, as further socialized and economized by the historical materialism and humanistic idealism of Marx, and as further revolutionarily short-circuited by the dialectical if nihilistic opportunism of Lenin."

Chapters Two through Ten develop the author's method of showing the irreconcilable antagonism between Christianity's faith in God the Creator as the origin of all things, and Communism's atheistic explanation of the origin of the universe and of society. Under this antithesis these chapters discuss the "origin" of God according to Communism, with the Bible answer; Communism and the origin of matter, the universe, life, man, labor, society, religion, knowledge.

The final appeal of the book is "Communism versus creation. A fight to the finish. Which of the two will you believe in? Which will you serve: dialectical motion, or the Lord God omnipotent? In the words of Joshua of old: "choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

An Epilogue which concludes the book con-

tains selected passages from the Bible which emphasize the sovereign creative power of God.

This book requires of the reader a degree of learning in theology, philosophy and natural science, but it would be a useful volume for the pastor's library or even the church library. It has fine documentation and a good bibliography for a wider study of Communism.

One disappointing lack in such a book as this one is the absence of any reference to the social responsibility of Christians who agree with the Biblical world-and-life view held by Dr. Lee. In the sensitive fields of race relations, for example, a Christian who is active in both Church and State as Dr. Lee is in South Africa might be able to answer some of the terrible charges made by Communists against the Christian Church there. Can we justify the Church's social failures by theology alone? While this book obviously confines its argument to basic theological assumptions, we Christians cannot avoid the social problems about us. If we have not loved our neighbor as ourselves, as our Lord commanded, how can we escape the King's rebuke as given in Matthew 25:41-46?

— S. E. Boyle

MARX'S RELIGION OF REVOLUTION, THE DOCTRINE OF CREATIVE DESTRUCTION, by Gary North. Craig Press, Box 13, Nutley, N.J., 07110. 1968, pp. 253, paperback. \$3.75.

Gary North borrowed an illustration from comparative religions to put the finger on the Communist doctrine of Utopia through creative destruction.

Roger Caillois and other social historians have told of the "chaos festival" which occurred often in primitive nature religions. Pagan cosmology believed in man's power to control the powers of Nature for his own advantage by magic rites. When social conditions became unbearably oppressive by reason of economic distress or stifling repressions of taboos and rules from the past, a festive celebration would be staged in which all were encouraged to give free, uninhibited expression to their desires. All rules, even the holiest laws of the religious tradition, were disregarded and a mass orgy of licentiousness was allowed free play. The Roman Saturnalia was one example of this pagan ritual, and even the Mardi Gras today in New Orleans is a faint imitation of the ancient pagan "chaos festival."

The reasoning behind these chaos festivals was that by such socially destructive behavior, in defiance of the moral code, men somehow returned to the age of pre-temporal chaos. Through this abandoned spontaneity of rebellion the whole tribe would experience a fresh revitalization resulting in social benefits comparable to a primitive Golden Age.

It is North's idea that Communism has a spiritual link with those ancient chaos festivals, clothed in the modern garments of German rationalism and contemporary materialistic science. Through planned chaos and destructive attacks on all existing moral and religious codes the Marxist revolution promises men a Golden Age of social renewal and perfect happiness on earth. This cult of total abandonment to destruction as the path to creative social good always appeals to sinful mankind. It combines full permissiveness for the natural lusts of the sinner's heart with an exalted belief that this "freedom" ushers in a New Order of social good.

This interesting analogy is but one of the many valuable features in Gary North's book on Communist revolutionary doctrines. Mr. North has been preaching and working on his doctorate at the University of California, Riverside campus, in the fields of economic history and world civilization. Some of his writings have already gained recognition.

He studied at Westminster Theological Seminary long enough to imbibe Dr. Cornelius Van Til's apologetic, for in his Introduction Mr. North states that his purpose in this book is "to subject Marx to an evaluation based upon the perspective of that contemporary Calvinist system known as 'presuppositionalism' which is expounded by Dr. Cornelius Van Til of Westminster Seminary and Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd of the Free University of Amsterdam."

The book is not easy reading, but the contents are most effective in combating Communism's false theory of revolution. There is one unimportant weakness in the arrangement of the chapters in this book. The chapters are numbered from I to IX, but under these nine headings are included the Preface, the Introduction, two Appendices and the Index, as well as the central chapters which constitute the main argument of the volume. Possibly a better editing of the next edition will increase the organic unity of the book and intensify its already fine impact on readers.

Appendix A ("Socialist Economic Calculation") and Appendix B ("Soviet Economic Planning") are most interesting. North follows Ludwig von Mises and other anti-socialist economists in defending the free market competitive system as the best economic system yet devised by mankind — one which is infinitely better for man than any type of socialism, either democratic or Communist.

One curious rumor concerning Karl Marx's religious life is quoted from S.M. Riis (*Karl Marx: Master of Fraud*, New York, 1962), in which he tells of interviewing a London woman who claimed to have worked as a domestic in the Marx household. This woman said that on Sat-

urdays Marx often attended a Jewish temple in London, and that sometimes at his home "he played alone in his room, before a row of lit candles, tying a sort of tape measure around his forehead."

Gary North's concluding criticism of Marx is as follows: "Man is a creature who must operate under law, and he lives in a universe which also operates under law . . . Marx, however, could not admit that man's authority is derivative; like the self-proclaimed autonomous men at the Tower of Babel, he announced the creature power of man apart from God . . . In affirming the power of man for total creation, he launched the forces of absolute destruction. Man's capacity for self-delusion is boundless, but man has been warned of the results of such self-deception."

— S. E. Boyle

FAIR SUNSHINE, by Jock Purves. Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern Street, London, W.1, England. 1968, pp. 206, paperback. 5 shillings.

TORCHBEARERS OF THE TRUTH, by A. Sinclair Horne. The Scottish Reformation Society, 17 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh 1, Scotland. 1968, pp. 125, paperback, illustrated, 6 shillings or \$1.00. Hardbound at 10 shillings or \$1.75.

Any sign of revived interest in the great cause of our Covenanted Reformed Faith is welcome. How much more when the work is well done, attractively printed, and available at a reasonable price. We found, too, that these two versions of the same history each has a distinctive value. The first excels in poetic charm and power. But the second is somewhat more full in historical detail. Together they reinforce each other. And in them the old history is made vividly real again. Once more we find ourselves saying: "What a wonderful thing this Reformed Faith is, and how we need to see and feel this, as did these stalwarts." Their faithfulness must not be forgotten. These two welcome booklets will help us to remember.

— G. I. Williamson

JOHN WESLEY: THE BURNING HEART, by Skevington Wood. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 49502. 1967, pp. 302. \$4.95.

This is an excellent book. It is written in an interesting style. We are convinced of the solid research of the author. And we come away with a new appreciation of the Sovereign Grace of God. We see better than we did before the dimensions of the spiritual need in that day when God raised up Whitefield and Wesley. We also see that God can do great things with a consecrated servant, even when his theology is defective. It is at this point that Wood's book is weak. He does not, in our opinion, do justice

to the element in Wesley's theology which was so happily contradicted by the main thrust of his life and work. The excellency of this book, then, lies in the background of Wesley's life and work that is so ably sketched here. It also lies in the sympathetic portrait of a truly great man. But it is (in Part III) weak in its assessment of the deadly heresy that did so much to vitiate Wesley's own achievements as a servant of the Lord. Methodist Wood is quite unable to help us here.

A final note. Much as we abhor Arminianism (and this book in no wise diminishes our abhorrence), we can understand better how Whitefield could oppose Wesley's theology so manfully, while yet having the highest reverence for the man.

— G. I. Williamson

THE AMERICAN FAR RIGHT, by John H. Redekop. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 49502. 1968, pp. 232. \$4.50.

This is an interesting book. It is also fair. Mr. Redekop finds something to applaud as well as something to criticize. To his credit also, he criticizes the "sophisticated and cautious scholars" who have somehow "exhibited an amazing degree of carelessness when reacting to the Far Right" (p. 202). The main thrust of the book, of course, is to show the poverty of this movement. And in this the author succeeds. The sheer inadequacy of fundamentalist theology — the amazing tendency to identify Christianity and "traditional" Americanism — and the "conspiratorial interpretation of history" (p. 188) whereby the Communists are behind everything bad — are clearly shown. Indeed, the humiliation is too complete. Our sympathy lies, in the end, somewhat with the poor fundamentalists. They do at least sense the great crisis in which we find ourselves, and they do see that Christ is the only answer in politics too! Why write a book like this, then, unless one is prepared to show a more excellent way? But the author himself is here found wanting. And we see yet more clearly the need for a sound **positive** program for political action. As the subject and author both demonstrate, merely being negative is just not enough.

— G. I. Williamson

THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST AS AN ADVOCATE, by John Bunyan. 1968 (reprint), pp. 143, paperback. \$1.95.

ISRAEL'S HOPE ENCOURAGED, by John Bunyan. 1968 (reprint), pp. 126, paperback. \$1.75.

A HOLY LIFE: THE BEAUTY OF CHRISTIANITY, by John Bunyan. 1968 (reprint), pp. 123, paperback. \$1.75.

All published by Reiner Publications, Swengel, Pennsylvania 17880.

In these three paperback reprints, sound, substantial Bible doctrine is expounded and practically applied by John Bunyan, the author of "The Pilgrim's Progress". After three centuries, Bunyan is still fresh and readable and both relevant and edifying. All three of these books deal with Christian experience and the Christian's needs and problems. The book entitled "Israel's Hope Encouraged" is not about the Jews and their future, but about Christians, who are the spiritual Israel. Reiner Publications is doing a real service in making these and other writings of John Bunyan available to the public in an inexpensive form.

— J. G. Vos

THE CHRISTIAN'S GREAT INTEREST, by William Guthrie. The Banner of Truth Trust, 79b Chiltern St., London W1M IPS, England. 5 shillings. Puritan Publications, Inc., P.O. Box 652, Carlisle, Pa. 17013. \$1.25. Paperback, 207 pages.

This work was first published in 1658, and it has been repeatedly reprinted. It has been very influential, and commended by such men as John Owen and Thomas Chalmers. The author was an outstanding preacher at the height of Scotland's "Second Reformation." In this book he deals in a very penetrating, practical and Biblical way with the great questions of personal salvation and assurance of salvation. While the language and style are necessarily those of the author's time, his message is intelligible and highly relevant at the present day. It is a good antidote to the watered-down evangelism and "cheap believism" which are so common in our time. The author's method is to cite the objections which sinners and troubled saints tend to raise, then to answer these by bringing the Word of God to bear on them. Highly recommended to our readers.

— J. G. Vos

THE ART OF UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF, by Cecil Osborne. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1967, pp. 216. \$4.95.

The author is a Southern Baptist pastor who has worked extensively with small spiritual growth groups. His topic is certainly important, and he has many good things to say. For example, "One of the tragedies of the Church today is that we tend to measure our success in terms of size." He discusses alienation, anxiety, guilt, punishment, confession, self image, etc. In his opinion, help for these problems is most likely to be found in the context of a small sharing group of Christians. "In general it is the destructive emotions which are shared rather than

the symptomatic acts." Most of the problems that are cited find their origin in poor relationships with one's parents.

This book appears to be a mixture of Christianity and secular psychology. Dr. Osborne quotes approvingly from many sources (Tournier, Rollo May, Trueblood, Jung, Menninger, Mowrer, Fromm, Adler, Freue, Kierkegaard, Seckman, Laubach, etc.). Contrast the Bible's emphasis on exhortation and rebuke with the following quotation. "No one has the right to listen to a confession, shared weakness, or even the problem of a friend, who feels judgmental or who is cursed with a need to give advice."

— David R. Armstrong

**MAN IN COMMUNITY**, by Russell P. Shedd. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49502. 1964, pp. 209, paperback. \$1.95.

Central to the Biblical doctrines of sin and salvation is its teaching concerning the unity of mankind. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:22). In this book the author demonstrates that Paul's concept of the unity of man is firmly based on the Old Testament Scriptures and not Rabbinical speculation or Hellenistic philosophy. For a scholarly and devotional approach to what it means to be "in Christ" this is a very valuable contribution. His discussion of baptism as the outward means of identification with Christ and the eucharist as communal fellowship should be a real blessing to all who take time to mediate upon it.

— Donald Weilersbacher

**THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF THE STATE**, by Herman Dooyeweerd. The Craig Press, P.O. Box 185, Nutley, New Jersey 07110, 1968, pp. 50, paperback. \$1.00.

In this book Dr. Dooyeweerd is not concerned with a platform program for a Christian political party, but rather a Scriptural view of the state in general. He states that the two popular, but conflicting theories of the state are (1) the absolutism of the totalitarian state and (2) the absolutism of the individual. Both of these are rejected as being unscriptural. Nevertheless, it appears that each of them have been influential in the development of modern Christian political thought. As an alternative he suggests that one must abandon dualism of nature and grace (with one or the other being supreme) and adopt a sphere of sovereignty approach. Herein the Lord's commands are recognized as authoritative in both the Church and the State; although neither one is subservient to the other. Their functions are complementary and overlapping. This is not an easy book to read, but certainly one which is challenging to a mature Christian.

— Donald Weilersbacher

**SCRIPTURE UNION BIBLE STUDY BOOKS**, Ephesians-2 Thessalonians. Written by William Lane. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49502, 1969, pp. 91, paperback. \$1.25.

Dr. Lane (Th. D. Harvard) is professor at Gordon Divinity School. The "Scripture Union" group produced the book. Fine print; Scripturally oriented and divided into approximately one page sections make this book geared for personal or group Bible study. Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 woefully miss on meaning. In Phil. 2:5-11 both a hymn notion is inserted and Christ's deity remains unstated. Several misprints were noticed. There is also the uneasiness of "modernistic vocabulary and expressions" in many places, though evidently the message is Biblical.

— Robert More, Jr.

**PLANNED PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN'S GROUPS**. Pauline Spray. Zondervan Pub. House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1968, pp. 60, paperback. \$1.00.

The ten programmes are indeed well planned with hymns, scripture passage, a short talk, written prayer and religious poetry. The talks include one each on Jesus as "teacher", "friend", a thanksgiving service, the Bible's pricelessness, faith, little things, adversity and ABCD's for Christians.

The talks are interesting, easy reading and could be used for devotions at WMS or family worship.

— Ruth More

**100 BIBLE GAMES**. Edith Beavers Allen. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1968 reprint, pp. 86, paperback. \$1.50.

A really wide variety of games suitable for Juniors, Young People and Adults is found in this book. All the material is based on the New Testament. There are "get acquainted" games, scrambled word puzzles, identification quizzes, relays, quizzes to be looked up in the Bible, active games, and many others.

Anyone would find this a useful little book to have on hand.

— Ruth More

**LEARNING TO LOVE**, by Richard Peace. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1968, pp. 197. \$2.75.

Learning to Love is a trilogy of Bible studies dealing with love in three aspects — loving God, loving ourselves, and loving people. The series is based on Mark 12:23-34 (greatest commandment). The inductive method is employed so that the student can discover Biblical truth for himself. It is designed to be a private study,

encouraging the student to be absolutely honest in his responses. This study could be especially helpful for the person who has difficulty accepting himself. Special features are the Bible passage printed within the study (sometimes in a modern language version), excerpts from relevant Christian literature, and bibliography. If approached studiously and in an introspective manner, these studies have considerable merit.

— Mrs. David R. Armstrong

**A TOPICAL DICTIONARY OF BIBLE TEXTS**, by James Inglis. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1968, pp. 524. \$4.95.

Perhaps if I had used this book over a longer period of time I could grow more enthusiastic about its usefulness. I have thus far found it little more detailed than a good topical reference Bible such as the Thompson Chain, and it is decidedly more inconvenient not to have both text and aids in one volume. There is an arbitrary character to the listings, which is to be expected in a work of this nature.

A good analytical concordance is far superior in its thoroughness. Also the lack of exegetical attention to the words in the original tongues of Scripture makes the work decidedly disappointing.

— R. W. Nickerson

**LIVING THE CHRIST-FILLED LIFE**, by John E. Hunter. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1969, pp. 130. \$2.95.

Don't waste time reading this book. If you want an orderly, concise, and deep treatment of the "Christ-filled life" reread the Westminster Catechism and then couple it with the Heidelberg Catechism as well.

Hunter's book has little to offer because of its shallow Arminianism. The preponderant use of cliches is thoroughly aggravating. Some good ideas are expressed, but expressed so tritely and repetitively that they lose all appeal. The development of the theme is orderly, but the content is lean. One would get the impression that Hunter has said these words so often that he is beginning to tire of them, but instead tries to work the reader up to a false enthusiasm for a collection of pious platitudes. Many texts are quoted pietistically, but few are treated with any exegetical depth.

The repeated references to "limiting God" are the carry-over from a previous work of that name. Again, Hunter's Arminian concept of sanctification amounts to little more than self-reformation. So get out your Catechism and stay on the right track.

— R. W. Nickerson

**TREASURY OF ALEXANDER WHYTE**, Edited by Ralph G. Turnbull. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1968, pp. 256. \$1.95.

The foreword by Clarence Macartney shows a "bird of a feather" praising Whyte's style of preaching. Both pulpit masters were heavy on literacy and oratory, but weak on exegesis. The book is to be noted for its practical applications and warm evangelical zeal. The two selections on prayer are masterful, as are those on the Apostle Paul. Less useful are the thematic discourses on the temperaments, the sermons based on Pilgrim's Progress, and the biographical sketches of Scottish contemporaries. The minute selection from his commentary on the Shorter Catechism is insufficient to commend or criticize the work itself. In many places Whyte is highly quotable and all ministers would do well to imitate his vivid, graphic style which is the obvious fruit of being well-read in good literature as well as in theology *per se*.

— R. W. Nickerson

**CONTEND WITH HORSES**, by Grace Irwin. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 49502. 1968, pp. 284. \$4.95.

Other reviewers have been less than enthusiastic in their evaluations of the final volume in Miss Irwin's fictional trilogy of Andrew Connington. The plot is basically realistic and the characters have depth — qualities often missing from so-called "Christian novels." On the other hand, the dialogue is afflicted with an erudition and a penchant for the well-turned phrase which do not characterize common speech. Likewise, the upper-middle-class motif tends to feed the pseudo-intellectual sophistication that has become the goal of many evangelicals today.

In matters theological, the hero's defense of immersion, annihilationist view of hell, and uncritical fondness for Karl Barth are distressing if we are to construe Connington's stand on these matters as the Christian norm. There is reasonable evidence to think that this is Miss Irwin's intention.

Even with the above criticisms, **Contend with Horses** is a strong, significant contribution to Christian fiction. Insights into pastoral and family relationships abound. Miss Irwin has effectively removed the minister from his ivory tower. Can we now expect in later novels that she will show the same skill in revealing the conflicts that face the contemporary Christian in other walks of life?

— R. W. Nickerson

**SLAVERY, SEGREGATION AND SCRIPTURE**, by James O. Buswell, III. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1964, pp. 101. \$2.50.

What C. H. Oliver presented from a theological standpoint in *No Flesh Shall Glory*, Dr. Buswell has ably presented in terms of Christian anthropology. The brevity of this work is deceptive; throughout it is well-written, concise, and thoroughly researched. The rebuttal of Carlton Putnam's *Race and Reason* is emotionally charged but factually substantiated.

Buswell does not argue for the straw man of rigid racial equality, he simply makes a plea to consider the cultural as well as biological factors in the development of any individual or race. His survey of the underlying motives that carry over into present day segregationism from slavery times is particularly eye-opening.

The conclusions are sane and balanced. Mr. Buswell decries the extremes of certain integrationists as well as segregationists; he clearly states "social change must come through individual change" (pg. 46).

Only the most biased will find the reading of this book something other than a profitable look at genuinely Christian scholarship applied to a pressing problem of our day.

— R. W. Nickerson

**HOLY BOOK AND HOLY TRADITION**, Edited by F. F. Bruce and E. G. Rupp. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1968, pp. 244. \$5.95.

The opening chapter assumes a naturalistic interpretation of the origin of Scripture. The Bible is declared to be only one "Holy Book" among many; Scripture is reported not to be self-authenticating but to owe its status, content, and interpretation to ecclesiastical authority (pg. 15). This unproven presupposition pervades the entire work; the development of religious writings in early Egypt, Iran and Islam are cited as parallels of how our Bible came to us. Even F. F. Bruce, one of the editors, rejects the prophetic reference of many Old Testament passages to Christ and accuses New Testament writers of reading references to the historical Jesus into these Old Testament passages. This snowballing effect is felt even more in the later chapters which deal with the role of tradition in ecumenical dialogue. Here it becomes evident why the Reformation concept of *Scriptura sola* has been attacked so thoroughly. Such a lofty doctrine of the authority of the written word, as opposed to placing it on a level with oral tradition, can only block the wild race for ecclesiastical union at any cost. That the once trustworthy Eerdmans label has sacrificed Biblical truth for scholarly relativism is a cause of great consternation.

— R. W. Nickerson

**JOHN THE BAPTIST AS WITNESS AND MARTYR**, by Marcus L. Loane. Zondervan Pub-

lishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1968, pp. 122. \$3.95.

Marcus Loane's works are unique for their blend of exegetical depth and literary beauty; this work is definitely no exception. The twelve studies avoid extra-Biblical hearsay and the tendency to engage in hero worship — two traits that mar many character studies of Biblical personages. The involved relationships between John's witness and Christ's early ministry are carefully expounded. The whole book is exciting and Spiritually nourishing. Throughout the reader is summoned to see the Christ, not merely to speculate about the "forerunner." The way in which both Old and New Testament passages are brought to bear on each event described provides a fascinating example of how Scripture provides its own vivid illustrations. All the riches of Bible-Study-in-depth are displayed, on every page — a valuable tool for ministers and teachers.

— R. W. Nickerson

**TYNDALE BIBLE COMMENTARIES, THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER AND THE EPISTLE OF JUDE**, by Michael Green, Edited by R.V.G. Tasker, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 49502. 1968, pp. 192. \$3.95.

Typical British conservatism permeates this work. Green virtually apologizes for being orthodox in many places, but he nonetheless supports traditional views of Petrine authorship and inspiration. He is not always precise in explaining difficulties such as Jude's quotes from Enoch. Comments on II Peter 2, 3:10 indicate distinctly less than a commitment to Reformed theology. He shows wide reading in classic and contemporary works and displays an organized and literate style. The book is genuinely valuable for its current scholarship and practical insights. The importance of the meaning of the Greek text is also clearly set forth, another strong point recommending its purchase by serious Bible students.

-- R. W. Nickerson

**POPCORN, KITS AND MISTLETOE**, by Marion Leach Jacobsen. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1969, pp. 121. \$2.95.

This is a thoroughly delightful book that absolutely belongs in any home that has children or comes in frequent contact with children. From a solidly Christian foundation that is also psychologically sound, the author sets down a wealth of practical insights for family fun. The approach is down-to-earth, personal and sprinkled with the right dash of humor. The chapter on family cultural activities is a masterpiece of good taste and practical wisdom. The only two drawbacks are the idealism in the chapter on pets and the fact

that certain materials (e.g. the recommended books for children's reading) lack a listing for easy reference. But even the rather casual presentation in these areas befits the "soft sell" which stimulates the reader to personalize the basic ideas of the book.

— R. W. Nickerson

**TOM SKINNER, TOP MAN OF THE LORDS AND OTHER STORIES**, edited by James R. Adair. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1967, pp. 84, \$1.95.

The 14 personal testimonies given here are a re-hash of familiar themes from Power Magazines. They seem to compete with one another either about who had sown the greatest number of wild oats before a climactic conversion or who has extra-ordinary talents that put him on a pedestal above ordinary young people. Little attention is focused on Scripture as the means of conversion; and the motivating force of the book seems to use the hero-worship motif to pragmatically inspire faith in Christ. It remains to be proven if this latter method is a Biblical means of evangelism or if it is a genuinely constructive tool in encouraging sanctification.

— R. W. Nickerson

**THE NORTH AVENUE IRREGULARS**, by Albert Fay Hill. Cowles Education Corporation, 488 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y., 10022. 1968, pp. 248. \$4.95.

This work which purports to tell how a minister and ladies of the community fought organized gambling is a dangerous piece of half-truth under the guise of "Christian" social action. Numbers of libellous allegations are hinted at. Drunkenness ("I persuaded a friend . . . to . . . spend a few nights drinking in selected bars." pg. 61) in order to gain facts about organized crime is excused, and betting to catch gamblers is likewise considered ethical. Says the author, "I am not carrying on any sort of campaign against gambling, which I think is largely a personal matter, but against organized crime" (pg. 54). He likewise engages in unnecessary profanity to prove he is "one of the boys" and not an ivory-tower clergyman. The overall effect of the book is slightly nauseating. Some relative good may have been achieved by this crew of kitchen commandos and a few facts about organized criminal activities are made public; but there is not a glimmer of Spirit-directed, Christ-centered, Biblically-oriented social action. All we have is a group of decent suburbanites playing cops and robbers with ecclesiastical backing.

— R. W. Nickerson

**NEW EVERY MORNING**, by Phillip E. Howard, Jr. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1969, pp. 187. \$3.95.

As devotional books go, these 46 little essays by Dr. Howard are superior to many others. There are many literate, if not poetic, expressions of vital Christian living. Essays like "The Grace of Punctuality" and "Controlling Committee Meetings" are gems of practical, Biblical advice. Scripture is used liberally although little attention to the exegesis of texts can be found. The author's awareness of God's revelation of Himself in nature makes for interesting reading.

Only minor evidences of his Arminian view of sanctification and the Dispensationalist eschatology mar the work's theological foundation. All in all, the average Christian will be blessed by its content; and the pastor will find much quotable material.

— R. W. Nickerson

**CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL THOUGHT**, Edited by Carl F. H. Henry. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1968, pp. 320. \$3.95.

Leading scholars in various fields of Christian thought have been asked to survey significant 20th Century evangelical contributions to their field of study, such as Old Testament, New Testament, Systematics, Education, History. Many become sidetracked with their pet theories and peeves (e. g., Gordon Clark's pre-occupation with Van Til). Others diverge widely into discussions of non-evangelical thought; some betray uncritical analyses of neo-orthodoxy. Roger Nicole's chapter best displays the intended purpose of the book, but the whole work is inadequately indexed for reference. The subject surveyed is entirely too broad for one book and leads to many vague generalities. The least explainable thing of all is that this is a reprint **without updating** of an eleven year old work. A far more analytical format with sharper classifications and distinct summary / outlines would be for more useful.

— R. W. Nickerson

**DEFEAT OF THE BIRD GOD**, by C. Peter Wagner. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1967, pp. 256. \$4.95.

This book is the story of a missionary, William Pencille, who began work among primitive tribes in Bolivia.

The material Wagner presents is interesting enough in and of itself to hold the readers' attention, but the book suffers from a serious lack of literary style. Hackneyed expressions and pietistic drivel abound. The goal of missions is often romanticized and psychological gimmickry is sometimes elevated to the status of definitely revealing God's Will. The story is simply written for all — but too simply for those who want to gain a good understanding of the cultural back-

ground of the Ayore tribesman. What theology comes to the surface is of the fundamentalist variety with a strong emphasis upon Christian experience.

It is always to the Christian's benefit to know where the Gospel is being carried, even though the narrative leaves much to be desired.

— R. W. Nickerson

**WHEN JESUS COMES HE WILL RAISE THE DEAD**, by Theodore Fitch. Published by Bible Truths Restored, P.O. Box 96, Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501. No date, pp. 64, pocket size, paper cover. \$1.00.

This little book is a mixture of Biblical truth and errors which were long ago tested by Scripture and rejected by evangelical Christianity. Along with a strong polemic against spiritism there is an equally strong assertion that the dead are asleep. The over-use of bold-faced type and capital letters fairly shouts at the reader. The treatment of Scripture throughout is superficial and ignores the organic character of Scripture. The author says that there are four direct contradictions in John chapter 6, then adds that he has "an easy explanation of the above contradictions." If they are really contradictions, then of course there can be no explanation of them. The doctrine of soul sleep which this book so dogmatically asserts is amply refuted by our Lord's statement in Mark 12:27; Luke 20:38. God is not the God of the dead but of the living. If it can be truly said that God is the God of Abraham, then Abraham cannot be dead. To say truly that God is someone's God implies an unbreakable covenant bond between that person and God, which guarantees not only that the person shall rise in immortality at the resurrection, but also that that person lives on after the death of the body (John 11:25, 26). We refer interested readers to the article on **The Intermediate State** which appeared in this magazine, Vol. 24, No. 2 (April-June 1969), pages 41-2.

— J. G. Vos

**AMBIGUITY IS THE KEY**, by James Olthuis. Association for Advancement of Christian Scholarship, 141 Lyndhurst, Toronto 4, Ont., Canada. 1969, pp. 11, paper cover. 50 cents.

The sub-title is "Remarks on H. M. Kuitert's view of the Scriptures." The material is reprinted from the July 1969 **International Reformed Bulletin**. Dr. H. M. Kuitert is professor of theology at the Free University of Amsterdam. His writings and public utterances have caused widespread concern because of his favorable attitude toward "modern" views of the Scriptures. Among other things, Kuitert treats the story of Adam and Eve as mythical rather than historical, and holds that it is unimportant whether Adam ever really lived or not.

The present booklet is a brief but searching critique of Kuitert's view of Scripture. The author shows that Kuitert's views are irreconcilable with the historic Reformed view of the Bible; that Kuitert has a naively simplistic view of science and fails to realize the philosophic nature of much modern scientific theorizing; and that Kuitert wrongly assumes that the natural sciences are completely objective and, from the standpoint of Christian faith, neutral. Anyone who thinks that Kuitert's views must be all right because he is on the faculty of the Free University of Amsterdam should ponder this booklet.

— J. G. Vos

**EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY**, by Wallace Nicholson. Published by the author, c/o Free Church Manse, Plockton, Ross-Shire, Scotland. 1969, pp. 271, flexible cloth cover. Price not stated.

American readers should bear in mind that in Britain the term "evangelical" is commonly used to designate the Calvinistic interpretation of Christianity which is usually called "Reformed" in America, whereas in America "evangelical" means Bible-believing Protestantism which is not specifically Calvinistic and which usually favors some form of Arminianism. In the title of this book "evangelical" is used as meaning Reformed or Calvinistic.

The book is a concise handbook of Christian truth in eighteen chapters which are grouped in seven sections, namely: God, Man, Person and Work of Christ, Works of Grace, Last Things, The Church, Sacraments. The author starts by outlining the traditional arguments for belief in God. He is rightly dubious about the validity of the Ontological argument. With regard to the theistic proofs in general, he states that in spite of the sinner's mind being depraved by sin, the proofs are sufficient to leave him without excuse; and also that the Holy Spirit may use these arguments to convert unbelievers.

The book continues following the usual order of Reformed theology. The material throughout is Biblical and ably presented. The ordinary Christian reader who is not a theologian will find this book easy to read and understand. The author is everywhere at pains to point out that the Scripture teaches these things.

Controversial matters such as baptism, the millennium, close communion and others are briefly but fairly presented. There is some emphasis on the special position and testimony of the Free Church of Scotland. This book is relevant to the modern situation, and is highly recommended to our readers.

— J. G. Vos

**CALVIN ON THE SCIENCES**, by Nigel Lee. Sovereign Grace Union, 6-8 Linkfield Corner, Redhill, Surrey, England. 1969, pp. 48, plastic cover. 2 shillings sixpence.

This monograph calls attention to an aspect of Calvin's thought and life that is often ignored. To the average American Christian the name of Calvin means just one thing: Predestination. This is unfortunate because Calvin set forth a world-and-life-view which makes science not only possible but meaningful to the glory of God and the benefit of mankind. The booklet shows that Calvin taught that the pursuit of science is part of the God-given mandate of humanity. It is abundantly shown that Calvin taught that only within a truly Biblical frame of reference can this mandate be adequately and worthily fulfilled.

— J. G. Vos

**RECONCILIATION IN TODAY'S WORLD**, ed. by Allen O. Miller. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 49502. 1969, pp. 122, paper cover. \$1.95.

This is a symposium by six writers: Donald G. Miller, Kenneth Hamilton, John H. Leith, John H. Reisner, David Willis and Charles C. West. The general theme is "God Reconciles and Makes Free." As is to be expected in a symposium by several writers, there are differences of viewpoint in the material presented. Part of the writers take their basic stand on the idea of Reconciliation found in the Confession of 1967 of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The prevailing viewpoint of the book is ecumenical and neo-orthodox. It will have little value or appeal to those who hold to the historic Reformed Faith as expressed in the great creeds such as the Westminster Confession.

— J. G. Vos

**FIRST PETER — REVELATION**, by H. L. Ellison. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 49502. 1969, pp. 92, paper cover. \$1.25.

This is part of the Scripture Union Bible Study Series. Such a brief treatment of seven books of the Bible, some of them among the more difficult books, is bound to leave many questions unanswered and many readers unsatisfied. More than half of this book is on the Book of Revelation alone. Inevitably this leaves many problems in the mind of the reader. On the other hand, much precious truth is presented. Those who read this little book should go on to more detailed studies of the Bible books.

— J. G. Vos

#### BRIEF NOTES ON RECENT BOOKS

The books listed and commented on below

are all published by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506.

**MEDITATION PROGRAMS: COMPLETELY PLANNED PROGRAMS FOR ADULT GROUPS**, by La Wayne Hulse. 1969, pp. 64, paper cover. \$1.00. Evangelical materials for meetings, with ready-made topics, poems, etc.

**SCRIPTURE QUIZ PROGRAMS: QUIZZES TO CHALLENGE ALL AGES**, by Emily Filipi. 1969, pp. 61, paper cover. \$1.00. Well worked out quizzes suitable for use in meetings, socials, etc.

**MORE WOMAN TALK: DEVOTIONAL TALKS FOR WOMEN'S GROUPS**, by Lucille Turner. 1969, pp. 60, paper cover. \$1.00. Many good ideas on every-day Christian living.

**PROGRAMS THAT PLEASE: PROVOCATIVE DEVOTIONAL MEDITATIONS FOR ADULT GROUPS**, by Phyllis Mitchell. 1969, pp. 63, paper cover. \$1.00. Brief meditations or outline talks on practical Christian living.

**MOTHER-DAUGHTER BANQUET IDEAS**, by Edna M. Schultz. 1969, pp. 63, paper cover. \$1.00. This contains twelve "completely planned programs." Each is built around a single idea, such as "Books", "Sewing", etc.

**SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR SPECIAL DAYS: A COMPLETE PROGRAM FOR EVERY MONTH IN THE YEAR**, by Jeanette Lockerbie. 1969, pp. 57, paper cover. \$1.00. These programs seek to link Christian devotion to events that recur at a certain time each year — for September, "Back to School", for July, "Our Dual Citizenship." The book will have some value for those who feel the need of this sort of thing.

**M. R. DE HAAN: THE MAN AND HIS MINISTRY**, by James R. Adair. 1969, pp. 160, paper cover. \$1.00. The late M. R. DeHaan was a medical doctor who became a preacher. His success was great and his influence widespread. Professing a Fundamentalist rather than a Reformed view of Christianity, he advocated some ideas we cannot endorse, especially in the area of prophecy or eschatology. There can be no doubt that God used him greatly.

**ROZELL'S COMPLETE LESSONS FOR 1970**, ed. by Brooks Ramsey. 1969, pp. 320. \$3.50. A commentary on the International Uniform Bible Lessons. The editor is a Southern Baptist minister.

**NOT MADE FOR DEFEAT: THE AUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY OF OSWALD J. SMITH**, by Douglas Hall, with Foreword by Billy Graham. 1969, pp. 192, paper cover. \$1.95. The life story of a well known Canadian Fundamentalist leader.

**MAN IN TRIUMPH: AN INTEGRATION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND BIBLICAL FAITH**, by Harold W. Darling. 1969, pp. 158. \$3.95. Preface by

Dr. E. Stanley Jones. A brief account of the leading types of modern psychology, with an attempt to relate all that is valid in them to the Christian view of human personality and behaviour.

**PLAIN TALK ON JAMES**, by Manford George Gutzke. 1969, pp. 189, paper cover. \$1.95. Not a commentary but a devotional exposition of the Epistle of James. Much precious truth and practical counsel is presented.

**DARK SIDE OF GLORY**, by Berta Swan. 1969, pp. 127. \$2.95. A Christian novel for adults. About a young man whom God called to the ministry, whose father opposed this.

**PURPLE-VIOLET-SQUISH: HIPPIES, YIPPIES, FREEBIE GYPSIES, FREAKNIKS, WAGUMPS**, by David Wilkerson. 1969, pp. 152. \$2.95. The author of "The Cross and the Switchblade" relates some of his experiences in dealing with some bizarre types of dropouts from conventional American society.

**SIMPLE SERMONS ON PRAYER**, by W. Herschel Ford. 1969, pp. 88. \$2.95. A book of sermons by a Southern Baptist minister. Much truth is presented. However we object to the title of Chapter 2: "Prayer Changes Things — and People." The truth is the God changes things and people in answer to prayer.

**THE FRAGMENTED, THE EMPTY, THE LOVE**, by Patti Bard. 1969, pp. 154. \$3.50. A Christian novel about four families in a typically suburban community.

**LAST THINGS**, ed. by H. Leo Eddleman. 1969, pp. 160. \$3.95. This is a symposium by twelve different writers, including Bernard Ramm and Billy Graham. The editor is a Southern Baptist. The material is divided into three parts: I. History and Eschatology; II. The Natural Order and Eschatology; III. The Spiritual Order and Eschatological Hope. The viewpoint throughout is consistently evangelical and supernaturalistic. In the final chapter, "Jesus' Concept of the Kingdom of God", the views of Albert Schweitzer, Rudolph Bultmann and C. H. Dodd, among others, are examined and found to be destructive of Biblical faith. Three chapters on science and eschatology bring out forcefully that natural science has its limits and cannot rightly contradict Biblical eschatology. A section on the Millennium favors Premillennialism but sets forth alternative views as well.

— J. G. Vos

**BOOKS BY CHARLES WILLIAMS**. The following books by Charles Williams are all published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502.

**Descent into Hell**. 1965, pp. 222, paperback. \$1.95 **Many Dimensions**. 1965, pp. 269, paperback. \$1.95. **War in Heaven**. 1965, pp. 226, paperback.

\$1.95. **Place of the Lion**. 1965, pp. 206, paperback. \$1.95. **Shadows of Ecstasy**. 1965, pp. 224. \$1.95.

Until his death in 1945, Charles Williams was closely associated with a group which included C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien and Dorothy Sayers. Williams wrote seven novels which have been called "supernatural thrillers." In these novels Williams does not create a world of fantasy similar to the Middle Earth or Narnia but instead, he takes very ordinary people living in very ordinary circumstances and the supernatural comes into their lives. In each novel one character learns of the nature of God's love and one other character refuses to admit God's power but struggles to seize power from God. **Place of the Lion** sees the archetypes of animals called forth into the world. **The War in Heaven** traces the events surrounding the discovery of the Holy Grail in a quiet English church. A secretary sacrifices her life to preserve the unity and power of the Stone of Suliman. **The Descent into Hell** is a clear and frightening account of the nature of hell and man's willingness to enter hell. The powers of Africa threaten Europe in **Shadows of Ecstasy**. While magic and such things as the Name of God are used in these novels, they are used to show that man will destroy himself if he tries to use power for himself and not for God's glory.

— Margaret Wallace

**CONTEMPORARY WRITERS IN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE**, edited by Roderick Jellema. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1966-69, pp. 48. 85 cents.

This series now includes twenty-two booklets with more in preparation. Each reviewer seeks to determine the religious conviction of the author. If the author has no expression of faith, the reviewer tries to relate this lack of faith to the whole attitude of thinking found in the mid-twentieth century. There is no attempt to find Christianity in a novel or in an author's life if it is not there.

The booklets are well written and very useful to any student of literature. For the general reader they provide a guide for trying to understand the novels and poetry of today.

— Margaret Wallace

**A CHRISTIAN CRITIQUE OF ART AND LITERATURE**, by Calvin Seerveld. Association for Reformed Scientific Studies, 141 Lyndhurst Ave., Toronto 4, Canada, First printing, 1969. pp. 127. \$1.75.

This collection of lectures given in 1962-63 at conferences of the Association for Reformed Scientific Studies presents clearly a Christian literary criticism based on the philosophy of Dooye-

weerd and Kuyper. Dr. Seerveld presents the early Calvinistic view of art which calls for simplicity of language and style. The Christian artist of a Reformed background will produce art which will "record obediently, with Old Testament type humanness, the just mercies of God upon our broken yet glorious world" p. 52. Art is defined as "the symbolical objectification of certain meaning aspects of a thing, subject to the law of coherence" p. 40. Dr. Seerveld uses this definition with Dooyeweerd's philosophy to establish a Christian standard for judging art. In the final lecture, he criticizes works by Tennessee Williams and thus shows how this Christian critique is used. A limited bibliography of Dutch and English works on this subject is included at the end of the book. The book serves as an excellent introduction into the application of the Reformed philosophy to art and literature.

— Margaret Wallace

THE EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN, by B. F. Westcott. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49502. 1966, pp. 245. \$6.50.

This commentary, first published in 1883, is

the work of the renowned scholar who in partnership with F. J. A. Hort produced the Westcott and Hort critical edition of the Greek New Testament. This reprint includes new material by F. F. Bruce, most important of which is a survey of Johannine studies since Westcott's day.

As a commentary it rates as a standard work which may be consulted with confidence. Besides the customary prolegomena (introductory matters) it presents detailed exegetical comments on the Greek text, which is conveniently printed at the top of the pages.

Without detracting from the inestimable value of this scholarly work it must be said that it is marked by a certain obsolescence. In recent years new light has been shed upon the primitive Christian order by the practice of certain Jewish communities, as witnessed by the Qumran literature. Also, the Nag Hammadi scrolls, found in Upper Egypt, have added new dimensions to our knowledge of Gnosticism. Competent scholarship in the Johannine literature must, of course, take account of such recent disclosures, uncovered since Westcott's day.

— Joseph A. Hill

## Reprints Available

In writing for free copies of reprints, readers living in U.S.A. should send a 6 cent stamp for postage. Canadian and overseas readers need not send stamp.

**Studies in the Covenant of Grace.** Series of 35 Bible lessons from the 1967 issues of the magazine. Obtainable from Reformed Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 738 Rebecca St., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221. \$1.00 plus postage.

**Philippians: Epistle of Humility, Unity and Loyalty.** 13 Bible lessons from the January-March 1965 issue. 60 cents plus postage, from R. P. Board of Christian Education, 738 Rebecca St., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221.

**A Christian Introduction to Religions of the World.** 78 page paperback book, from the 1964 issues of the magazine. \$1.50 from Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506.

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## *Blue Banner Question Box*

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

**Question:**

Did Judas Iscariot partake of the Lord's Supper?

**Answer:**

This question has often been raised, and never conclusively answered. Certain things are clear. Judas was a wicked man, never a true Christian, and finally went to hell. He was present at the final Passover with Jesus and the other disciples (Matthew 26:25). See also Mark 14:20, 21; Luke 22:21. The Gospel of John does not give the institution of the Lord's Supper, but also proves that Judas was present at the Passover (John 13:21-29). John adds that immediately after receiving the sop from Jesus, Judas went out. This would seem to indicate that Judas was not present at the institution of the Lord's Supper. However, the matter is not proven, because John does not mention the Lord's Supper. If we hold that John proves the absence of Judas from the Supper, we must assume that John 13:30 occurred before the institution of the Supper. This seems probable but cannot be regarded as absolutely proven.

Many have supposed that the presence or absence of Judas from the Lord's Supper has a bearing on the question of Close Communion. This is incorrect. Judas was an unregenerate man, but participation in the sacraments is not based on evidence of regeneration but on profession. It would seem that so far as profession was concerned, Judas professed the same as the other disciples. Similarly, Simon of Samaria, a wicked, unsaved man, made a Christian profession and received baptism (Acts 8:13). Both Judas and

Simon must be regarded as hypocrites. Close Communion means that the Church excludes the person who lacks a credible profession of faith. This the Church can and must do. But only God knows who the hypocrites are.

— J. G. Vos

**Question:**

What is the meaning of the word "exegesis"? Does every person have a right to his own exegesis of a portion of Scripture?

**Answer:**

The word "exegesis" is derived from the Greek verb "exegeomai", which originally meant "to lead out, be leader, go before", and later came to be used in the sense of "to draw out in narrative" or "to unfold in teaching". Thus the exegesis of a text or portion of Scripture is an unfolding or drawing out of its meaning. Properly exegesis means drawing out or ascertaining the true meaning of a text by means of a painstaking, accurate study of the text, its context, historical circumstances, etc. The aim of all genuine exegesis is to be as faithful and accurate as possible in drawing out the real, true meaning of the text. While Biblical exegesis can never be as exact as chemical analysis, owing to the nature of the material with which it deals, still the aim must be the highest possible degree of accuracy in extracting the meaning from the text.

There is a fairly common mistaken notion that "exegesis" is equivalent to "opinion", and that several scholars, each of whom advocates a different exegesis of a certain text, may all be equally correct. According to this popular no-

tion, exegesis is something like taste in art, music or architecture — something which is highly individual, in which a person is entitled to his own preference and need not be able to give any reasons for it. This is far from the true meaning of exegesis. There can be only ONE true exegesis of any text or portion of Scripture, for there can be only ONE true meaning of any text or portion of Scripture, — the meaning intended by the Holy Spirit in that text or portion. The exegetical studies of scholars will approach that one true exegesis with varying degrees of accuracy; an exegesis of a Scripture portion may be entirely incorrect, or it may be entirely correct, or it may be somewhere between the two. Where two exeges are mutually contradictory, it is absolutely certain that one of them is false.

No person has any right to an exegesis for which he is unable to present a substantial reason. If a person says, "this is my exegesis of this text; I have no special reason for it; but it is my exegesis and I like it", he is a very foolish person. Such a person is not even trying to "draw out" the meaning of the text; he is just reading his own opinions and prejudices into the text. Every person has a right to his own exegesis just in proportion to his own knowledge. It would be foolish for a person who had never studied Greek to undertake to decide points of Greek grammar and syntax. Such a person does indeed have a right to his own opinion about points of Greek grammar and syntax, but he must make a thorough study of the Greek language first.

The popular idea that "you can prove anything by the Bible" is based on the false notion that any exegesis of a text is as valid as any other exegesis of that text, which implies, of course, that the Bible is not the infallible, inspired Word of God and does not have a definite meaning in itself, apart from the opinions of those who study it. If the Bible is really God's Word, as we believe it is, then it is not true that "you can prove anything by the Bible". For if the Bible is God's Word, then every particular text and sentence of the Bible has a definite meaning in itself, quite apart from the subjective opinions or beliefs of those who study it. Just in proportion as men study the Bible ARIGHT they will arrive at a grasp of its true meaning.

— J. G. Vos

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O, how great a proficiency has that man made, who, having been taught that he is not his own, has taken the sovereignty and government of himself from his own reason, to surrender it to God! — John Calvin "Institutes of the Christian Religion," Book III, Chap. 7.

## 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.

PSALM 82  
5

8,7,8,7  
Kalmor

1. God, ma - jes - tic 'midst the great ones, Stands to judge these "gods" a-mong.  
How long, fa - vor - ing the wick - ed, Will you ren - der judg - ment wrong?

- 2. Judge the destitute and orphan,  
And the poor, distressed defend;  
Free the destitute and needy,  
Save them from the wicked's hand.
- 3. These are they who have no knowledge,  
To perceive no effort make;  
They walk on in utter darkness;  
All of earth's foundations shake.

- 4. "Gods" you are, I have declared it,  
Sons now of the Highest, all;  
Yet you'll die as common men die,  
And like any prince shall fall.
- 5. Now, O God, arise we pray You,  
And the earth to judgment call;  
For You, as Your own possession,  
Shall inherit nations all.

(Reprinted from *Praise: New Adventures in Psalm Singing*. Copyright 1969 by The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. Copies of the booklet are available at 25 cents plus postage from Christian Education Office, 738 Rebecca Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15221 U.S.A.)

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**J. G. Vos, Editor and Manager**  
3408 Seventh Avenue  
Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania 15010, U.S.A.



# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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APRIL-JUNE, 1970

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# *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.

---

# *Steadfast Toward Jerusalem* \*

By Christina G. Rossetti

These thorns are sharp, yet I can tread on them;  
This cup is loathsome, yet He makes it sweet:  
My face is steadfast toward Jerusalem,  
My heart remembers it.

I lift the hanging hands, the feeble knees —  
I, precious more than seven times molten  
gold —  
Until the day when from his storehouses  
God shall bring new and old;

Beauty for ashes, oil of joy for grief,  
Garment of praise for spirit of heaviness:  
Although today I fade as doth a leaf,  
I languish and grow less.

Although today He prunes my twigs with pain,  
Yet doth His blood nourish and warm my root:  
Tomorrow I shall put forth buds again,  
And clothe myself with fruit.

Although today I walk in tedious ways,  
Today His staff is turned into a rod,  
Yet will I wait for Him the appointed days  
And stay upon my God.

\*The last five stanzas of the poem entitled "From House to Home".

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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NUMBER 2

## *The Westminster Confession of Faith in Modern English*

Prepared by Dr. James A. Hughes

(Continued from last issue)

### Chapter XIV Of Saving Faith

I. The grace of faith by which the elect are enabled to believe on Christ (resulting in the salvation of their souls) is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments and by prayer, it is increased and strengthened.

II. By this faith a Christian believes to be true whatever is revealed in the Word because of the authority of God Himself, who speaks in it; and he acts in different ways upon that which each particular portion of the Word contains: obeying the commands, trembling at the threatenings and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principal parts of saving faith are accepting, receiving and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

III. This faith differs in degrees: it may be weak or strong; it may be often and in many ways assailed and weakened, but it gains the victory, increasing in many persons to the attainment of a full assurance of salvation, through Christ, who is both the originator and object of our faith.

### Chapter XV Of Repentance to Life

I. Repentance to life is a gospel-grace the doctrine of which is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ.

II. By it a sinner, viewing and sensing not only the danger but also the filthiness and odiousness of his sins as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God and perceiving that He is merciful in Christ to those who repent, so grieves over and hates his sins that he turns from them all to God, determining and endeavoring to walk with Him in the way of obedience to His commandments.

III. Although repentance is not to be rested in as a satisfaction for sin or as a cause of its being pardoned (the cause being the act of God's free grace in Christ), yet it is so necessary to all sinners that none may expect pardon without it.

IV. As there is no sin so small not to deserve condemnation, so is there no sin so great that it can bring condemnation upon those who truly repent.

V. Men ought not to be content with a general repentance; it is every man's duty to endeavor to repent of his particular sins especially.

VI. As every man is obligated to confess his sins privately to God, praying for the pardon of his sins (he shall find mercy, conditioned upon confessing and forsaking his sins), so he who offends his brother or the church of Christ ought to be willing, by a private or public confession, with sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those who are offended, who are upon such a declaration to be reconciled to him and in love are to receive him.

(To be continued)

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## *Studies in the Book of Genesis*

(Continued from last issue)

### LESSON 14

#### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

##### 5. The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. 4:1-26, continued

"And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden" (4:16). Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and so does every sinner who refuses God's grace and hardens himself in his sin. "The

land of Nod" means "the land of wandering" or "the land of exile"; it is not the name of any known country or region. We only know that it was to the east of the garden of Eden that Cain wandered. Cain went out to the eastward beyond what was then the boundary of human civilization. He became an exile in a previously uninhabited part of the world. How far Cain went, and just what regions he penetrated, we do not know.

"And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch" (4:17). We may now for a moment consider the old question, often raised by infidels and scoffers, of where Cain got his wife. It is astonishing that this question should ever have been raised as a serious difficulty in the Bible — let alone as an argument against its truth. The scoffers who ask "Where did Cain get his wife?" never seem to ask "Where did Seth get his wife?" yet in both cases it is perfectly obvious that the man's wife was also his sister, a daughter of Adam.

Why should the marriage of Cain to his sister be regarded as such a difficulty? Such marriages are forbidden today for very good reasons, but those reasons did not exist in the early time we are studying. As late as the time of Abraham (Gen. 20:12) we find that patriarch marrying his half-sister, and there is no indication that this was regarded as either sinful or illegal. Later such marriages were forbidden in the Law of Moses and in the civil law of nearly all nations. It is well known that marriage of close relations tends to intensify, in the offspring, the hereditary characteristics of the parents. This includes all kinds of inherited weaknesses, abnormalities and defects. For instance, if there is a tendency to feeble-mindedness, this will be greatly intensified by a marriage between a brother and sister. The prohibition of marriages between close relatives serves as a safeguard to the race, preventing the unlimited and intensified transmission of inherited weaknesses and defects.

But in the early days of the human race it was different. Sin had not yet broken down the physical and mental vigor of the race as it did in the course of time. Early mankind evidently had a vitality which is unknown today. Before the Flood men lived for centuries, not merely for decades. Adam lived 930 years; Noah lived 950 years; Abraham lived 175 years; Moses lived 120 years. Mankind still possessed in large measure its original vigor with which the race had been endowed by the Creator. Consequently in that early period, for a man to marry his sister was neither wrong nor dangerous. Marriage of brother and sister had no such evil results as would occur at the present day.

It is possible that Cain already had a wife before he killed Abel. We do not know when the

daughters of Adam and Eve were born, but we do know that "he begat sons and daughters" (5:4); this statement does not necessarily imply that Adam had no daughters before the birth of Seth. It is possible, however, that Cain was still unmarried at the time when he killed Abel. In that case we must assume that at some time in the course of his wanderings he returned to take a daughter of Adam — one of his sisters — as his wife.

We would not waste any ink on this matter if it were not for the fact that the old question "Where did Cain get his wife?" is still being raised as an argument against the truth of the Bible. The simple truth is that Cain's wife was one of his sisters, and that this involves no real problem or difficulty whatsoever.

In the course of time — how long is not stated — a son was born to Cain and his wife, and this son was named Enoch. The name Enoch means "initiated" or "dedicated." This Enoch was the second of a line of wicked men who made remarkable progress in human civilization and culture.

The next thing we are told of Cain is that he built a city, and named the city "Enoch" after the name of his son. This may of course have been a considerable time after the murder of Abel, as it may also have been at a considerable distance from the original home of mankind. When we read of Cain building a city, we should not think of cities as we know them today. The language used implies no more than an enclosed or fortified village. The Hebrew verb means literally "he was building a city," perhaps implying that he did not succeed in completing it. Cain's building the city may have been an attempt to cancel the curse that he be a wanderer in the earth. Perhaps the city was finished by others, and did not provide a permanent abiding place for Cain.

Nothing is known of the first human city today. We may suppose that all traces of it were obliterated by the Flood.

We must now take up the descendants of Cain. The line of descent is as follows: Adam — Cain — Enoch — Irad — Mehujael — Methushael — Lamech — the three sons of Lamech: Jabal, Jubal and Tubal Cain. The meaning of several of these names is uncertain. Moreover, these are the Hebrew equivalents of names in the original language of the human race. What that language was we do not know; there is no reason for supposing that it was Hebrew.

Coming down to the time of Lamech, the sixth generation after Adam, we note that "Lamech took unto him two wives," thus daring to change the marriage ordinance established by God at the creation of mankind. The evil of Polygamy dates from the time of Lamech. Contrary to the common

evolutionary theory of human social progress, we believe that mankind was originally monogamous, and the polygamy appeared later, when the race had fallen very deep into sin.

The period we are studying shows a very rapid and extreme development of sin in the line of Cain. This is clearly shown by the arrogant boasting of Lamech. Cain still felt the need of God's protection, "lest any finding him should kill him." Lamech feels no need of such divine protection. He proudly boasts that he can look after himself and his own interests. The speech or song of Lamech, addressed to his two wives, is recorded in 4:23, 24. The scholar Delitzsch called this speech an expression of Titanic arrogance. Lamech boasts that while God would avenge Cain sevenfold, Lamech would avenge himself seventy and sevenfold. All fear of God has been cast off. No consciousness of sin or of human weakness and need of God's help remains. Lamech is an atheist — if not in theory, at least in practice. He wants to stand on his own feet and handle his own problems in his own power. He recognizes no law higher than his own wishes. His spirit is that of Henley's blasphemous poem *Invictus*: "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."

Adam and Eve were covenant-breakers; Cain was a murderer and liar; Lamech was an atheist. This is what sin has done to the human race in just seven recorded generations (counting Adam and Eve). The tendency of sin is always to break down and destroy all that is good and pure and holy. It can never leave man alone. Sin goes on destroying until soul and body both undergo eternal destruction in hell. Sin never stops of itself. Only the almighty power of God can stop sin and heal its damage.

It is evident that it was God's purpose, in the period of history we are dealing with, to allow sin to run its natural course and show once for all what it really is and what it really can do. This continued until finally God sent the Flood as a judgment of mankind. Between Cain and the Flood, God checked the progress of sin only enough to render the continued existence of humanity possible. He granted a minimum of grace, throughout this period. If God had bestowed His grace freely and fully at this time, the real character of sin would have been concealed. Then man would have claimed that sin was not so very bad after all, and that man really had a lot of goodness in his own personality. This human boasting had to be prevented. So before carrying out the work of redemption actively, God first lets the human race sink very deep in sin, that its exceeding sinfulness may be clear to all.

Ordinarily the effects of sin are checked and limited by the common grace of God. By "common grace" we mean that grace of God which is bestowed on all mankind, not only on the elect.

By the common grace of God, even wicked people are prevented from being wickeder than they actually are. By the common grace of God, ordinary law and order are maintained and common human decency is preserved. Thus human civilization is rendered possible, and the Judgment Day is postponed. Throughout most periods of human history the common grace of God has been active as a preservative force and a check upon human sin. This has been true even in heathen nations where the Bible was entirely unknown; even in heathen darkness, the common grace of God maintained a degree of law and order and gave a measure of security to human life.

But sometimes the restraining hand of God has been partly withdrawn. When that happens, sin immediately becomes much stronger and more dominant. The period between Cain and the Flood was such a period. It was God's lesson to mankind concerning the true nature and effects of sin. It showed what sin is in itself, in its pure state, unchecked by God's common grace (except for the minimum necessary to keep the human race in existence).

There have been other periods of history when the common grace of God was partly withdrawn, and wickedness has become violent in its raging growth and power. There is some reason to believe that the present day is of this character. Many sins which a generation or two ago were a matter of shame and disgrace even among worldly people, are today committed openly and without any sense of shame. Filthy literature which could not have been publicly offered for sale a generation or two ago, is today openly sold in drug stores and newsstands all over our country. There has always been sin (since the Fall), but there has not always been the brazen, open, unrestrained abandonment to sin which exists today. What we see today is terrible sin unaccompanied by any consciousness of sinfulness or sense of shame.

A day is coming when the grace of God (both His common grace and His saving grace) will be totally withdrawn. That will be the Judgment Day, called in Scripture the Day of the Lord and the Last Day. When that day comes, there will be no more restraint on God's part. His wrath will crash upon this God-dishonoring, Christ-rejecting world. The great Flood of Noah's day was a type or small-scale sample of the Judgment Day. In this connection we would do well to read 2 Peter 3:1-14 and Revelation 6:12-17.

#### Questions:

1. What is the meaning of "the land of Nod"?
2. Where was the land of Nod located?
3. What question has often been raised by scoffers as an argument against the Bible?

4. What fact concerning Abraham throws light on the question "Where did Cain get his wife?"

5. Why is the marriage of close relatives prohibited today?

6. Why was the marriage of brothers and sisters not forbidden at the beginning of the human race?

7. What can be said about the question of the time of Cain's marriage?

8. What was the name of Cain's first son? What does the name mean?

9. What may be implied by the Hebrew of 4:17, "he was building a city"?

10. What was the city built by Cain probably like?

11. Why is the meaning of some of the names of Cain's descendants unknown today?

12. Who was the first man to have more than one wife?

13. What is the common evolutionary theory as to the development of marriage?

14. What was the difference between Cain's

attitude toward God and Lamech's attitude toward God?

16. What is the inevitable tendency of sin when left to itself?

17. What was evidently God's purpose in the period of history from Cain to the Flood?

18. If God had greatly checked the progress of sin during this period, what would have been the result? Why was it necessary that this result be prevented?

19. How are the effects of sin ordinarily limited by God?

20. What is meant by God's common grace?

21. What are the effects of God's common grace?

22. What happens when the common grace of God is partly withdrawn?

23. What evidence exists that the common grace of God is being partly withdrawn in our own day?

24. What will happen when God's grace is completely withdrawn?

25. What is meant by saying that the Flood was a type of the Judgment Day?

## LESSON 15

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

#### 5. The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. 4:1-26, continued

We have noted the rapid and deep development of sin in the line of Cain. We must now note the progress made by Cain's descendants in human civilization. It is a remarkable fact that while several great and important inventions and discoveries are credited to the descendants of Cain, none at all are credited to the godly line of Seth. The only remarkable things reported of the descendants of Seth are certain facts closely connected with their religion: that they began "to call upon the name of the Lord"; that Enoch walked with God and was translated to heaven without dying.

But in the line of Cain there was a remarkable progress in the development of human culture and civilization. First of all, Cain built the first city. Jabel, son of Lamech, "was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle" (4:20). In the Hebrew language the expression "the father of . . ." is used in the sense of "the originator of . . ." or "the pioneer of . . .". The domestication of animals was not entirely new in Jabel's day, as is shown by the fact

that Abel was a shepherd (4:2). But Jabel must have made notable advances in the science of animal husbandry. The Hebrew word for "cattle" used in 4:20 is a broad term which may include much more than the bovine species. In Ex. 9:3 this same Hebrew word for "cattle" is used as including horses, donkeys, camels, oxen and sheep. Thus the meaning is not merely "cattle" in the modern sense, but the whole class of domestic livestock.

Jabel invented the tent, a movable human dwelling. With tents, man could move far and wide with his flocks and herds in search of pasture.

Jubal, the brother of Jabel, was the originator of musical instruments; he was "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ" (4:21). The word here translated "harp" properly means a zither or lyre. Real harps were a later development. The word translated "organ" means an instrument of reed pipes. No doubt Jubal's instruments would be quite primitive and simple in comparison with those of the present day; nevertheless there is not a musical instrument factory in the world today that is not dependent on the inventions of Jubal so long ago. For Jubal was the original inventor and maker of both stringed in-

struments and wind instruments — long ago in the remote past.

Another son of Lamech was Tubal-cain. This name may mean "Tubal the Smith", and if so, he was the first of that multitude of human beings named "Smith." Tubal-cain, like his brothers, was a man of inventive genius. He was the originator of metal-working, "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron" (4:22). The word for "brass" here should properly be translated "bronze." We should note that bronze is mentioned before iron, which accords with the well-known archaeological fact that bronze was used before iron. How much Tubal-cain himself did with metal we do not know. The meaning of the text is that he laid the foundation which made later progress possible. He made the primary discoveries.

"And the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah" (4:22b). The name "Naamah" means "pleasant." It is worth noting that the family of that wicked man, Lamech, pioneered in the great inventions and discoveries which can make human life pleasant. It may strike us as remarkable that these inventions and discoveries were not made by the godly branch of the human race, but by the wicked branch, the descendants of Cain. Yet such was the case. And this should teach us a lesson. By the common grace of God, human civilization and culture are developed, not only by the godly, but also by the ungodly. Dwelling in tents, domestication of cattle, musical instruments, use of metals — these things are not evil because they were discovered by wicked people. On the contrary, they are gifts of God's common grace and ought to be used for His glory. But owing to the power of sin in the human race, the fact is that they are used for selfish and sinful purposes. Tubal-cain's discoveries rendered possible not only improved implements for agriculture, but the construction of armaments for aggressive warfare. Musical instruments are a blessing or a curse, depending on who is using them and what kind of music is produced by them.

We learn here, too that progress in human civilization and culture does not preserve humanity from moral deterioration and final destruction. The same line of people that made the great inventions and discoveries, also made the world so morally rotten that God finally wiped out human civilization by the Flood. At the present day there are a good many people who confuse common human progress with salvation. Some think that if illiteracy could be wiped out and all the people in the world could be taught how to read and write, this would make the world much better than it is today. Others seem to think that an increase in the number of bathtubs, radios, automobiles and television sets would mean great progress toward "a better way of life." This, however, is a great delusion. Material progress is

one thing; moral soundness is another. Just as in the old world before the Flood, material progress was accompanied by moral and spiritual deterioration, so in our own day there are many signs that material progress is being accompanied by moral retrogression and corruption.

Before bringing this lesson to a close, we must mention one more mistake which is very common at the present day — the notion that all material, social and scientific progress is the result of Christianity. This idea is often found in books written by Fundamentalist writers who have never made a thorough study of history, and who have been schooled in the Bible but not in theology. One writer has confidently stated that "the heathen have no electric lights" and have never invented anything except for destructive purposes. The trouble with this idea is just that it is not true. A trip around the world would cause the author just mentioned to revise his opinion as to whether "the heathen" have electric lights or not. As to inventions and discoveries, these are not products of Christianity but gifts of God's common grace. This is clearly brought out in Genesis chapter 4. But it has also been true throughout human history. The foundations of our modern science and technology did not come from Christianity. Throughout the entire period of the Old Testament not a single great invention or discovery is credited to the people of Israel, the people who knew and worshipped the true God. Our modern science and technology rest upon foundations laid long ago by the Babylonians, the Egyptians and the Greeks. Building on what had been done by Babylon and Egypt, the ancient Greeks worked out mathematics, mechanics, logic, psychology, medicine and other sciences and arts. Every medical doctor in the world today is a debtor to the ancient Greeks. The Greek Euclid worked out geometry; the Mohammedan Arabs worked out the science of algebra. On the other side of the world, the Chinese are credited with the invention of the mariner's compass, the discovery of how to make paper, the art of printing, and numerous other practical methods and devices. It was not until about 500 years ago that the vanguard of progress in the arts and sciences passed to the nominally Christian nations of Europe (and later, America and other parts of the world where the European peoples have settled). We can see, then, how ignorant and stupid it is to say that invention, discovery and human progress are products of Christianity. They are the gifts of God's common grace.

We shall now consider more in detail Lamech's speech or song addressed to his wives (4:22, 24). This speech of Lamech is commonly called "Lamech's Sword Song." Very likely Lamech was holding in his hands a new weapon manufactured by his ingenious son Tubal-cain. Looking at the weapon and turning it around, Lamech begins to realize what can be done with such a weapon. The

form of the Hebrew words "And Lamech said. . ." indicates that this verse is closely connected up with the preceding verse, which described Tubal-cain's work in bronze and iron. As he reflects on the possibilities of the weapon, Lamech speaks to his wives. The speech or song is more than a glorification of the sword; it is a glorying in the spirit of revenge. Thus Lamech, so long ago, sounded the keynote of human civilization that defies and hates God.

Lamech prudently did his boasting at home. His two wives had to listen to him and there was no danger in his boasting to them. Whether Lamech was actually such a mighty fighter as he boasts of being, we do not know.

With regard to the content of Lamech's speech we note that this has been regarded as a very difficult passage. Lamech speaks in the perfect tense: "I have slain a man. . .". This may mean that Lamech had already committed a murder to avenge himself for an injury done to him. Or the meaning may be that Lamech is only boasting of what he will do to anyone who dares to injure him. The perfect tense is sometimes used to describe something that has not yet happened, but is regarded as sure to happen. For example in 4:14a, Cain says to the Lord, "Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth." The actual driving out had not yet taken place, yet Cain speaks of it in the past tense, "thou hast driven me out." Also in prophecy the perfect tense is often used in speaking of future events; compare Isa. 53:4, "Surely he hath borne our griefs," a statement about Christ's atonement which was still hundreds of years in the future.

So it may be that Lamech's song is not a reporting of facts but rather a boastful threat, as much as to say: "If anyone dares to injure me, I shall kill him." Lamech speaks first of "a man" and then of "a young man." This we take as a Hebrew poetical way of saying "anyone." The expressions "wounding" and "hurt" together mean any kind of injury.

But the climax of this wicked song comes in verse 24. Here Lamech casts off all fear of God. He recalls that God promised protection to Cain. Anyone who might kill Cain would have to reckon with the sevenfold vengeance of God. But Lamech scorns the protection of God. He is a man and can stand on his own feet; he does not need God. Not only will he look out for himself without depending on God for help, but he will do it to the very limit — not sevenfold but seventy and seven fold. The arrogance, pride and godless defiance of Lamech's speech are extreme. This song of hate and revenge is pure atheistic humanism. Leupold calls it "one of the most ungodly pieces ever written."

Lamech's arrogance and presumption still exist in the world today. The modern world's attempts to obtain peace and security by military preparation without repentance and calling upon God, are really similar to Lamech's haughty boasting. It was this attitude that the poet Kipling had in mind in writing his *Recessional*, the last stanza of which is:

For heathen heart that puts her trust  
In reeking tube and iron shard —  
All valiant dust that builds on dust,  
And guarding calls not Thee to guard —  
For frantic boast and foolish word,  
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord!

It was truly a remarkable family, this family of Lamech the descendant of Cain. In Lamech and his sons we see ability amounting to great genius, achievement basic to all future progress of the human race, and yet all this is coupled with atheistic humanism and a godless abandonment to sin. Here are great gifts of God's common grace, but they are used in the service of wickedness. The descendants of Seth did not rise so high, but on the other hand they did not sink so low either. As we shall see in a later lesson, while all this achievement, boasting and wickedness were going on, the godly descendants of Seth were living their lives quietly by faith in God and His promise of redemption. They were hoping for the seed of the woman who would at last destroy the serpent.

#### Questions:

1. What was the only thing that the descendants of Seth were noted for?
2. What discoveries are credited to Jabal, son of Lamech?
3. What is included in the Hebrew word for "cattle" in 4:20?
4. What was the importance of the invention of the tent?
5. What kinds of musical instruments did Jubal invent?
6. What may be the meaning of the name Tubal-cain?
7. What discovery did Tubal-cain make?
8. What is the correct meaning of the word "brass" in 4:22?
9. Why is it important to note that bronze is mentioned before iron?
10. What is the meaning of the name Naamah?
11. What connection may be seen between the name of Naamah and the discoveries made by her brothers?

12. Does the fact that the great discoveries were made by wicked men prove that human culture is a bad thing?

13. What is the effect of man's sin on his use of the gifts of God's common grace?

14. Are musical instruments a blessing or a curse?

15. Is it true that progress in civilization and culture can preserve humanity from destruction?

16. What is the difference between material and moral soundness?

17. Why is it incorrect to say that material, social and scientific progress is the result of Christianity?

18. What is the speech of Lamech in 4:23, 24 commonly called?

19. What may have been the circumstances under which this speech was made?

20. What is the character of Lamech's speech?

21. Where did Lamech choose to do his boasting? Why was this a prudent choice on his part?

22. What two interpretations are possible of Lamech's statement, "I have slain a man"?

23. Does Lamech's use of the past tense prove that the murder had already been committed?

24. What statement forms the climax of Lamech's speech?

25. How did Lamech's attitude differ from Cain's?

26. What is meant by "atheistic humanism"? Why should Lamech's speech be classed as atheistic humanism?

27. What facts show that the spirit of Lamech still exists in the world today?

28. What English poem rebukes the spirit of trust in armaments without trust in God?

29. Why may the family of Lamech be called a remarkable family?

30. What were the godly descendants of Seth doing while the descendants of Cain were making their achievements?

## LESSON 16

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

#### 5. The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. 4:1-26, continued

We now turn to the line of Seth, starting with 4:25. Of course we are not to suppose that the birth of Seth took place after the time of Lamech, Jabal, Jubal and Tubal-cain. Chapter 5 informs us that Seth was born when Adam was 130 years old. The mention of the birth of Seth was reserved until 4:25 in order that the line of Cain might first be described and disposed of. It is the regular practice of the Book of Genesis to take up the less important matters first, and dispose of them, and then proceed to what is of central importance for the history of redemption. Accordingly, having disposed of the ungodly line of Cain, the sacred writer now takes up the birth of Seth, and his descendants.

The name Seth means "appointed" or "substituted." Eve called her third son Seth because, as she said, God had appointed him to be her seed instead of Abel, whom Cain killed. Eve sees the gracious appointment of God in the birth of her third son. She may have hoped that this third son would be the promised Seed who would destroy the serpent. And, indeed, it was to be of the descendants of Seth that the promised Seed would finally come. Eve shows an attitude of faith that

is in strong contrast to the godlessness of the line of Cain.

"And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (4:26). The name Enos means "weakness" or "frailty." Being impressed with the fact of human frailty, no doubt, Seth called his son Enos. This emphasis on human weakness was not the result of pessimism or despair, but rather of faith. Consciousness of human weakness makes men more ready to turn to God for help in time of need. So about the time of the birth of Enos, men began to call upon the name of the Lord. This does not mean that faith in Jehovah, the covenant of God of redemptive grace, first began in the time of Enos. It only means that formal public worship of Jehovah began at that time. The religion of faith in Jehovah began with Adam and Eve. By the third generation, about the time of the birth of Enos, regular public assemblies for the worship of Jehovah had originated.

It would be interesting to us to know the details of the public worship mentioned in 4:26. Were the assemblies large or small? Were they held in the open air or in buildings? Did the worship take place every Sabbath day, or perhaps more frequently? Who took the leadership, and just what were the exercises of worship? We may venture the opinion that this "calling upon the name of the Lord" took place on the weekly Sabbath, and that it included prayer and the offer-

ing of sacrifices. But beyond this we dare not speculate. The Scripture tells us what we need to know, not what we would like to know.

There is a remarkable parallel, as well as contrast, between the two lines, those of Cain and Seth. In order to make this more clear we shall now present the list of generations of the two lines in parallel arrangement:

Adam -----	Adam
Cain -----	Seth
Enoch -----	Enos
Irad -----	Cainan
Mehujael -----	Mahalaleel
Methusael -----	Jared
Lamech -----	Enoch
Lamech's sons -----	Methuselah
	Lamech
	Noah
	Noah's sons

The first thing we notice here is the striking resemblance of some of the names in the line of Cain to names in the line of Seth. Two of the names, Enoch and Lamech, are identical in the two lines. Several others are remarkably similar. This identity or similarity of names indicates, certainly, that there existed some contact between the two branches of the human race. The resemblance is too great to be explained by mere coincidence. As already stated, we do not know the original language of these names, which must have been the original language of the human race. The names as we have them in the Hebrew Old Testament are either translations or transliterations of the names in the original language. It we could know the original meaning of all these names with certainty, this might help us answer the question of which line of men borrowed the names from the other. But we do not know this.

Next, we should notice the remarkable contrasts, generation by generation. Cain stands over against Seth, a true example of the seed of the serpent over against the seed of the woman. Enoch, the son of Cain, whose birth was marked by the building of the world's first city, stands over against Enos, the son of Seth, whose birth was marked by the beginning of public worship of Jehovah, the God of salvation. Lamech of the line of Cain, who was the originator of polygamy and the author of the blasphemous sword-song, stands over against Enoch of the line of Seth, who walked with God, and was taken to heaven without dying. Tubal-cain, son of the Cainite Lamech, who made possible the cutting short of human life by the sword, stands over against Methuselah, who attained the greatest age ever reached by man on earth, namely, 969 years.

How obvious it is that there were two kinds of people in the world, and that these two kinds of people differed not superficially but radically! Wicked, atheistic humanism stands over

against godly, humble faith in Jehovah. Also, we should realize that humanity is still divided into two camps, the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. In spite of all the popular talk today about the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man, humanity is still divided into the two opposing elements. True, the descendants of Cain perished in the Flood, and the human race received a new start with the family of Noah. But it was not long after Noah's time that "the seed of the serpent" became prominent in the world again, from among Noah's descendants. And the two kinds of people exist side by side in the world today.

We have seen that God's purpose in this period of history was to allow sin to run its course with a minimum of restraint, in order that its true character and tendency might be fully manifested for all time. This predominantly negative character of the period is evident even in the godly line, the descendants of Seth. Even among them, there was no very remarkable progress in religion, beyond the beginning of the public worship of Jehovah at the time of the birth of Enos. We might say that the program of redemption was marking time throughout this period; the godly were maintaining their own integrity, but there was no marked progress toward the accomplishment of God's redemptive purpose. There were individuals of marked piety, such as Enoch who walked with God. But on the whole the descendants of Seth, during this period, only succeeded in maintaining their integrity and holding their own. There is no evidence that they had any influence whatever for good on the descendants of Cain. On the contrary, as we shall see in the study of chapter 6, the influence was just the other way around: through intermarriage, the Cainites began to corrupt the Sethites.

We may summarize the history of the Sethites during this period, then, by saying that they succeeded in keeping themselves comparatively free from the gross sins and corruptions of the Cainites. That is about all that can be said for them. From the New Testament we learn that Noah was a preacher of righteousness to his own generation (2 Pet. 2:5), but evidently his preaching neither checked the sins of the Cainites, nor did it lead them to repentance and faith in Jehovah, for when the Flood came, only Noah and his family were saved. There is not the slightest evidence of any successful missionary work on the part of the Sethites among the Cainites. Noah's preaching of righteousness, of course, served a purpose in that it honored the name of God and left the sinners of his day even more without excuse than they otherwise would have been.

Chapter 5 begins a new section of the book of Genesis with the familiar formula, "the generations of. . .". "This is the book of the generations of Adam" (5:1). From this point the book will

give the history of the true posterity of Adam — that portion of Adam's posterity which was of true importance for God's plan of redemption.

The word "book" does not necessarily mean what we call a book today. We distinguish between books and booklets, pamphlets and leaflets. But in the Hebrew the word for "book" can refer to any written document, whether long or short, that is complete in itself. The Hebrew word is *sepher*, and it occurs 181 times in the Old Testament, of which 137 are translated "book", 28 "letter", 4 "bill," etc. For example, a "bill of divorcement" is called a "sepher", which would obviously be only a single sheet.

We may ask whether the use of the word "book" in 5:1 indicates that there was an ancient written document which Moses, by divine inspiration, made use of in composing Genesis. Dr. G. C. Aalders of the Free University of Amsterdam says of Gen. 5:1, "The use of the word 'book' shows that this genealogy must have been taken from a written document; presumably the superscription was the original heading of the document, which with its heading was incorporated into the Pentateuch" (*A Short Introduction to the Pentateuch*, p. 153).

It is certainly possible that the material from 5:1 to 6:8 ("The Book of the Generations of Adam") existed in written form before the Flood. The art of writing is much more ancient than was once assumed, and the science of archaeology has demonstrated this time and again. But, of course, we cannot be sure. We must distinguish carefully between what is possible, and what is certainly fact.

Next, we have a brief repetition of the account of the creation of mankind (5:1b, 2). Some critics have asked why this should be repeated. There is a good reason. It reminds the reader of what is recorded in chapter 1. The original blessed state of man has not been forgotten by reason of the narration of the growth of sin and evil in chapters 3 and 4; it is still to be kept in mind; God will still bring about a return to the original bliss and righteousness of Eden.

So chapter 5 reminds the reader that man was created by God (he did not originate of himself; is not a product of evolution), that he was created in the likeness of God (not depraved by sin as he is today), that he was created male and female (monogamous marriage being ordained by God for the propagation of the race), and that at his creation the blessing of God rested upon him (before there was any curse on account of sin). If our first parents had only been covenant-keepers instead of covenant-breakers! If they had only obeyed God instead of yielding to the temptation of the serpent. How different the whole history of the human race would have been!

#### Questions:

1. Did the birth of Seth take place before

or after the time of Lamech, Jabal, Jubal and Tubal-cain?

2. How old was Adam when Seth was born?

3. Why was the record of the birth of Seth reserved until 4:25?

4. What is the meaning of the name Seth?

5. What is indicated concerning Eve's religious faith by her naming her son Seth?

6. What is the meaning of the name Enos?

7. Was Seth's naming his son Enos a result of pessimism?

8. What very important fact occurred about the time of the birth of Enos?

9. When did the religion of faith in Jehovah begin?

10. What features did the worship of Jehovah mentioned in 4:26 probably include?

11. What is indicated by the similarity of names between the line of Cain and the line of Seth?

12. What are some of the remarkable contrasts between individual members of the line of Cain and the corresponding members of the line of Seth?

13. How was the situation of the human race in the period we have been studying parallel to the situation of the human race today?

14. What one event indicated progress in religion in the line of Seth during this period?

15. Why is it correct to say that the program of redemption was marking time throughout this period of history?

16. Did the descendants of Seth have a good influence on the descendants of Cain, or was it the Cainites who influenced the Sethites?

17. How may the history of the Sethites during this period be summarized?

18. What was the effect of Noah's preaching or righteousness to the people of his generation? Did it accomplish an important purpose?

19. What expression at the beginning of chapter 5 shows that a new section of the Book of Genesis is about to begin?

20. What is the meaning of the Hebrew word for "book" used in 5:1?

21. Does the use of the word "book" in 5:1 indicate that what follows was taken from a written document which existed before the time of Moses?

22. Why is the account of the creation of mankind briefly repeated in 5:1, 2?

23. How would human history have differed from what it actually has been, if Adam and Eve had been covenant-keepers instead of covenant-breakers?

## LESSON 17

## II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

### 6. The line of descent from Adam to Noah. 5:1-32, continued

In chapter five we have the record of the antediluvian patriarchs, that is, the godly men who lived before the flood. We have already noted the names of these men in a previous lesson. We shall now consider the remarkable fact of the great age attained by men before the flood.

The recorded ages of these men were as follows: Adam 930 years; Seth 912 years; Enos 905 years; Cainan 910 years; Mahalaleel 895 years; Jared 962 years; Enoch 365 years; Methuselah 969 years; Lamech 777 years; Noah 950 years. The average length of life was 857 years. If we omit Enoch, who did not live out his normal life-span but was taken by God without dying, the average length of life was 912 years.

This great longevity of the antediluvian patriarchs has been the occasion of considerable scoffing against the Bible. Unbelievers have declared that it is absolutely impossible that human beings could have lived so long, and therefore the record must be regarded as false. Various explanations have been offered. One is that the "years" spoken of in the record are really months. This however leads to the absurdity that Seth begat Enos when he was 105 years old, that is, when he was 8 years and 9 months old! So this "explanation" is worthless.

Another "explanation" alleges that these long lives are pure mythology, comparable to the ancient Greek myths about gods and heroes. It is stated that these early chapters of Genesis are not history but mythology, and are therefore not to be understood literally. Against this opinion we must observe that the New Testament, especially Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul, take the book of Genesis literally and treat it as sober history. Jesus makes the literal truth of Gen. 2 the basis of His teaching about marriage and divorce (Matt. 19:4, 5). Everything favors the traditional interpretation that Genesis is historically true. We therefore reject the mythological view.

What then shall we say about the great age of these men before the flood? Unbelievers take for granted that no human being could live to such a great age. But what basis do they have for this assumption? Obviously, they assume that people could never have lived 900 or more years because people today do not live that many years. But this is pure guesswork. What happens today is not necessarily the same as what happened thousands of years ago at the dawn of human history. It is possible that there were

factors involved in the longevity of early mankind which do not exist today.

Although the Bible does not give us the answer to the problem, we believe that a probable answer can be given. Death is the consequence of sin. If sin had not entered the world, man would never have died at all. Not only is death itself the consequence of sin, but all kinds of physical disability and weakness result from sin. Sin began, of course, with Adam and Eve. All the people mentioned in Gen. 5 were sinners and all died in the end, except Enoch who was taken by God without dying. But very likely in those early generations mankind still retained a large measure of the physical vigor and vitality with which he had been originally endowed by the Creator. In other words, it seems probable that sin had not yet broken down the physical organism of man to anything like the degree that is the case today. Very likely man today is a mere shadow, in point of physical vitality, of what man was before the flood. We consider it certain that man's highest physical vitality was possessed by Adam and Eve before they fell into sin. Following the fall, it would seem, vitality was lessened but still continued strong until the flood. Sin apparently has caused a progressive weakening of man's physical vigor and vitality.

When we remember that man was created to be a deathless being, it will not be difficult to believe that the early generations of men lived for centuries. Sin brought death, with infallible certainty, but sin did not immediately reduce man's life-span to what it is today. For a long period of time man's physical vigor must have continued very strong, though less than it was before the fall. We therefore need feel no hesitation about accepting the long lives of the antediluvians as historically true.

We come now to the history of Enoch. Enoch begat his son Methuselah at the — in those days comparatively early — age of 65 years. But two other facts about Enoch are even more remarkable. First, Enoch walked with God. Second, Enoch was one of two human beings who never died.

"And Enoch walked with God. . .". This statement, which occurs in verse 22 and then again in verse 24, is obviously emphatic in the record. The expression "walked with God" is commonly understood to mean that Enoch lived a godly life, that he was a God-fearing and upright person. This explanation, however, is open to objection. For Enoch's walking with God clearly is mentioned as something special, which distinguished Enoch from the others who are named. If it means no more than that he lived a godly life, the same could be said of others who

were descended from Seth and "called upon the name of the Lord" (4:26). In the Old Testament the expression "to walk before God" is used to mean "to live a godly life". See Gen. 17:1, where God commanded Abraham: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." The expression "walked with God" is used only four times in the Old Testament: twice of Enoch, once of Noah (Gen. 6:9), and once of the Levitical priests (Mal. 2:8). It would seem, then, that the expression "to walk with God" implies not merely a godly life, but special supernatural contact with God. It implies that Enoch and Noah, among the antediluvians, received special revelations from God. (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 58). These two men were specially favored by God and received revelations of divine truth from Him.

The other remarkable fact about Enoch is the fact that he was taken from this world without dying. Although he had lived only 365 years — less than half the life-span of the men of his line — he was removed from this world by the direct, supernatural action of God. The Old Testament expresses this fact with its characteristic simplicity of language: "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him" (5:24). That this language means that Enoch was taken from the world without dying is proved by the inspired statement of Heb. 11:5, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him."

So far as we know, only two human beings have ever been taken from this world without dying, namely, Enoch and Elijah. "Obviously some connection is intended between this unique degree of closeness to God and Enoch's exemption from death. Through the patriarch's translation it is once more proclaimed, that where communion with God has been restored, there deliverance from death is bound to follow" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 58).

Enoch was the father of Methuselah, the man who lived the longest of anyone recorded in Scripture — 969 years. Beyond his long life, nothing extraordinary is recorded of him.

The son of Methuselah was Lamech, the father of Noah. A saying of Lamech on the occasion of the birth of Noah is recorded: "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed" (5:29). "This saying expresses a profound sense of the burdensomeness of the curse, and in so far of the burdensomeness of sin, the cause of the curse, and it also voices a, perhaps premature, expectation that from this burden relief, comfort, will soon be found. It contrasts vividly once more with the paganistic sentiment of the Cainites, who either did not feel the curse, or, if they felt it, expected relief from themselves

and their human inventions" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, pp. 58, 59). That is, this saying of Lamech proceeds from faith in God and God's revelation. It recognizes the burden caused by sin, and hopes for relief by the providence and blessing of God.

As we have noted in a previous lesson, the characteristic feature of this period of history is the comparatively unrestrained development of sin. The godly branch of the human race is enabled to hold its own, but nothing more. Meantime the wicked branch of the race becomes more and more desperately wicked. There is no evidence whatever of any influence for good of the godly upon the ungodly. God was letting sin run its course; He was letting sin go to seed, that an object lesson might be provided for all time to come concerning what sin really is and what it really does. A minimum of grace was granted, to keep a line of godly people in existence, while the wicked branch of the race went its way, sinking ever deeper and deeper into iniquity.

#### **7. Human wickedness and the judgment of the Flood. 6:1 to 8:19**

"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men and they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose" (6:1, 2). We have here recorded a further stage in the sinful corruption of the human race, namely, the prevalence of intermarriage between the godly and the wicked.

Some scholars have held that the "sons of God" here mentioned were angels, who married the "daughters of men." This interpretation is fantastic and is ruled out as impossible by Matt. 22:30 which teaches that angels do not marry. The true interpretation is that intermarriage took place between the two branches of the human race — the godly branch descended from Seth, and the wicked branch descended from Cain. The former are called "the sons of God" because their relationship to God was the important thing about them; the latter are called "daughters of men" because they were human and nothing more — they lacked the covenant relationship to God.

The record indicates that the initiative in contracting these mixed marriages was taken by the "sons of God" — it was the descendants of Seth that began to break down the distinction between the two great branches of the human race, thereby opening the way to the great development of wickedness which resulted in the judgment of the flood. The fact that "the sons of God" took the initiative in this sinful conduct indicates a serious religious deterioration in the Sethites. We have here the first recorded instance of the Church becoming to a large extent merged in the world.

The motive given for these mixed marriages was the physical beauty of the Cainite women. Evidently the will of God and the obligations of His covenant were forgotten or disregarded, and the Sethites married as they pleased without regard to religious convictions. The godly branch of the race was badly infected with secularism, the view of life which limits God to the sphere of religious worship and excludes Him from control of life as a whole. "They took them wives of all which they chose" — their own wishes and preferences, not God's will, were the determining factor.

Once this program of mixed marriages was under way, it was only a matter of time until the church would be completely merged with the world. The Sethites would lose their identity and distinctive character and would be merged with the Cainites in a wicked godless race. And this is exactly what actually did happen. At the beginning of this period there were two great branches of the human race, one godly and the other ungodly. But at the end of the period none remained godly except the one family of Noah and his sons. The rest of the godly branch had become like the ungodly Cainites.

This development displeased the Lord, as we see in verse 3: "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." The interpretation of this verse is extremely difficult because of an ambiguity in the Hebrew text. Leupold translates it: "My spirit shall not judge among mankind forever, because they also are flesh. Yet shall their days be one hundred and twenty years." On this translation, the meaning would be that God at this point announced that He would not continue His restraining of human sin indefinitely, as He had previously restrained it to a large extent. The reason for God's withdrawing His restraining power is that mankind is "flesh," that is, merely human, subject to physical corruption because of sin. "Yet shall their days be one hundred and twenty years" — that is, God will give the human race one last opportunity to repent, before sending the judgment of the flood to destroy humanity from the face of the earth. This last opportunity to repent shall last for 120 years, after which divine judgment will occur.

Some scholars have held that the reference to 120 years means that the ordinary span of human life shall henceforth be reduced to 120 years. This interpretation, however, is improbable. As a matter of fact people lived longer than 120 years, even after the flood. Noah lived to the age of 950 years; Shem 600 years; Arphaxad 430 years; Terah 205 years; Abraham 175 years; Isaac 180 years; Jacob 147 years. Clearly, then, the reference to 120 years cannot mean that the life of individual men shall be limited to 120 years. We believe the correct interpretation is that di-

vine judgment, in the form of the flood, would come 120 years after God made this statement.

#### Questions:

1. What is meant by "the antediluvian patriarchs"?
2. What was the average life-span of the antediluvian patriarchs?
3. What attitude have unbelievers taken toward the long life of these men?
4. Why can we not accept the explanation that "years" means "months" in Gen. 5?
5. Why can we not accept the claim that the long lives of these men are mythology?
6. What was the attitude of Jesus Christ toward the book of Genesis?
7. Why do unbelievers assume that these early men could not have lived so long? Why is this assumption wrong?
8. What probable explanation can be given for the long life of these early men?
9. What facts about Enoch are specially remarkable?
10. What is the meaning of the expression "Enoch walked with God"? Why does this mean more than that Enoch lived a godly life?
11. How did Enoch's earthly life come to an end?
12. What New Testament text speaks of the manner of Enoch's departure from this world?
13. Besides Enoch, what other human left this world without dying?
14. What religious lesson is taught by the translation of Enoch?
15. What peculiar interpretation has been held as to the meaning of the phrase "sons of God" in 6:2?
16. What verse in the New Testament proves that this interpretation is wrong?
17. Who took the initiative in contracting mixed marriages between the two branches of the human race?
18. What do these mixed marriages indicate as to the spiritual state of the godly portion of the human race?
19. Why did the Sethites want to marry Cainite women?
20. What is meant by "secularism"? How does Gen. 6:1, 2 indicate a condition of secularism in the church of that day?

21. What was the effect of the intermarriage between the two branches of the human race?

22. What was God's attitude toward the mixed marriages which were taking place?

23. What is the meaning of the first part of verse 3?

24. How can it be shown that the reference to 120 years in verse 3 does not apply to the length of life of individuals?

## LESSON 18

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

#### 7. Human wickedness and the judgment of the flood. 6:1 to 8:19, continued

"There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown" (6:4).

The word here translated "giants" is Nephilim, a word which occurs only three times in the Old Testament — once here, and twice in Num. 13:33. That this word should be translated "giants" is doubtful. Leupold suggests "bandits" as a possible translation.

According to the translation found in the King James Bible, these "giants" were the product of the marriages between the sons of God and the daughters of men. It is possible, however, that these "giants" are mentioned as a distinct class, whose boldness in wickedness went even beyond the ordinary badness of children reared by ungodly mothers. Certainly the product of the mixed marriages could not be expected to be other than bad; but it may be that the Nephilim are mentioned as a special class of bad men who existed at the same time "and also after that."

Verse 4 adds that these Nephilim "became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." That is, they had a reputation for bold actions, actions which of course were evil. Perhaps "renown" might better be translated "notoriety." They were famous for their bold and active wickedness. The emphasis of the word Nephilim is not on physical stature but on lawless violence.

In 6:5-7 God gives His summary of this period of history, especially of the closing part of this period of history. The terrible wickedness which had become prevalent at the end of this period is emphasized. Human wickedness was "great in the earth"; it was a wickedness of heart and mind as well as of outward conduct ("every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil"); and it was a constant wickedness, without any intervals of goodness ("continually").

"And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (6:6). This, of course, is anthropomorphic language; it speaks of God as if He were a man. Actu-

ally, God does not repent (1 Sam. 15:29); God does not change His mind; He has a single consistent purpose which He follows from eternity to eternity. When the Bible speaks of God as "repenting" or changing His mind, this means that He changes His attitude toward some of His creatures. The change of attitude itself is part of the original purpose of God and was planned from eternity. So in the present passage, the truth is expressed that God changed His attitude toward the human race. Human sin had developed to such an extreme degree that the purpose for which man had been created could no longer be accomplished. A new beginning must be made with the godly remnant of the race, while the mass of the wicked must be destroyed. This of course was known and planned by God from eternity; the change was in God's attitude toward man, not in God's own intentions and purposes.

"And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them" (6:7). We can understand God's purpose to destroy the human race on account of sin. But we may wonder why it was necessary to destroy the beasts, creeping things and birds of the air. It is evident that the destruction of these creatures was not merely incidental to the destruction of man, for their destruction is specifically mentioned as a part of God's deliberate purpose. The reason is, no doubt, that through man's sin the entire realm of nature has become involved in evil. Not only man, but "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:22).

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (6:8). Thus the destruction of the human race is not to be total. "God saves enough out of the wreck to enable Him to carry out His original purpose with the self-same humanity He had created" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 62).

"These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (6:9). We will recall that the expression "the generations of" is a formula for introducing a new section of the subject. We have here the beginning of the history of Noah and the flood.

The statement that Noah was a just and perfect man of course does not mean that Noah was

sinless. It means that he was a godly man who lived a consistent life. The word translated "just" is the common Hebrew word for "righteous." It implies that by grace, Noah was regarded as righteous by God. The word translated "perfect" means well balanced or rounded, complete in all aspects of life with no phase of his character omitted. We might paraphrase the statement by saying that Noah was a saved man who had a balanced and mature character.

To the statement about Noah's righteousness and his mature character there is added the fact that "Noah walked with God." As we have already seen in the case of Enoch, this expression means something more than the mere fact that Noah was a pious man who lived a godly life. If that were all it meant, it would already be covered by the statement that Noah was righteous and perfect. In the Old Testament a godly life is described either as "walking before God" or "walking after God." To "walk with God" means something more — it implies supernatural intercourse with God; it implies that Noah, above and beyond other godly men, received direct, special revelations from God.

"And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth" (6:10). This verse repeats information already given in 5:32. In chapter 5, however, the statement about Noah's sons served merely to complete the genealogy of the descendants of Seth. In 6:10, on the other hand, coming directly after the description of Noah's character and his "walking with God," the thought is suggested that Noah's sons must have been deeply influenced by their father's life and example (Leupold). It is almost as if the description given of Noah were to apply, to some extent, to his family also; they are mentioned first, before the record goes on to emphasize again the wickedness of society in general.

"The earth also was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence" (6:11). Here human wickedness is definitely affirmed. Ever since the fall, men had been sinners. But now sin had reduced mankind to an all-time low of corruption. It was "before God" that mankind was so corrupt; that is, it was in relation to His holy law and will. We easily tend to forget that sin is always sin against God; the effects of sin on ourselves and on our fellow-men are incidental; the real moral offence is against God (Psalm 51:4).

"Violence" means serious injury done to one's fellow men. We sin against God, but we injure our fellow men. Strictly speaking, we cannot sin against man and we cannot injure God. In the period just before the flood, "violence" or injury to men was common; the earth was filled with it. There had been crime ever since Cain killed Abel, but this condition before the flood was a "crime

wave," it was a reign of terror. Man sinned against God by violence to his fellow men.

We get a picture of human society just before the flood in Matt. 24:38, "they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. . . and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away." It is a picture of godless, selfish pleasure-seeking. But the record in Genesis teaches also that it was a condition of society in which crime and violence had become rampant. "And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (6:12). The word "behold" is important in this verse. It implies that the world had become almost unbelievably bad, just a few generations from man's creation in moral uprightness. This was the general condition; it included "all flesh," with the exception, of course, of Noah and his family.

"And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (6:13). Here a special revelation from God comes to Noah; God's plan of action is disclosed to him. The opportunity for repentance will soon be over; divine judgment will overtake the human race. God will destroy man "with the earth." Not only the human race, but the earth shall be destroyed. Not, of course, in the sense that the earth itself would be permanently unfitted for habitation, but in the sense that the world as it then existed, with its cities and villages, its houses and farms, would be wiped out by a devastating flood of water. Read 2 Peter 3:5, 6 in this connection.

In our day many people say that God is a God of love and is too kind and loving to punish sin. They forget the holiness of God; they forget that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). Scripture solemnly reminds us that just as the old world was destroyed by water on account of man's sin, so the world that we live in today will some day be destroyed by fire, and "the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2 Pet. 3:5-10). The flood of Noah's day was a type — a small-scale sample beforehand — of the Judgment Day.

#### Questions:

1. What is the Hebrew word translated "giants" in 6:4?
2. Where else in the Old Testament is this word used? How many times does it occur altogether?
3. How else may this word for "giants" be translated?
4. Were these "giants" born of the mixed marriages described in 6:1, 2?

5. What is meant by saying that the Nephilim were "men of renown"? What kind of reputation did they have?

6. How does God describe this period of history in 6:5-7?

7. What is meant by "anthropomorphic language"?

8. What does the Bible mean when it speaks of God "repenting" or changing His mind?

9. What verse of the Bible proves that God does not change His eternal plan and purpose?

10. Why must the animals and birds be destroyed, as well as mankind?

11. What new subject is begun at 6:9?

12. What is meant by saying that Noah was just and perfect? Does the statement made imply that he was sinless?

13. What is meant by the statement that "Noah walked with God"?

14. Why are Noah's three sons listed in 6:10, after having been listed already in 5:32?

15. What is implied by the words "before God" in 6:11?

16. What is the meaning of "violence" in 6:11?

17. What is the difference between "sin" and "injury"? Why is it true that we cannot sin against man nor can we injure God?

18. What verse in the Psalms shows that sin is, strictly speaking, an offence against God rather than against man?

19. How much crime existed in the world in the period just before the flood?

20. What description did Christ give of human society just before the flood?

21. What special revelation did God grant to Noah in 6:13?

22. What was meant by God's statement that he would destroy not only the human race, but also the earth?

23. Is God too kind and loving to punish sin?

24. What lesson does the flood teach us today?

25. What is meant by saying that the flood was a type of the Judgment Day?

## LESSON 19

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

#### 7. Human wickedness and the Judgment of the flood. 6:1 to 8:19, continued

We now come to God's instructions to Noah concerning the construction of the ark. God had not yet told Noah that the destruction of the race was to be by a flood, but he now commands Noah to make an ark, which would certainly suggest to Noah that the divine judgment would take the form of water. It is not until 6:17 that the flood is actually mentioned.

The ark was to be made of gopher wood. What kind of wood this was is unknown today, but no doubt it was some kind peculiarly suitable for this special purpose. We may suppose it to have been strong, for the ark would have to withstand some rather violent wave-action.

The ark was to be coated inside and outside with pitch — probably asphalt or bitumen — to make it watertight. The dimensions of the ark were to be as follows: length, 300 cubits; breadth, 50 cubits; height, 30 cubits. There is some uncertainty as to the exact length of a cubit, but the figure of 18 inches is commonly accepted. This makes the ark 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. It has been observed that these proportions are not very much different from those

of modern ships. The ark, however, was not a ship, it could not be propelled, steered or navigated in any way; it was intended merely to float. Leupold describes it as "a huge floating box."

Scoffers against the Bible have asserted, on the one hand, that no one in that early day could have constructed so large a floating structure; and on the other hand, that the ark could not possibly have been large enough to accommodate the people and animals that are said to have entered it. As to the first objection, it is based on the groundless assumption that men in Noah's day were mere savages and had no real tools; actually, of course, there is no reason to doubt that Noah and his sons could have built a wooden structure of the dimensions stated. It may have taken many years to complete it, but there is no reason to doubt the possibility.

As to the second objection, it is sufficient to ask scoffers, first, how large the ark was. Usually they are not familiar enough with the Bible to answer; and secondly, to ask them just how many species of animals, birds, etc., entered the ark — another question which they cannot answer. If they know neither the size of the ark nor the number of species accommodated, we need not pay further attention to their objections. Actually, if we take the trouble to calculate the number of square feet of floor space included in the three decks of the ark, we will find that it was very

large. We shall say something later about the number of species accommodated in the ark.

"A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above" (6:16). The apparent meaning is that there was to be an opening for light and ventilation, one cubit in height (18 inches), near the top of the ark. Noah was to "finish" this window; that is, it was to go completely around the ark. Presumably the eaves would project out over the opening, to keep out the violent rain which would fall for forty days and nights. We are not given any detailed description of the ark, much as we should like to have one. Only the most important features are mentioned.

"And the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it" (6:16b). The record does not say "a door" but "the door," that is, the door that anyone might expect to find in such a structure. Just how this door was made, how large, and to which deck it gave entrance, are matters which we do not know.

The fact that the ark was to contain three stories or decks indicates that it would have abundant space available. We should realize that space would be required for man, for other living creatures, and for supplies of food to last about a year.

Leupold remarks that God's instructions to Noah may have been much more detailed than what we find recorded in Genesis. When Moses by divine inspiration wrote the book of Genesis, be included what was of permanent importance. There would be no need to include many minor details which may have been necessary for Noah to know in order to build the ark.

"And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die" (6:17). Note here the emphasis on the divine initiative in sending the flood: "And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood. . .". The flood is not to be regarded as a chance calamity nor as a mere product of natural laws and forces. Back of all natural factors stands the special purpose of God. We easily forget that back of all the phenomena of nature there is a Person, God, whose providence controls all that comes to pass.

There are people at the present day who speak as if natural laws operated of themselves, automatically. Such is not the Biblical view of the matter. Natural laws and forces are under the control of an infinite, almighty Person, God. They operate because of His decree and by His continuous providential activity. Nothing in the whole realm of nature works "of itself." The old Deists thought of the universe as a vast machine

which God created, wound up like a clock, and then left it to run down of itself without providential support or control. The Bible teaches differently. God Himself is active everywhere.

With regard to the moral law, too, there are people who speak as if it functions of itself, automatically, as it were. They say that sin destroys the sinner, and by this they mean that sin automatically carries with it its own penalty. But this is not the Bible teaching on this subject. The moral law is not an impersonal something which pervades the universe and operates of itself. What we call "the moral law" is just what God, by reason of His character, requires of His creatures. The moral law does not enforce itself any more than the income tax law enforces itself. The moral law is enforced by a Person, God, who has decreed that "the wages of sin is death." If God sometimes (not always) sees fit to punish sin by the natural consequences of the sin — as when indulgence in dissipation results in ruined health — we should remember two things. First, this does not just happen "of itself", but by the providence of God. Second, such natural consequences of sin are never the full punishment of the sin; the full and absolute penalty of the sin, in the case of the elect, is borne by Christ on Calvary, and in the case of the reprobate, it will be borne by them in hell.

We have digressed a little from the history of the flood in order to bring out the truth that such a calamity as the flood, whether regarded in its natural aspects or in its moral aspects, should be considered "an act of God," not something that "happened of itself." We now wish to add that we do not believe that the flood was brought about by God operating solely through natural laws and forces. It is evident that supernatural factors were involved also. Certainly the exact timing of the flood (6:3b; 7:4) and the announcement of this timing by God in advance was miraculous. Beyond this, the present writer believes that a miracle set the natural forces in motion which deluged the earth.

"All flesh" in 6:17 is further explained by the clause "wherein is the breadth of life." This includes not only man, but all land animals, reptiles and birds, as well as insects. Obviously fish and other aquatic creatures would not perish in the flood.

"But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee" (18). Here again the divine initiative must be noted. Not only did God take the initiative in destroying the wicked; He also took the initiative in saving the elect. Men do not make a covenant with God; God establishes His covenant with men. This is the first occurrence of the word "covenant" in the Bible. It is a translation of the

Hebrew word **berith** which occurs 279 times in the Old Testament. God confirms His covenant with Noah and his family. They are to be saved alive by means of the ark. Thus they are to be the continuation of the human race, so that the covenant originally made in the garden of Eden shall finally come to fulfillment.

All flesh is to be destroyed by the flood, but with Noah and his family God will establish His covenant. We see here the antithesis between the two kinds of people in the world. This antithesis holds true today as well as in Noah's day. The people of the world can be divided into two classes: 1. Those who will perish eternally. 2. Those with whom God establishes His covenant. To be in a covenant relationship with God is the opposite of perishing eternally.

#### Questions:

1. How did God first suggest to Noah the truth that divine judgment would take the form of a flood?
2. What may we suppose concerning gopher wood?
3. How was the ark to be made watertight?
4. What were to be the dimensions of the ark? What would be the equivalent in feet?
5. Why is it incorrect to speak of the ark as "a ship"?
6. What objections have scoffers raised against the Bible account of the building of the ark?
7. How can these objections be answered?
8. What provision for light and ventilation was to be made in the ark?

#### 9. How many doors did the ark have?

10. For what three purposes was space required in the ark?

11. For how long a period would food have to be provided in the ark?

12. What is taught in 6:17 as to the relation between God and the flood?

13. What stands back of all natural phenomena?

14. Why is it not correct to speak of natural laws operating of themselves?

15. What did the Deists believe concerning the relation between God and the universe?

16. Does sin automatically punish the sinner?

17. Why is it wrong to regard the moral law as an impersonal force or principle which operates automatically?

18. Does God sometimes punish sin by letting the sinner suffer the natural consequences of his deeds?

19. Are these natural consequences the full and final penalty of sin?

20. What can be said as to the question of whether the flood was a miracle?

21. What is the meaning of "all flesh" in 6:17?

22. Who took the initiative in establishing the covenant relationship between Noah and God?

23. What antithesis exists between the people of the world today?

## LESSON 20

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

#### 7. Human wickedness and the judgment of the flood. 6:1 to 8:19, continued

We see the covenant principle manifested in the fact that not only Noah and his wife, but Noah's sons and their wives, were taken into the ark. It was God's purpose to preserve the human race for the future, not by granting grace to eight persons unrelated by close ties of kinship, but by granting grace to a family with its children. God's covenant mercies are to believers and their children after them. Many people today quite fail to appreciate this truth — they neither know nor care about God's covenant with believers and their children; they see no difference in covenant status between the children of believers and the children of the world. But the Word of God teaches the

covenant principle, and it teaches the principle of the CONTINUITY of the covenant from parent to child in the generations of believers. We consider the ignorance of this truth which is prevalent in American Fundamentalism to be a blind spot with regard to an important teaching of the Word of God.

"And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind; two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive" (6:19, 20). These were the preliminary instructions given to Noah, before the construction of the ark. Later, after the ark had been built, and when the flood was imminent, God gave Noah more specific instructions (7:1-3), providing that of certain species, seven specimens

were to be taken into the ark. We shall consider this further when we come to chapter 7.

We must now face the question, already referred to in a previous lesson, of how many species of living creatures were taken into the ark. Unbelievers have confidently asserted that the number of species is so great that no man-made structure could contain a complete collection. The fallacy in this argument rests in the ambiguity of the term "species." Modern scientific classification may often regard as separate species what are in reality a single natural species. For those who are interested in a very informative discussion of this point, we suggest the reading of "After Its Kind" by Byron C. Nelson (pub. by Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, Minn.). The true test of identity of species is the ability to interbreed freely, with fertile offspring, with inherited characteristics occurring in accordance with Mendel's laws. It has been proved that what were formerly regarded as distinct species are in reality often only varieties of a single natural species. Thus, for example, the dog (including scores of breeds and varieties, large and small), the wolf and the coyote, are all members of the same natural species, and can interbreed freely. The fox, on the other hand, belongs to a different species. The number of TRUE natural species may be much less than is commonly supposed. The common domestic chicken, of which hundreds of breeds and varieties exist today, varying in weight from 1 to 12 pounds, some with four toes and some with five, some laying white eggs, some brown, and one breed even laying blue eggs, forms but one single species, and moreover is of the identical species with three or four types of wild "jungle fowls" which exist today in southern Asia and Indonesia. All of these can interbreed freely, and regardless of superficial differences in size, form and color, form a single natural species.

No one knows just how many true natural species exist in the world today, nor how many existed in Noah's day. It is no doubt true that the number of real species is much smaller than would appear to superficial observation, and also smaller than what is claimed by modern scientific classification. Since definite information is not available, we must insist that no one has proved that the ark could not hold specimens of "all flesh."

Some have wondered how Noah got all these wild and domestic animals into the ark. Leupold points out that the Hebrew verbs used imply that the creatures would come into the ark voluntarily, adding that "the wildest of beasts have been known to seek the nearness of man when calamities impend. The creatures, rendered docile by the apprehension they felt of coming danger, are then without difficulty brought into the ark by Noah" (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, Vol. I, p. 277).

"And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them" (6:21). This provision of food for man and beast for over a year would be a great task in itself. The amount of food needed for the animals, however, would be much less in the ark than they would require under more normal conditions. Without opportunities for exercise, they would require comparatively little food. All that was required was enough to keep them alive until the flood would be over. With regard to the wilder animals, such as lions, a restriction of their amount of food would no doubt have the effect of keeping them more or less tame and quiet during their period of necessary captivity.

"Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (6:22). The New Testament (Heb. 11:7) informs us that it was by faith that Noah built the ark. Gen. 6:22 informs us that Noah obeyed the instructions of God with exactness and precision. We too should learn the lesson of exact obedience to the requirements of God's Word. Some people seem to think that if they have "faith" this somehow licenses them to deviate, in what they call "minor matters" or "details," from what God has appointed in His Word. In other words, some people regard "faith" as a sort of substitute for obedience to the will of God. But this is a mistaken notion. True faith will lead a person to do what Noah did — obey the revealed will of God with precision.

We now come to chapter 7, which begins the actual history of the flood. Up to the present, we have been considering preparations for the flood. Now the great act of divine judgment is about to take place. A final revelation of God comes to Noah, just a week before the torrential rains were to begin.

We may note that it was a wise and merciful providence of God that Noah and his family at this time and all the while they were in the ark would be so busy that they would have little time to think about the awful doom that was coming upon all the human race except themselves. They could not avoid thinking about it, of course, but the activities required of them must have kept them extremely busy and this would tend to keep them from spending their time in lamenting the awful fate of mankind. For, after all, it was a terrible thing that was happening, and Noah and his family would have been less than human if they had not felt very sad about the absolute destruction of the entire human race except themselves. When we reflect that this mass destruction included not only adults but children and infants, we will realize, as those in the ark must have realized, what a terrible doom sin had brought upon the human race. But in the good providence of God, activity which demands our complete time and attention affords a degree of relief from sor-

rows which cannot be changed. And we may be sure that the eight persons who were to be saved in the ark were more than busy during this last week of preparations. They would also be kept busy during their entire time in the ark, with the numerous living creatures on board to be fed, watered and attended to.

"And the Lord saith unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (7:1). God addresses Himself to Noah, who was the head of the family. God had seen Noah as righteous in that wicked generation. This word "righteous" is the Hebrew word used for "the just" in Hab. 2:4, "The just shall live by his faith" — a verse quoted in the New Testament in connection with the doctrine of justification by faith. In New Testament terminology, Noah was a justified man. He was regarded and treated by God as righteous, the righteousness of Christ being imputed to him and producing as its fruit a personally righteous life.

"Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth" (7:2, 3). Here Noah is given more detailed instructions than formerly. Of certain classes of creatures, classified as "clean," not two but seven were to be taken into the ark. Some have thought that the command was for Noah to take fourteen specimens (that is, seven pairs) of each kind of clean animals into the ark. This, however, is probably incorrect. The usage of the Hebrew indicates that seven individual specimens, not seven pairs, were meant. That is, of each kind of clean animals Noah was to take into the ark three pairs and one extra specimen. It has been suggested that the extra specimen was provided for the purpose of offering sacrifices to God immediately after the flood (8:20), a suggestion which is very likely correct.

The origin of the distinction between "clean" and "unclean" animals, like the origin of sacrifice, is shrouded in mystery. The mention of clean and unclean animals is made to Noah without further explanation, indicating that he evidently was already familiar with this distinction. When we come to the law given through Moses we find that this subject is not introduced as something entirely new and previously unknown, but as something already known. The Mosaic law accepts the distinction of clean and unclean, and adds detailed regulations based upon this distinction.

The explanation offered by some, that the distinction between clean and unclean animals is based wholly upon sanitary or hygienic considerations, is unsatisfactory. Many things are

pronounced unclean in the Mosaic law which involve no real hazard to health. For example, any person touching a grave, or a human bone, contracted ceremonial uncleanness for seven days (Num. 19:16). Besides the sanitary theory, several other explanations have been offered for the distinction between clean and unclean. For example, one theory holds that this distinction is derived from ancient totemism; another theory regards it as derived from ancestor-worship; a third theory is the animistic theory, holding that certain animals or objects contain spirits or impersonal "soul-matter" which can cause people to contract uncleanness. Those who are interested in a discussion of these theories and of the Biblical facts about cleanness and uncleanness are referred to "Biblical Theology," by Geerhardus Vos, pages 190-200 (published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.). "At the outset we must guard against identifying the unclean and the forbidden. There are processes and acts absolutely unavoidable, which nevertheless render unclean. . . . Further, we must avoid identifying cleanness with cleanliness, uncleanness with dirtiness. Sanitary significance the distinction does not have" (G. Vos, Biblical Theology, p. 190). In the case of the unclean animals and birds, of course, the eating of them was forbidden.

Whatever the origin and original explanation of the distinction between clean and unclean, it was evidently known to Noah, so that no explanation was required; he was simply commanded to take the clean creatures into the ark by sevens, the unclean by twos.

#### Questions:

1. What Bible principle is manifested in the fact that Noah's family was saved with him in the ark?
2. What instructions did God at first give Noah concerning what living creatures he should take into the ark?
3. What objection to the history of the flood, concerning the living creatures saved alive in the ark, is raised by unbelievers?
4. On what fallacy does this objection rest?
5. What is a natural species?
6. What mistake is often made as to the number of true natural species in existence?
7. What must be our verdict on the objection that the ark could not hold specimens of all species of animals?
8. How much food had to be stored in the ark?
9. What fact would limit the amount of food required by the animals?

10. What does the Epistle to the Hebrews say about Noah's work of building the ark?

11. Why is it wrong to regard faith as a substitute for exact obedience to the Word of God?

12. What will true faith lead a believer to do?

13. What wise and merciful providence of God may be seen in the fact that Noah and his family would be kept very busy just before and during the flood?

14. What is the connection of the word for "righteous" in 7:1 with the doctrine of justification by faith? In what famous text of the prophet Habakkuk is this word used?

15. How many specimens of each kind of clean creatures was Noah to take into the ark?

16. What reason can be suggested for taking

seven specimens instead of six of clean creatures into the ark?

17. What is known as to the origin of the distinction between clean and unclean animals?

18. How is the subject of cleanness and uncleanness introduced in the Mosaic law?

19. Why is it incorrect to say that the distinction between clean and unclean is based wholly upon sanitary considerations?

20. Besides the sanitary theory, what are some of the other theories that have been proposed to explain the distinction between cleanness and uncleanness?

21. Why did the Lord not explain to Noah the reason why some creatures are clean and others unclean?

## LESSON 21

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:14 to 11:26, Continued

#### 7. Human wickedness and the judgment of the flood. 6:1 to 8:19, continued

"For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth" (7:4). Here Noah is given very definite information as to just what God will do. He and his family have just a week in which to complete their final preparations. After these seven days, God will cause it to rain. Note that the text does not simply say "it will rain" but "I will cause it to rain." The divine purpose and providence are emphasized. This reflects the Scriptural view that God decrees and controls whatsoever comes to pass.

There will be continuous rain for forty days and forty nights. This in itself would be sufficient to cause a flood. But there was also another source of water, as we shall see later.

"And Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded him" (7:5). Noah, living and working by faith, obeyed the revealed will of God with precision. We know nothing of Noah's own feelings with regard to what was going on, but we do know that he exactly obeyed the revealed will of God. It is well for us modern Christians to remember that the duty which God requires of us is not to have certain emotions or feelings, but obedience to His revealed will. Over against the fact of obedience or disobedience to the revealed will of God, our personal feelings, preferences or desires are unimportant. Yet how many people decide questions of religion more by their own feelings than by the will of God revealed in the Bible! How often we have heard people say, for

example, "I don't feel that buying chance tickets is wrong," or "I feel that all religions are good if only a person is sincere." Whether Noah "felt" that he should build the ark or not, we are not told; but we are told that God commanded him to build it, and he did build it.

"And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth" (7:6). At this point in his life, Noah ceased to be the head of a tiny minority group that lived by faith in Jehovah and incurred, no doubt, the opposition, ill-will and ridicule of the world. At this point "the world" was eliminated. Noah and his family, instead of being a tiny minority of the human race, became the human race itself; and Noah became the honored head of the human race. This was when Noah was 600 years old. He still had 350 years to live (9:29).

"And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his son's wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood" (7:7). The listing over again of exactly what persons were to enter the ark shows that there were no exceptions made at the last minute. Of all the population of the world — which probably consisted of millions of people — none repented and believed at the preaching of Noah. Only Noah and his family — eight persons — were permitted to enter the ark.

"Of clean beasts and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth, there went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah" (7:8, 9). The language used implies that the animals, birds and reptiles, etc., entered the ark willingly. The statement that they went in "two and two" applies, of course, to the unclean species which would be greatly in the majority; it is in no way contrary to the fact

that the clean animals and birds were taken by sevens.

"And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth" (7:10). The final week of preparations was now over. The flood began.

"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened" (7:11). The exact date, in terms of Noah's life, of the beginning of the flood is here given. It came when Noah was 600 years old. It was the seventeenth day of the second month of that year. We cannot be sure what time of year this was in terms of our present calendar. Leupold states that it was probably in the autumn, corresponding approximately to our month of October.

The water of the flood came from two sources. First, it rained 40 days and 40 nights. Then "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up." This expression, "the fountains of the great deep," is understood by some scholars to mean sources of subterranean water. It is held that some disturbance of the earth's crust released vast quantities of underground water, which flowed out onto the surface of the land. This view is held, among others, by Leupold and by the New Bible Commentary (Inter-Varsity Fellowship, London, 1953). Others hold that "the fountains of the great deep" means water from the ocean which flooded the land. This interpretation seems to the present writer much more plausible than the other. The word for "deep" in this verse is the same as the word used for "deep" in Gen. 1:2 ("and darkness was upon the face of the deep"), where obviously the sea is meant. This Hebrew word, *tehom*, occurs 36 times in the Old Testament. 20 times it is translated "deep," 15 times "depth," and once "deep place." Though ordinarily it clearly means the sea, still in some places it may mean subterranean depths. We consider it almost obvious that the ocean must be meant in Gen. 7:11.

As to the meaning of the statement, granting that it refers to water from the sea, we have no certain information. Various theories have been advanced to account for the rush of water from the sea onto the land. The first is known as the glacial theory (George Frederick Wright). This holds that during the glacial period, as more and more ice was piled up on the continents, they became heavier and began to sink, while at the same time there was less water pressing down on the ocean floor, which accordingly began to rise, resulting in an overflow of water onto the land surfaces of the globe. This theory is not accepted by all Bible scholars, by any means.

Another theory is that in some way the earth's axis shifted a few degrees resulting suddenly in

tremendous climatic changes all over the globe. This, it is held, resulted in an immense flow of water over the land surfaces. Still another theory is that seismic disturbances of the ocean floors (that is earthquakes at the bottom of the oceans) raised the level of the sea bottom, causing the surplus water to inundate the land.

None of these interesting theories can be proved at the present time. The Bible simply tells us that "the fountains of the great deep were broken up." As Bible students we may regard these theories as to just what happened with interest, but we need not commit ourselves to any one of them.

"And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights" (7:12). Verse 4 predicted forty days and nights of rain; verse 12 records the fulfillment of that prediction.

"In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; they, and every beast after his kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort. And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in" (7:13-16). These verses are practically all a repetition of matters already stated, for the sake of solemn emphasis. There is however one new element, namely the statement "and the Lord shut him in." Leupold translated the last clause, "And Yahweh closed the door after him." The door was shut, we may suppose, by the power of God, beyond the possibility of Noah or anyone in the ark opening it again until after the flood. There could be no last minute entrance to the ark by any of the wicked. Nor could any malicious or desperate attack be made on Noah by any of the wicked during the last hours before the world's population perished. It was God, in His sovereignty, who shut the door — shutting Noah and his family in for salvation, and shutting the rest of mankind out for destruction.

The record tells us nothing of Noah's own thoughts and feelings on this solemn and truly awful occasion. We can only imagine how he must have felt now that the long preparation was over, and God had irrevocably sealed the ark. Outside of this craft made of gopher wood there would soon take place a most terrible judgment of God — a veritable type of sample of the great Judgment Day at the end of the world. Inside this craft made of gopher wood was the seed of the human race for all time to come. At this point in history, the entire plan of redemption hinged upon the safety of the ark! The fulfillment of the promise of Gen. 3:15 — that the seed of

the woman would finally destroy the serpent — depended on the ark safely riding out the storms and preserving eight frail human lives for the post-flood world. God's plan and promise of redemption has often seemed to hang by a slender thread. Yet always God's plan of redemption has been infallibly certain of perfect success. For God's decrees and purposes are sovereign — they do not fail. To outward appearances, there was only an ark of gopher wood between Noah's family and the flood. But in reality, besides the ark, there was God. And when God is between His people and danger, they are perfectly safe.

At this point we may say something about the Babylonian and other accounts of the flood outside of the Bible. It is a remarkable fact that traditions of a universal deluge are found all over the world. This fact is so striking that unbelievers and sceptics used to explain it by saying that the North American Indians, Chinese, Eskimos, etc., got their stories of the flood from missionaries who preached the Bible account of the flood to them. This explanation, however, is entirely impossible. The fact is that these traditions of the flood are quite independent of the Bible. The Babylonian account is the one which most closely resembles the Genesis record, though it differs in some important particulars. These traditions of a universal deluge are certainly most interesting and tend to support the truth of the Bible record (though of course the Bible does not need this kind of support). Dr. Marcus Dods wrote as follows in "The Expositor's Bible" (Vol. I, p. 55):

"The first great event which indelibly impressed itself upon the memory of the primeval world was the Flood. There is every reason to believe that this catastrophe was co-extensive with the human population of the world. In every branch of the human family traditions of the event are found. These traditions need not be recited, though some of them bear a remarkable resemblance to the biblical story, while others are very beautiful in their construction, and significant in individual points. Local flood happenings at various times in different countries could not give birth to the minute coincidences found in these traditions, such as the number of persons saved, and the sending out of birds."

Those who are interested are referred to "The Deluge Story in Stone," by Byron C. Nelson (Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minn.) for a most interesting tabular presentation of the various ethnic traditions of the flood, showing at a glance the points of resemblance and the points of difference.

#### Questions:

1. What truth about God's relation to the realm of nature is implied in 7:4?
2. Did Noah live by feelings or by faith?
3. Are Christians of the present day to believe and act as they feel to be right? If not, how should they decide matters of faith and life?
4. What great turning point in the position of Noah took place when he was 600 years old?
5. Did Noah's witnessing for God lead anyone to repentance as the flood approached?
6. How did Noah get the animals and birds to enter the ark?
7. How many days and nights did it rain?
8. Besides rainfall, what other source of water was involved in the flood?
9. What opinions have been held as to the meaning of "the fountains of the great deep"?
10. Which of these opinions is probably the correct one?
11. What theories have been held as to what caused water from the sea to inundate the land surface?
12. Who shut the door of the ark?
13. What possibilities were prevented by the shutting of the door of the ark?
14. On what did the fulfilment of the plan of redemption hang at this point of history?
15. Why were Noah and his family absolutely safe in the ark? Why are God's true children always safe?
16. Besides the Bible record, what accounts of the flood exist?
17. How have unbelievers sometimes tried to explain these traditions of the flood? Is this explanation correct?
18. Which tradition of the flood most closely resembles the Bible record?
19. What do these world-wide traditions of the flood prove?
20. Does the Bible need the support of these other traditions?
21. What book by Byron C. Nelson gives an interesting comparison of the various flood traditions?

#### LESSON 22

**II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued**

**7. Human wickedness and the judgment of the flood. 6:1 to 8:19, continued**

"And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth" (7:17). The meaning here is that the water continued to rise for forty days. At some time during this period of rising water the ark began to float.

"And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth: and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered" (7:18-20). This seems to repeat over and over again the thought that "the waters prevailed." But this repetition has a purpose. It conveys to the reader and emphasizes the tremendous impression made upon Noah and his family by the mounting flood waters. It is almost as if language failed to describe such a great amount of water! Delitzsch says: "These tautologies paint the dreadful monotony of the endless and vast expanse of the waters which covered the earth."

The statement that the waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward apparently means that the waters rose as much as 15 cubits above the height of the highest mountains. The ark finally came to rest in the mountain range of Ararat (8:4), supposed to be the range in Armenia near the Turkish-Russian frontier. One peak of this range is 16,916 feet high. Perhaps Noah gauged the 15 cubits by observing that when the ark came to rest "upon the mountains of Ararat," the water still reached halfway up the side of the ark — in other words, the ark's draught was 15 cubits of water. It will be recalled that the height of the ark was 30 cubits. So if Noah observed that when the ark came to rest, the water line was halfway up the side of the ark, he would know later that the water had been 15 cubits above the top of the mountains.

We must now consider the question of the universality of the flood. This really involves two questions, namely (1) did the flood destroy the entire human race except Noah and his family? and (2) did the flood cover the entire globe, or was it limited to a certain part of the earth?

Concerning these two questions, the traditional answer in orthodox Christian circles has always been to affirm the universality of the flood on both counts — it destroyed the entire human race, and it covered the entire surface of the globe. In comparatively recent times, however, some scholars have held the contrary views, maintaining that the flood was a local one, covering the Tigris-Euphrates valley, or perhaps the entire Near East; and some maintaining that it did not destroy the entire human race, but only the human race in that part of the world.

Some evangelical scholars hold that the flood

was a local one, but that it did destroy the entire human race except Noah and his family. They argue that the purpose of the flood was to destroy the wicked human race, and that to accomplish this, it was only necessary that the flood reach as far as mankind, in those early days, had already penetrated. They tend to hold that in Noah's day mankind had not gone very far beyond the Tigris-Euphrates region.

What shall we say about these theories? The two questions concerned are not of equal importance. Theologically it is much more important to maintain that the flood destroyed the entire human race than it is to maintain that it covered the entire surface of the globe. Yet there is good ground for believing that the flood was universal in both respects. We would again refer the interested reader to "The Deluge Story in Stone" by Byron C. Nelson. Leupold argues very strongly, on the basis of the exact language used in Scripture concerning the flood, that it was universal both with regard to the human race and with regard to the surface of the globe. He points out that Gen. 7:19 says ALL the high hills that were under the WHOLE heaven were covered by the waters, while no Scripture statement in any way disproves the idea of a world-wide flood. The present writer agrees with this view of the matter. It is a mere assumption that in Noah's day the human race was still localized around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. As Leupold quite properly says, "Men may have colonized the Western Hemisphere before the Flood, for all we know" (Exposition of Genesis, Vol. I, p. 304).

The objection has been raised that Mount Ararat rises only to about 17,000 feet, while Mount Everest and other peaks in the Himalayas are over 29,000 feet in altitude — how then could a flood which rose 15 cubits above Mount Ararat have covered the Himalayas? In answer to this objection, two things may be said. First, the flood must have caused amazing changes in the topography of the earth. It is at least possible that before the flood the relative altitude of various mountains was different from what it is today. Second, as Leupold points out, following Keil, if a few mountain peaks such as some of the Himalayas remained above water, they would be mere pinpoints of rock in an otherwise universal ocean, and would not disprove the universality of the flood any more than the survival of Noah and his family disproved the statement that "all flesh" was destroyed. A very good case can be made out for the global universality of the flood. The objections based on the distribution of animals after the flood — such as the kangaroo to Australia — seem to be quite without weight. How did the kangaroo get to Australia after the flood? Well, how did the kangaroo get to Australia BEFORE the flood? Presumably the same method would serve in both cases. And who can tell us just what the shape of Australia was be-

fore the flood, and whether or not it was connected to Asia by a land bridge or by islands even more closely than it is today? An argument based on so many guesses and unknown quantities does not carry one very far.

"And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark" (7:21-23). These verses record the actual death of "all flesh" in the flood. The manner of statement is repetitious, no doubt to impress on the reader the awful solemnity of what is being said. Such total destruction of human and animal life has occurred but once in the entire history of the world. It will occur again—once only—at that great Day which shall mark the boundary line between history and eternity. In this connection the reader would do well to read again 2 Peter chap. 3.

"And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days" (7:24). The statement that the waters "prevailed" for 150 days must mean that after having reached their greatest height, the waters continued at that level for 150 days. Those who have crossed an ocean, especially the Pacific, well know what an impression is produced upon the passenger by the sight of nothing but a vast expanse of water, meeting the horizon in a great circle, with nothing else visible for many days. Such must have been the impression produced upon those within the ark; but in their case the situation continued for almost half a year.

"And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged. The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated" (8:1-3). Here again we see that the Person behind the forces of nature is God. It was not simply that the waters receded by the operation of natural laws, though that was no doubt true. But back of that was the more important fact that "God remembered Noah." The impersonal, mechanical, automatic view of the laws of nature which has been fostered by modern science, is foreign to the viewpoint of the Bible. The Bible leaves plenty of room for nature, with its forces and laws, but at every point it regards God as the great Author of nature and as in control of all its facts and processes.

While various natural factors are mentioned in connection with the removal of the waters of the flood from the face of the earth, still there must have been a miraculous factor also involved. As for the natural factors, first of all, the sources of increased water were stopped: "The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained" (8:2). This would prevent any additional increase of the floor waters. In the second place, "God made a wind to pass over the earth," which had an evaporating effect. Doubtless this wind was no ordinary breeze, but something very powerful, which would have an extraordinary effect.

Verse 3 implies that the decrease of the waters was very rapid — "the waters returned . . . continually." Leupold translates this by "more and more." After 150 days of water at the highest level, the process of abatement set in, continuing until "the earth was dry" (8:14).

"And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat" (8:4). Remember that the ark was not a ship and could not be steered or navigated in any way. Even if navigation had been possible, there were no landmarks to steer by. While the ark was seaworthy and floated, it would be carried by winds and air currents with no possibility of human control. Consider, then, what a remarkable divine providence is manifested in the fact that when the flood was over, the ark was above the solid ground of Asia Minor, and not somewhere in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf, or even out in the great Atlantic. Though there was no human pilot, God was the Pilot of the ark. In His wise and good providence, he brought it to rest "upon the mountains of Ararat."

It is sometimes said that the ark came to rest upon "Mount Ararat." The Bible, however, uses the plural: "upon the mountains of Ararat" — that is, somewhere in the Ararat range. The highest mountain in this range is Mount Masis (altitude 16,916 feet). It is possible that the ark came to rest at or near the summit of this mountain, though this is not certain. The fact is that it would be difficult to bring the animals down safely from such an inaccessible peak. Yet it may be that the ark was grounded on that peak. The Jewish Targum has the interpretation that the ark ran aground in the Kardu mountains (south and west of Lake Van; see map of Bible lands).

The exact location of the spot where the ark ran aground is an interesting question, but not really of any great practical importance. Much more important is the fact that the ark was safely grounded, without wreck or ruin, and thus its intended purpose had been successfully accomplished. Suppose the ark had been violently driven by high winds against great rocks and boulders, and wrecked at the end of the flood!

But here again the powerful, all-embracing providence of God was at work. The ark was safely grounded.

#### Questions:

1. How can we explain the fact that 7:18-20 repeats over again things already stated?
2. What is the probable meaning of the statement that the waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward?
3. How may Noah have gauged the 15 cubits?
4. What two questions have been asked concerning the universality of the flood?
5. What has been the traditional answer to these questions in orthodox Christian circles?
6. What have some modern scholars held as to the extent of the flood?
7. Which is more important, the question whether all mankind was destroyed by the flood, or the question of whether the entire globe was covered by the waters of the flood?
8. What is the bearing of 7:19 on the question of the global extent of the flood?
9. How far may the human race have extended itself by Noah's day?
10. What objection has been raised concerning the relative height of Mount Ararat and the Himalaya mountains? How can this objection be answered?
11. How can we answer the objection to a

global flood based on the problem of distribution of animals after the flood to isolated islands or continents such as Australia?

12. Why is the language of 7:21-23 repetitious?
13. How many times in human history has such total destruction of human and animal life occurred?
14. How many times will such total destruction occur in the future, and when will that be?
15. What is meant by the statement that the waters prevailed for 150 days?
16. What was the real cause of the waters abating from the earth?
17. What is the difference between the modern scientific view of nature and the Bible view of nature?
18. When did the ark run aground?
19. Where did the ark come to rest on solid ground?
20. What remarkable providence is seen in the location of the ark at the end of the flood?
21. What is the highest mountain in the Ararat range, and how high above sea level is its summit?
22. What fact is much more important than the exact location of the spot where the ark was grounded?
23. What fact accounts for the safe grounding of the ark?

### LESSON 23

#### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, Continued

##### 7. Human wickedness and the judgment of the flood. 6:1 to 8:19, continued

"And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen" (8:5). This verse would seem to imply that the ark came to rest on or near the summit of the highest mountain of the range, otherwise the top of the highest peak would have been visible as soon as the ark was grounded.

"And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: and he sent forth a raven, which went to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth" (8:6,7). After the peaks of the mountains became visible, Noah waited forty days, and then released the raven. Evidently the window, which Noah opened, did not afford a sufficiently wide view. Leupold suggests that the

window may have been rather high up under projecting eaves, which would limit the view. The raven, once released, does not return to the ark. Of course the meaning is not that the raven flew hither and yon without any rest until the earth was dry. We must remember that the mountain peaks were already exposed, and these would afford rest for the raven when not in flight.

"Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark; for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. Then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark" (8:8,9). The dove is not a strong bird like the raven; possibly it was a tame dove, not used to long flights. Or it may be that the dove, a bird of clean habits, found no clean place where it was willing to alight, and so returned to the ark. Noah's act of taking the dove back into the ark indicates his kindness to the animal world.

"And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came in to him in the evening, and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off; so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth" (8:10, 11). The intervals of seven days between attempts to obtain information about the condition of the earth, indicate a reckoning of time by seven-day weeks, and by implication, a knowledge of the weekly Sabbath. On the second release of the dove, it returned with an olive leaf in its bill. The olive leaf was "plucked off"; the Hebrew implies that it was freshly plucked off therefore it was not a pre-flood olive leaf which the dove had found floating somewhere, but a new leaf from a growing olive tree. Olive trees cannot grow at any such altitude as the summits of the Ararat mountains; therefore the dove appearing with the fresh olive leaf proved that the waters had receded far, perhaps as far as the foothills or even the valleys.

"And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove, which returned not again unto him any more" (8:12). This time the dove did not come back at all. From this Noah would conclude that the drying up of the land surface must be almost complete, if not entirely so.

"And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry. And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried" (8:13,14). This brings us to the end of the flood. All that now remains is for the occupants of the ark to emerge from its confinement to possess the earth.

By comparing 8:14 with 7:11 we will note that the total period during which Noah and his family were in the ark was a year and ten days.

#### **8. Divine revelation to and through Noah. 8:20 to 9:29.**

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord." This is the first mention in the Bible of an altar. No altar is mentioned in connection with the offerings brought by Cain and Abel in chapter 4, though of course there may have been an altar without it being mentioned in the Bible record. It is therefore uncertain whether altars originated in the time of Adam and Eve, or in the time of Noah. The word translated "altar" means literally "place of slaughter."

The statement that Noah "took of every clean beast" may properly be translated "took one of every clean beast." It will be recalled that the clean animals were taken into the ark by sevens, presumably meaning three pairs plus one odd specimen. The seventh or odd specimen would probably be used for the sacrifice. Leupold com-

ments that if the definition of clean and unclean animals was the same in Noah's day as later in the law of Moses, as was probably the case, "this must have been a generous sacrifice and in proportion to the number of creatures extant the most liberal sacrifice ever offered" (Exposition of Genesis, I, p. 322). At any rate, one-seventh, or about 14%, of the cattle, sheep, goats, etc., in the world were offered to God as a sacrifice. As Leupold adds, "never was there a man who had greater occasion to render hearty thanks to God" (p. 322).

This offering a liberal sacrifice to God is an evidence of Noah's faith and true piety. "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor" (8:21). This statement informs us of God's acceptance of the offering and the offerer. The language used is of course anthropomorphic; it speaks of God in human terms to teach a truth about God. The word here translated "sweet" means "pleasant," "restful." God was pleased with Noah's act and with the motives which prompted the act.

"And the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (8:21, 22). Here God promises that the regular uniformity of nature in its normal processes will continue until the end of history. There shall be summer and winter, seedtime and harvest. Nature will be dependable, so that human life can exist and human history can continue.

It should be noted, however, that the promise is limited to the duration of history: "while the earth remaineth." God has also planned an end of history, at which time this promise will no longer hold good. When the judgment day comes, history will be at an end. Then again a wicked world will be destroyed by the righteous judgment of God. Read in this connection I Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5.

In verse 21 God gives the reason why He will not again destroy mankind as a whole until the end of history: "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." A similar statement was made before the flood, 6:5. There it was a reason why there must be a flood; now in the end of chapter 8 it is given as a reason why the flood would not be repeated. This may seem to be a contradiction. The explanation, however, is to be found in the words "from his youth" which are added in 8:21. In 6:5 the statement describes the climax of a historical process of degeneration and increasing wickedness, which necessitated divine judgment. But in 8:21 the natural sinful condition of the human heart ("from his youth") is being described, quite apart from

particular historical developments of evil. It is true of all mankind everywhere and always, that his heart is evil from his youth. "Because the evil is thus deep-seated, no judgment can cure it. Therefore other means must be resorted to, and these other means would become impossible of execution, if repeated, catastrophic judgments of this nature in the sequel interfered with the ordinary unfolding of history" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, pp. 63, 64). In other words, man is deeply sinful by nature. Therefore judgment cannot cure sin; it can only punish the sinner. To cure sin, what is needed is divine redemption by a Mediator. This divine redemption requires a historical process. This historical process requires orderly conditions under which human life is possible. God therefore holds His absolute judgment in abeyance until the Judgment Day, in order that there may be time for human history, including the working out of the plan of redemption.

#### Questions:

1. What seems to be implied by 8:5 as to the place where the ark came to rest on solid ground?
2. How long did Noah wait after the mountain peaks became visible, before taking steps to find out what the situation was?
3. What bird was first released by Noah, and with what result?
4. What bird was next released, and with what result?
5. What may have been the reason why the dove returned to the ark, while the raven did not?
6. What is implied by the intervals of seven

days between Noah's attempts to obtain information about the receding waters?

7. What kind of olive leaf did the dove bring back? What did this prove as to the extent to which the waters had receded?
8. How long were Noah and his family in the ark?
9. Where in the Bible is an altar mentioned for the first time?
10. What is the literal meaning of the word translated "altar"?
11. What proportion of the existing clean animals did Noah offer in sacrifice to God?
12. Why should Noah offer such a liberal sacrifice to God?
13. What was God's response to Noah's offering?
14. What is the meaning of the word "sweet" in 8:21?
15. What promise did God make after Noah's sacrifice?
16. What limitation was placed on the permanence of this promise?
17. What event will bring about the end of human history?
18. What is the difference in meaning between Gen. 6:5 and 8:21b?
19. Why must judgment in the absolute sense be deferred until the end of history?

## LESSON 24

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, continued

#### 8. Divine revelation to and through Noah. 8:20 to 9:29, continued

"And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (9:1). This command of God to Noah and his sons parallels the mandate given to Adam and Eve in 1:28. It is a blessing, accompanied by a command to fill the earth with people.

This mandate to fill the earth with people is accompanied by certain divine ordinances pertaining to the protection of human life and the sustenance of human life. These ordinances were necessary for the carrying out of the program of redemption through the course of history. We must bear in mind that the human race had at this time been reduced to the number of eight people. In a real sense the human race is beginning over again with Noah and his family.

The command to be fruitful and multiply is specially important, as shown by the fact that after being stated in 9:1 it is repeated with emphasis in 9:7. Next, our attention is called to the fact that man's life was to be protected from destruction by animals. "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered" (9:2). To this is added the statement "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it . . ." (9:5).

At the creation (1:26,28) man was made supreme over the animals, but at that time the creatures were willingly submissive to man — a state of affairs symbolically mentioned by the prophets as to exist in eternity, after the final removal of sin (Isa. 11:6-8). But during the time of sin, it is necessary that human life be protected by making the animals afraid of man. Moreover, God promises to avenge man where devouring animals

destroy his life. "It is not possible to tell with certainty how this law works itself out; it has been suggested that every species of carnivorous animals is doomed to ultimate extinction" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 64).

Along with the statement that the animals are to be afraid of man, there is permission granted to man to eat animal food. This permission is granted, however, with a restriction: "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat" (9:4). "This being coupled with the promise of vengeance from animals reveals the point of view. Since the animals are not to devour man after a carnivorous fashion, man also is not to eat the animals as wild beasts devour their living prey. He must show proper reverence for life as a sacred thing, of which God alone has the disposal, and for the use of which man is dependent on the permission of God" (G. Vos *Biblical Theology*, pp. 64, 65).

Not only must man's life be protected from destruction by the animals; it must also be protected from destruction by his fellow man. We should recall, as the background of this divine command, the conditions which existed in human society just before the flood. The earth was filled with violence; crime existed on every hand. Now that humanity is making a new start, God expressly and with strong emphasis forbids murder. Moreover, God specifies the punishment for murder, namely the death penalty. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (9:6).

At this point we should note that death as the penalty for murder is required by divine commandment. Those who in our own day oppose the death penalty for murder often forget this, and regard the death penalty as a mere human law. It is astonishing how many Christian people, who profess to believe in the Bible as the infallible Word of God, dare to say that they are opposed to the death penalty as the punishment for murder. They seem to forget that this is not just a human law or custom, but has back of it the command of God. The nation or state which abolishes the death penalty for murder is itself sinning against God and may expect His judgment in some form.

Modern arguments against the death penalty for murder are almost always based on one or more of three mistakes: (1) they may be based on mere sentiment — a mere shrinking from the idea of the state putting an end to an individual's life in this world. (2) They may be based on a false notion of law and justice, which holds that the only purpose of punishment is the reform of the offender. Obviously a murderer cannot be reformed by putting him to death. (3) Or they may be based on the false notion that the teachings of Christ, or the Sermon on the Mount, has repealed this divine law given at the time of Noah.

It is not true that the only purpose of punishment is the reformation of the offender. Nor is the purpose of punishment merely to make an impression on other people, so as to warn them against committing murder. The true purpose of punishment is **justice**; it is a manifestation of God's attribute of retributive righteousness, by which sin and suffering are inseparably linked. A murderer is executed, not merely to warn other people against committing murder, but because it is right that he be executed. The character of God demands it.

Nor is it true that the teachings of Christ, or the Sermon on the Mount, have repealed the law of capital punishment given in the days of Noah. Many people make sweeping statements of this kind, by which they attempt to get rid of anything in the Old Testament which does not please them. Jesus teaches rather that in addition to all penalties for sin suffered in this life, there remains the eternal punishment of sin in hell (Matt. 5: 21,22).

The record in Genesis assigns as the reason for the death penalty in the case of murder, "for in the image of God made he man" (9:6). Man is not just another kind of animal; unlike all the animals, man was created in the image of God. He bears the image of his Creator. Therefore he who destroys the life of man destroys that which bears the image of God. Murder is not only an awful injury to one's fellow man, but also an insult to God. He who murders his fellow man affronts God by destroying God's image bearer.

"The argument so frequently met with, that capital punishment adds but a second murder to the first is an argument based either on total ignorance of the facts of Scripture or on open denial of the obligatory character of what the Bible teaches. How can that be characterized as a duplicated murder that professes to rest on the most explicit command of God, and over against which men have nothing to put except sentimental objections, and an unproven theory about the meliorating efficacy of forms of discipline which from their very nature exclude the punishment of death," (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 66).

Next we must consider the covenant which God established with Noah. "And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you . . ." (9:8,9). Before the flood, God had informed Noah, "With thee will I establish my covenant . . ." (6:19). God's covenant is a religious bond between God and His people, by which they receive life and blessing. To be in covenant with God is the opposite of perishing. God established His covenant with Noah and Noah's family; therefore they did not perish in the waters of the flood. Those who are in a covenant bond with God are saved unto eter-

nal life; those without this covenant relationship to God will perish eternally in hell.

We should note that God took the initiative in establishing this covenant relationship. This is very strongly emphasized in the text we are considering: "And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you." This covenant was not established by Noah, and it was not established by God and Noah jointly. **It was established by God acting alone.** Noah was the recipient and beneficiary of this covenant, but he was not in any sense the originator or author of it. It is important to emphasize this because we live in a day when it is common to debase God and exalt man in religious thinking. Many people today talk of "making" a covenant with God, when in reality, of course, they can do no such thing. The idea commonly met with that God's covenant is a kind of "contract" or "bargain" or "agreement" between God and man is based on the notion that God and man can be equal contracting parties to such an arrangement. The Bible, on the other hand, represents God as the establisher of the covenant, and man as the recipient and beneficiary of it. God and Noah did not mutually discuss this matter and come to agreement on having a covenant with certain provisions; God imposed the covenant and Noah accepted it.

The man-centered view of religion which is so prevalent on every hand today is not found in the Bible. Let us make sure that we derive our religious ideas from the Bible, not from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Democracy is a good form of government for the state, but it has no place in the religious relationship between God and man.

God, then, established His covenant with Noah, his family and their seed after them. Never again would there be a flood of such magnitude as to destroy the whole earth, or the entire human race. As token of this covenant promise, God appointed the rainbow (9:13, 14). This does not necessarily imply that there had never been a rainbow before this time, but only that at this particular point in human history, the rainbow was appointed as the token or pledge of God's covenant promise.

"And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth" (9:16). The idea is not that the rainbow will remind man of the promise, but that God Himself will be reminded of His promise by seeing the rainbow. This is anthropomorphic language; it speaks of God as if He were a man, but this very fact serves to bring out and make impressive the truth that is taught. It is worth noting that the rainbow itself is connected with the force of nature against which it is a pledge of protection (rain and consequent flood). "It is produced against the background

of the very clouds that had brought destruction to the earth. But it is produced upon these by the rays of the sun which in the symbolism of Scripture represent the divine grace" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 67).

It should be noted that the divine promise of security from any future world-wide flood included not only mankind but also the entire animate creation (9:10, 15). This is in keeping with the teaching of the Bible that the whole animate creation exists for the service and benefit of the human race. It is involved in this that, as the animals perish when man perishes in the flood, so also the animals are guaranteed protection when man is guaranteed protection after the flood.

#### Questions:

1. On what two occasions did God command the human race to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth with people?
2. How many people existed at the end of the flood?
3. How was man's life to be protected from destruction by wild beasts?
4. What was the difference between man's supremacy over the animals at the creation, and after the flood?
5. What is the possible meaning of the statement that God will require the life of man at the hand of every beast?
6. When was mankind given permission to eat flesh?
7. What restriction was placed on this permission by God?
8. What was the reason for this restriction on the permission to eat flesh?
9. What authority lies back of the death penalty for murder?
10. What errors are involved in modern objections to the penalty of death for murder?
11. What is the essential meaning of God's covenant?
12. At what point in the narrative do we first read of God's covenant being established with Noah?
13. What benefits came to Noah and his family by reason of the covenant?
14. What benefits come to people by God's covenant today?
15. What will be the final destiny of those who are outside of God's covenant?
16. Who took the initiative in establishing the covenant relationship?

17. Why is it wrong to speak of the covenant relationship as a "contract" or "agreement" between God and man?

18. What token did God give to pledge that there would never again be a total flood?

19. What is the true idea of the rainbow as token of the covenant?

20. Why did the promise of future security from a total flood include the animals as well as mankind?

## LESSON 25

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, continued

#### 8. Divine revelation to and through Noah. 8:20 to 9:29, continued

We now come to the prophetic utterances of Noah. After mentioning the names of the sons of Noah, and stating the fact that the entire world was populated from their descendants, the record related that "Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: and he drank of the wine, and was drunken. . ." (9:20, 21). In discussing this somewhat mysterious passage of Scripture, we should avoid speculation beyond what is written. Some have speculated as to whether Noah was the first man in history to make intoxicating wine, as to whether he made it accidentally, as it were, and drank it without realizing its intoxicating properties, etc. On all such questions we should refrain from making pronouncements for which there is no basis in the Bible. Some have labored to clear Noah of all blame and responsibility in connection with this incident. It is not necessary to attempt this. The facts are as stated. Noah drank wine and was drunken. It is an evidence of the strict accuracy and truthfulness of the Bible that it does not attempt to idealize its heroes, nor to picture them as better than they really were. Other ancient books smooth over the faults of their heroes, or even omit discreditable facts altogether. The Bible tells the truth about its great men. Noah's drunkenness, Abraham's untruthfulness, David's adultery, Peter's denial of Christ — all these and others are recorded, not because they were legitimate, but because the Bible tells the real truth about people.

This whole incident is quite evidently included in the record especially as an introduction to the prophetic utterances of Noah which followed in verses 25-27. In spite of Noah's wrongdoing, he was a true servant of God and a prophet, as well as a preacher of righteousness.

The incident recorded in verses 22-24 is of a rather mysterious nature. Evidently the record is intended to bring out a different attitude on the part of Shem and Japheth from that of Ham. It would seem that Ham took an improper and disrespectful delight in his father's shame. Shem and Japheth, on the other hand, were sorry about their father's disgraceful condition, and took steps to conceal his shame as far as possible. Ham was apparently amused at his father's shame; Shem

and Japheth were saddened by it. Note that twice in the record it is stated that Ham was the father of Canaan (9:18, 22). This obviously affects the meaning. The sensual character of Ham is continued and intensified in his son Canaan and Canaan's descendants.

When Noah awoke from his drunken stupor, he realized what had happened (9:24). Just how Noah knew what had happened while he had been unconscious, we do not know. Presumably none of his three sons would have told. It has been suggested that he noticed the garment which Shem and Japheth had laid on him—either that this was not a garment he was accustomed to use, or that it was laid on him in an unusual way. The record states that Noah "knew what his younger son had done unto him" (9:24). Some have thought that he knew this by prophetic inspiration, though the record does not state this. It may be that, knowing his three sons as he did, he realized that Ham, rather than Shem and Japheth, would be the one to be involved in misconduct. As the Bible does not provide the information, we cannot speak positively about it.

At any rate, Noah pronounced a curse, not upon Ham, but upon Canaan, the fourth son of Ham (10:6). It may be inquired why the curse was pronounced on Canaan rather than on Ham himself. The explanation of this is to be found in the fact that Canaan and his descendants evidently reproduced and continued the sensual character of Ham. "Ham was punished in one of his sons because he had sinned against his father, and he was punished in that particular son, because Canaan most strongly reproduced Ham's sensual character" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 69). It should be observed that only the descendants of Canaan, not all the descendants of Ham, are included in the curse pronounced by Noah. As a matter of fact it is well known that sensuality was a dominant characteristic of the Canaanites, which perverted not only their life but also their religious worship.

The curse pronounced on Canaan is: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (9:25). This statement of Noah cannot be rightly understood unless we bear in mind that it was predictive prophecy. Leupold states that we do Noah an injustice if we suppose him to have been actuated by personal resentment or ill will in uttering these words. Noah feared God and he would not lay great disabilities on portions

of his posterity of his own will (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, I,p.349). Concerning Noah's words on this occasion, Leupold states: "Being so accurate a delineation of the future of the three branches of the human family . . . it approves itself to the thinking man as a truly prophetic utterance" (Leupold, I,349). "The event took place at a critical juncture where no significant event could fail to influence history for ages to come" (G. Vos, Biblical Theology, p. 68).

The notion, often advocated in the slavery controversy in the previous century in America, that Gen. 9:25 involves a curse upon the Negro race, or even affords a divine warrant for keeping the Negro race in a condition of servitude, is wholly untenable. Apart from other considerations, this theory is shown to be wrong by the simple fact that it was not all the descendants of Ham but only the Canaanites that were included in the curse. The Canaanites formed only a fraction of the Hamitic stock of mankind. They were inhabitants of Palestine before that land was conquered by Israel under Joshua. The African Negroes are not Canaanites and never were, so far as known. The Canaanites are cursed; the rest of the Hamites are neither blessed nor cursed; blessings are pronounced upon Shem and Japheth.

Next we come to the blessings pronounced by Noah on Shem and Japheth. "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant". (9:26,27). Noah is moved to praise the Lord because of the great blessings that are to be granted to Shem. Jehovah is called "the God of Shem." Jehovah is the name of God especially associated with His plan and work of redemption. "Jehovah, the God of redemption, gives Himself to this part of the race for religious possession and enjoyment" (G. Vos, Biblical Theology, p. 70). It has been through the descendants of Shem that God has provided redemption from sin. Through them came Abraham, Israel and finally Jesus Christ. We have inherited art and science from the Greeks, law and organization from the Romans. But the religion of redemption—Christianity—came to us from Israel, which means from Shem.

The third part of Noah's prophecy concerns Japheth. "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem . . ." (9:27). This statement contains a play on words in the Hebrew. The verb translated "enlarge" is "japht" which is similar in sound to "Japheth." But what is the meaning of God "enlarging" Japheth? Is this to be understood literally, meaning that God will grant Japheth and his descendants increasingly large territories to live in, or is the meaning figurative, meaning that God will grant prosperity to Japheth and his descendants? It is probable that the literal meaning of "enlarge" is intended. The meaning, then, would be that God will enable the

descendants of Japheth to occupy large portions of the world.

In the clause "he shall dwell in the tents of Shem," we take the pronoun "he" as referring to Japheth, although some scholars hold that the reference is to God dwelling in the tents of Shem. It seems more probable that the meaning is that Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem. This would involve the Japhethites conquering territory of the Semitic peoples. "But ultimately such physical conquest will have for its result the coming of a religious blessing to Japheth. Occupying the tents of Shem he will find the God of Shem, the God of redemption and revelation, there" (G. Vos, Biblical Theology, p. 71). This prophecy was fulfilled in later history when the Greeks and the Romans conquered and ruled Semitic lands. By means of this the true religion came to be spread widely through the ancient world. As Delitzsch put it, "We are all Japhethites dwelling in the tents of Shem." God's revelation and redemption have been mediated to us through a Semitic channel.

We may note in passing that all the elements of Noah's prophetic utterances have been fulfilled. The blessing of salvation has indeed come to the world through the Semites, and the descendants of Japheth—the Indo-European or Aryan peoples—have occupied vast territories, stretching from India clear across Europe to the Atlantic, only to overflow to North America, South America and Australia.

"And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died (9:29). Noah is the last of those recorded to have lived nearly a thousand years. Shem lived 600 years, Arphaxad lived 438 years, and so on. We see no valid reason for denying or questioning the truthfulness of the statements about the great ages of these ancient men. We take the statements as literally, historically true. No doubt the true explanation of their extreme longevity is that mankind was still new, and endowed with a large measure of that physical vigor and vitality which man possessed at his creation.

#### Questions:

1. What sin did Noah commit soon after the flood?
2. Was Noah responsible for what he did?
3. What does the account of Noah's conduct show concerning the reliability of the Bible?
4. What was the attitude of Ham toward his father's shame?
5. What was the attitude of Shem and Japheth in the same matter?
6. Why was Canaan cursed rather than his father Ham?

7. What trait was characteristic of the Canaanites?

8. How should we regard Noah's utterance, as a private statement of personal opinion, or as a prophetic statement?

9. Why is it incorrect to say that Gen. 9:25 applies to the Negro race?

10. What wrong use was often made of this verse in the slavery controversy of the last century?

11. Why was Noah moved to praise the Lord?

12. What special meaning is associated with the name Jehovah?

13. What special blessings have come through the descendants of Shem?

14. What is meant by the statement that God would enlarge Japheth?

15. What is meant by Japheth dwelling in the tents of Shem?

16. How was the prophecy of Japheth dwelling in the tents of Shem later fulfilled?

17. How was the prophecy of God enlarging Japheth historically fulfilled?

18. What parts of the world were occupied by the descendants of Japheth?

19. How old was Noah at the time of his death?

20. How can the longevity of these early people be explained?

## LESSON 26

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, continued

#### 9. The repopulation of the earth from the family of Noah. 10:1-32

Chapter 10 is called the Table of the Nations. This chapter is regarded by Biblical scholars as authentic and extremely ancient. Probably it was written long before the time of Moses, and incorporated by Moses in the Book of Genesis when he wrote or compiled that book. This chapter speaks of some nations, tribes, etc., the origin of which is not mentioned until chapter 11. The Semites are mentioned last in the list. This is because they are important for the history of redemption. The method of Genesis is to mention other branches first, discuss them briefly, and then drop them, continuing with the detailed history of that particular branch of the human race that was important for the working out of the Plan of Redemption — the Semitic branch, and finally the people of Israel.

The descendants of Japheth are mentioned first, in 10:2-5. The names given doubtless stand not only for the actual individuals but for the tribes or nations descended from them. Thus "Javan" stands for the Ionians, originally a part of the Greek race, but later used as a name for all Greeks. The same word is translated as "Javan" in several places in the Old Testament, but translated as "Greece" or "Grecia" in Daniel 8:21; 10:20; 11:2; Zech. 9:13; Joel 3:6.

Several of the names cannot be positively identified, or only with doubt. Others, however, are clear as to their historical identification. Thus "Madai" means the Medes; "Kittim" refers to Cyprus. In general, we may say that the Indo-European peoples, occupying western Asia and all of Europe, are descended from Japheth.

Turning now to the sons of Ham, we note that there were four main branches of the Hamitic race, descended from his sons Cush, Mizraim, Phut and Canaan. "Cush" means Ethiopia or Nubia, located south of Egypt; however there were Cushites also in Arabia, in southwestern Asia. "Mizraim" certainly means Egypt. The form "Mizraim" is dual, meaning "the two Egypts," doubtless because Egypt was divided into two parts, Upper and Lower Egypt. As for "Phut," its identification is not certain; it may have been an ancient nation located where Somaliland is today (east coast of Africa), or it may have been in northern Africa where Lybia is today. "Canaan" certainly refers to the land of Canaan, and the Canaanites who inhabited it.

The sons of Cush which are mentioned must have been Ethiopian tribes. Some of them may have been located in southwestern Arabia. "And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord" (10:8,9). This reference to Nimrod is a sort of parenthesis in this chapter which consists mainly of a list of the various descendants of Noah. The statements made are of a rather mysterious nature. The word translated "mighty" may mean either "hero" or "tyrant" (Leupold). "Hunter," again, may have either a good or a bad meaning. It may mean someone who hunts lions or other wild animals, or it may mean someone who hunts and enslaves his fellow men. The added expression, "before the Lord," does not of itself imply either approval or disapproval of Nimrod's activities. Leupold states that the name "Nimrod" literally means "let us revolt," and adds that this meaning of the name gives the key to the meaning of the passage. "The tendency of this Cushite must have been to rise up against, and to attempt to overthrow,

all existing order" (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, I, 366). This being the meaning of the name "Nimrod," the expression "mighty hunter" must be understood in a bad sense. "So this inciter to revolt (Nimrod) came to be the first tyrant on the earth, oppressing others and using them for the furtherance of his own interests" (Leupold, I, 266).

As to the expression "before the Lord," this is literally "in the face of Jehovah." But what does this mean? Of the various meanings that have been proposed, the most probable seems to be that Jehovah took notice of and remembered Nimrod's evil deeds. So evil was Nimrod, and so successful in his exploits, that his very name gave rise to a proverbial expression used of others in later times: "Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord" (10:9). Mere fame as a hunter of lions, etc., could hardly account for the language used.

"And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar" (10:10). We have here the first statement in the Bible about the origin of the nation later known as Babylonia. What is remarkable is the fact that the Bible — alone among ancient records — speaks of Babylonia as having a Hamitic origin. History and archaeology have shown that in very ancient times there were two races in the Babylonian plain — the Sumerians and the Akkadians. The Akkadians were of Semitic stock, spoke a Semitic language, and probably entered the Babylonian plain from Arabia. The Sumerians, on the other hand, were non-Semitic, and secular history and archaeology have not been able to discover who they were nor where they came from. It is probable, however, that the earliest inhabitants known to history were the Sumerians, and the Akkadians came in later. On the basis of the statement of Gen. 10:10 we may properly conclude that the Sumerians were of Hamitic stock.

The "land of Shinar" means the Babylonian plain in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. The cities (Babel, Erech, Accad, Calneh) are well known, and the region has been extensively excavated by modern archaeological expeditions. Babel or Babylon is mentioned as the beginning of the kingdom of Nimrod. It is possible that this city had already been built and that Nimrod took it over for the beginning of his domain. Chapter 11 which in the Tower of Babel incident describes the building of Babylon may actually look back to a time even before what is mentioned in 10:10.

"Out of that land went forth Asshur, and buildeth Nineveh, and the city of Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city" (10:11, 12). This is the King James Version of these verses, but there is reason to believe that it is inaccurate. Young's Literal Translation reads: "From that land he

hath gone out to Asshur, and buildeth Nineveh, even the broad places of the city, and Calah, and Resen, between Nineveh and Calah; it is the great city." The American Revised Version (1901) reads: "Out of that land he went forth into Assyria, and builded Nineveh, and Rehoboth-Ir, and Calah, and between Nineveh and Calah (the same is the great city)". Leupold's translation is similar to this. We believe that these translations, rather than the King James, are correct at this point, and that the "Asshur" mentioned in verse 11 is not an individual, but the name of the country Assyria, which formed Nimrod's second venture in empire building.

The statement "the same is a great city" refers to the city of Nineveh. The other places mentioned are to be regarded as suburbs or adjacent towns, which taken together made Nineveh such a great city. Verses 11 and 12 have given us some valuable information about the beginnings of world politics.

Next the other peoples of Hamitic stock are mentioned, starting with Egypt (Mizraim). The names given in verses 13 and 14 are all plural in form, and therefore mean not merely individuals, but nations. In the Hebrew the plural of a masculine noun is formed by adding -im, just as in English the plural is formed by adding -s. Among those mentioned, the Philistim and Caphtorim are of special interest. Amos 9:7 shows that the Philistines came from Caphtor, which means the island of Crete in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. In verse 14 the Philistim or Philistines are said to have come out from the Casluhim. The Casluhim have not been positively identified, but it is possible that a region east of the Nile delta is meant. Even if this is the correct meaning, this does not necessarily involve a contradiction between Genesis and Amos. Crete was the original home of the Philistines. If the Casluhim were located near Egypt, still they could have come originally from Crete.

The Canaanites are mentioned next, including the Phoenicians (Sidon) and others. The Phoenicians were of Hamitic stock, but came to speak a Semitic language. They were located on the Syrian coast just north of Palestine. "Heth", mentioned in 10:15, was apparently the ancestor of the Hittites, who formed a great empire in the second millennium before Christ. It has been proved that the Hittites spoke a language with affinities to the Indo-European family of languages. This however is not inconsistent with the fact that their founder was a man of Hamitic stock. Language and racial stock are two different things. There are millions of Negroes in North America whose language is English — a language of the Indo-European (Japhetic) family — yet they are of the Hamitic race and their use of the English language goes back only 400 years or so at most. There are numerous known cases of whole nations changing their

language to an entirely different one, while the racial stock remains largely unchanged.

From 10:21 the chapter takes up the descendants of Shem, that branch of the human race which was to be religiously important, for through them the divine promise of redemption was to be fulfilled. Here again the names given are not merely the names of individuals, but the names of the nations or tribes descended from them.

Shem is stated to be "the father of all the children of Eber," that is to say, he was the ancestor of all the Hebrews. The name "Eber" means "across," and refers to the region across the Euphrates River. All Israelites were Hebrews, but not all Hebrews were Israelites. Abraham is called a Hebrew, that is, he was a member of this particular tribe or group. The Hebrew language, or something very close to it, was spoken by various countries besides Israel.

"Elam" is a country located east of the Tigris River. "Asshur" in the Bible sometimes refers to the nation of Assyria and sometimes to the individual from which this nation sprang. "Aram" stands for the Aramaeans, who lived to the northeast of Palestine. In the Bible they are commonly spoken of as "Syrians." They were akin to but not identical with the Hebrews. "Uz," mentioned in 10:23, is of interest because it was the home of Job (Job 1:1). The location is not known, but it was certainly the home of part of the Aramaean race, and possibly located somewhere in Arabia.

Other Semitic tribes are listed in the verses which follow. As far as Peleg (10:25) this forms part of the genealogy of Abraham, which is repeated in fuller form in chapter 11. Chapter 10 continues with Joktan, Peleg's brother, and lists the various Semitic tribes descended from him. Most of these seem to have been located in various parts of Arabia.

The statement of 10:25 that in the time of Peleg "was the earth divided" is of interest. A statement such as this, that in the days or lifetime of Peleg the earth was divided, indicates that these various names listed are the names of individual persons, not merely the names of tribes descended from them. A tribe would live on for centuries; it could hardly be said that during the days of a tribe or nation the earth was divided. It could not be said, for example, that in the time of Spain America was discovered. Spain has a known history of at least 2500 years, so the statement that in the time of Spain America was discovered would be so indefinite as to be practically meaningless. But it would be very proper to say that in the lifetime of Columbus America was discovered.

But what is meant by the statement that in Peleg's days the earth was divided? The probable answer is that the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel, described in chapter 11, is meant.

We know nothing more about Peleg. His brother Joktan, however, was the ancestor of many Arabian tribes. Verse 30 states that their territory "was from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar, a mount of the east." Both Mesha and Sephar are thought to have been in the southern part of Arabia, though the exact location is unknown.

The last verse of chapter 10 (verse 32) summarizes the entire contents of the chapter. It is clearly stated that the entire population of the post-flood world came from the three sons of Noah and their descendants. This fits in with what is known about human ethnology, though it leaves some unsolved problems in our hands. Many questions cannot be answered; for example, how are the Chinese, the Eskimos and the North and South American Indians to be classified? Are they descended from Shem, Ham or Japheth? We must bear in mind that races which exist today are not necessarily descended wholly from any one of Noah's sons. There is certainly the possibility and even the high probability that the various branches intermarried and mingled.

How many descendants of Noah are listed in chapter 10? Delitzsch holds that there are 70. Others give a slightly different total varying from 68 to 71.

#### Questions:

1. What is the subject of chapter 10?
2. When was the material in this chapter probably written?
3. Why are the descendants of Shem mentioned last in the list of peoples in this chapter?
4. Besides the actual individuals descended from Shem, Ham and Japheth, what do the various names given stand for?
5. What is the meaning of "Javan"?
6. What is the meaning of "Madai"?
7. What is the meaning of "Mizraim"?
8. Where was Cush located?
9. Who was the most famous son of Cush?
10. What are the possible meanings of the word "mighty" in verse 9?
11. What is the meaning of the name "Nimrod"?
12. What is meant by the statement that Nimrod was a mighty hunter "before the Lord"?
13. What verse in chapter 10 gives the Bible's first statement about the origin of Babylonia?
14. Who were the Akkadians? From which of Noah's sons were they descended? What kind of language did they speak?

15. Who were the Sumerians, and what is known about their racial affinities?

16. Where was the "land of Shinar" located?

17. What was Nimrod's second venture in empire building?

18. What question exists as to the translation of 10:11?

19. What is meant by the statement "the same is a great city" in 10:12?

20. What is indicated by the ending -im on a Hebrew noun?

21. What was the original home of the Philistines?

22. From whom were the Hittites descended? What kind of language did they speak?

23. What was the racial stock of the Phoeni-

ans, and to what family of languages did their language belong?

24. Why are the descendants of Shem mentioned last in the list?

25. What is the meaning of the name "Eber"?

26. Were the Israelites the same as the Hebrews? What was the difference?

27. Where was Elam located?

28. What famous man lived in the land of Uz?

29. What great event took place in the lifetime of Peleg?

30. Where were the descendants of Joktan located?

31. About how many descendants of Noah are listed in chapter 10?

(To be continued)

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## *Religious Terms Defined*

**CHRONOLOGY.** The science of calculating periods of time, and dates of historical events.

**CHURCH, THE.** The body of people who are distinguished from the rest of mankind either by a vital or an external participation in the dispensation of the Covenant of Grace.

**CHURCH CENSURES.** The progressive steps by which Church Discipline is exercised, namely, Admonition, Rebuke, Suspension, Deposition, and Excommunication.

**CHURCH DISCIPLINE.** The exercise of the authority which Christ has committed to His Church for reclaiming members who fall into scandalous sin, and for guarding the purity of the Church by excluding those who cannot be brought to repentance.

**CHURCH GOVERNMENT.** The system of organization which Christ has appointed in the Scriptures for the visible Church.

**CHURCH JUDICATORIES.** The series of graded courts composed of ministers and ruling elders by which the government of the Church is carried on, namely Session (Consistory), Presbytery (Classis), Synod, General Assembly.

**CHURCH MILITANT, THE.** That portion of the invisible Church which at a given time is present on earth, and consequently engaged in conflict with evil.

**CHURCH TRIUMPHANT, THE.** That portion of the invisible Church which has already entered the state of glory, and consequently is enjoying victory over evil with Christ.

**COMMENTARY.** A book giving a continuous exposition of the Bible, or of some portion of it.

**COMMUNION.** Communion means sharing or mutual participation. It is used in this sense in the phrase "the communion of saints." In I Cor. 10:16 the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are spoken of as the communion of the body and blood of Christ; that is, the Lord's Supper involves a sharing or mutual participation in the benefits of Christ's atonement. From this text the Lord's Supper has come to be called the Communion, or the communion service.

**CONCEPTION, THE IMMACULATE.** The false Roman Catholic doctrine, made a dogma in 1854, that the Virgin Mary was born without original sin. The term "Immaculate Conception" is often incorrectly used by Protestants when they mean the Virgin Birth of Christ.

**CONFESSION.** That element of prayer which expresses our unworthiness and ill-desert because of our sins, and our sincere sorrow for them.

**CONGREGATION.** A body of Christian people of common faith, united under the same officers, and assembling together for public worship.

**CONGREGATIONALISM.** That system of church government which recognizes no authority having jurisdiction over more than a single local congregation. (Held by Congregationalists, Baptists and some others; also called Independency. Opposed to the Papal, Presbyterian and Episcopal forms of church government.

# The Church a Covenant Community

By the Rev. E. Clark Copeland, D.D.

(Continued from last issue)

Just as righteousness received in faith was necessary for the establishment of the covenant, so a blameless walk before God was required for the maintenance and confirmation of the covenant.<sup>57</sup>

Although the covenant is a unilateral enactment initiated by God in grace, it was designed to produce the response of faith so as to become mutual.<sup>58</sup> The obedience of faith which Abraham displayed is given as the experimental cause of the continuation of the covenant with Isaac: "As a consequence (of the fact) that Abraham obeyed my voice, kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5).<sup>59</sup> Abraham's walk was directed by the objective word of the covenant promises, not the pious imaginations of his mystical heart. His faithfulness in his own life and in instructing his household is also the experimental cause of God's revealing to him His purpose concerning Sodom (Gen. 18:17-19).<sup>60</sup> Abraham was God's servant-prophet and priest — towards the nations (Gen. 20:7).

## The Covenant Renewed with Israel at Sinai

As the covenant progresses and Israel becomes the people of God by a new covenant at Sinai, we see these same features continued. In fact it is clear that we do not have a different covenant, but one that came in beside the promise of the covenant with Abraham to guard it and to secure its full realization in the end (Rom. 5:20 with 3:20).<sup>61</sup> The covenant made with Abraham and his seed forever was neither "disannulled nor altered by adding new conditions."<sup>62</sup> "The newness is not that of substitution, but of completion. The Sinai covenant did not annul the covenant of promise; it was a step forward in its fulfillment."<sup>63</sup> Professor Kline says that the Sinai covenant did not come alone, or as a substitute, but as an alternate.<sup>64</sup> It made law obedience by Israel the way of life-inheritance, yet the Mosaic covenant as a whole law was accompanied by promise sealed by divine oath and offering an alternate way of inheritance — forgiveness and acceptance through sacrifice. Hence the promise was renewed by the Mosaic Covenant, for it was made in pursuance and fulfillment of the covenants with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.<sup>65</sup> However, as Kline contends, even the promise alternate was itself ultimately a way of law, not the way of individual obedience to a law enunciated in the Mosaic Covenant, but "one implicit in the promise itself — the way of vicarious law-obedience and satisfaction by way of the Christ of promise."<sup>66</sup> Thus the Mosaic

Covenant does not make void or suspend the Abrahamic, but comes as "an addition subserving the interests of the promise which found its focal point in the seed that was to come."<sup>67</sup>

At the foreground of the Sinai Covenant stands the same concept of sovereign administration of grace based on electing love that was present in the covenant with Abraham.<sup>68</sup> At its center is the same concept of spiritual union with God. As God had promised Abraham "to be God to you and to your descendants after you" (Gen. 17:7), so He says to Israel, "I will take you for my people and I will be your God" (Ex. 6:6-7; compare Deut. 29:13). The election is to sonship: Yahweh is Israel's father, Israel is His first-born son (Ex. 4:22; Deut. 32:6). R. F. Weidner emphatically says,

It is only on this ground (election as the free act of God's love) that the divine commands to the people are given, and therefore the Decalogue (Ex. 20:2) places at the forefront the fact of election.<sup>69</sup>

So God says to Israel,

"Today you have become the people of Yahweh your God." The fact is stated; then is joined the demand to listen and obey, "Listen therefore to the voice of Yahweh your God" (Deut. 27:9,10).<sup>70</sup>

In the Sinai Covenant commandment becomes synonymous with covenant (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 9:10-11).<sup>71</sup> The "Ten Words" are but an epitome of the divine law, the whole of which made up the Covenant stipulations. However the demand of obedience, and the solemn oath to be obedient do not place it in a different category from the Abrahamic covenant, nor constitute it a covenant of works.<sup>72</sup> The law was given to those who were already covenant sons, the re-deemed people (Ex. 4:20; 6:6-7; 20:2). When Israel said, "All that the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient" (Ex. 19:8; 24:3,7) they were formally "entering the covenant" (Deut. 29:12), but

It is a mistake to read Ex. 19:5,6; 24:7,8 as if the covenant had to wait for the promise of obedience on the part of the people. In keeping the covenant and obeying God's voice the covenant is conceived of as dispensed, as in operation, and as constituting a certain relation. What is conditioned upon obedience is the enjoyment of the blessing which the covenant stipulates.<sup>73</sup>

In expressing the same view, John Milton emphasizes the fact that the basic provisions of the covenant at Sinai stress the inwardness of the obedience:

It is not to be understood as the external obedience to ordinances imposed from without, but as the inward response of the heart to the will of God who has graciously made a covenant into which we are called . . . The obedience of faith is something permanent, a fruit that God always seeks in His redeemed people; for without it there can be no real appropriation of His blessings nor can there be any sharing of them with others.<sup>74</sup>

He brings to mind a fact often overlooked in relation to Israel's obedience, the work of the Holy Spirit.

Though this is not stated in Ex. 19, we need not rule out "his holy spirit" (Isa. 63:10,11), the Spirit of His presence, as being active also in this situation. At any rate the tone of the divine "if" in Ex. 19:5 is definitely not legalistic but spiritual, in harmony with the spirit of the covenant with Abraham.<sup>75</sup>

The New Testament makes abundantly clear that only by the Holy Spirit may man bring forth the obedience of faith.

#### Notes

57 C. F. Keil, F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. I, *The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), p. 223.

58 See Milton, p. 5; and Dr. Roehrs, p. 585, references to Gen. 17.

59 *eqev asher* "as a consequence (of the fact) that," *BDB*, p. 784.

60 *BDB*, p. 775, "Sq. inf. Gen. 18:19 l' maan habiy, for the purpose of J's bringing to the intent that J might bring." Abraham's instruction had wide consequences: "his sons and his house," (v. 18). He had 318 "trained men, born in his house," (14:14). His servant sent to choose a wife for Isaac sought the direction of the Lord as would his master, Gen. 24: espec. 12-14,24,52.

61 D. Douglas Bannerman, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Church Historically and Exegetically Considered* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955), p. 25.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

63 Milton, p. 137. P. Peters finds an essential difference between the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants since in the Mosaic, law and commandment become synonymous with covenant, making it a conditioned covenant, a bilateral engagement

involving reciprocal obligations between God and His people. He notes, however, that "covenant" and "mercy" are synonymous in Scripture, citing Deut. 7:9 which, he says, refers to the Sinai Covenant. He seems hesitant to say that the Abrahamic Covenant was contained in the Sinaitic. Article, "Diatheke in the Old and New Testament," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, XXXIX (1942), 258-262. Milton seems to have solved this difficulty.

64 Kline, p. 14.

65 Ex. 2:24-25; 3:6,15; 6:2-8; Deut. 4:31; Ps. 105:8-12.

66 Kline, p. 14.

67 Murray, p. 267.

68 "This was made with Israel as a people who had been sovereignly chosen in love unto redemption and adoption" (*Ibid.*). See John Milton's discussion of election as including a sense of continuity relating to the fulfilling of the goal as well as to keeping the promise, pp. 150-153. Cf. Weidner, p. 73, "The adoption of Israel as the covenant people is a free act of God, or in other words, an act of divine love, and necessary only so far as God has bound Himself by His oath, — that is, a proof of His truth and faithfulness — but is in no way dependent on man's desert. The propositions are expressly inculcated on the people at every opportunity." N. H. Snaith makes a helpful study of *ahav* and *chesed* in relation to the covenant, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: The Epworth Press, 1944), p. 95.

69 Weidner, p. 73.

70 Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, in *The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*, translated by D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 194.

71 Roehrs, p. 585. "The covenant which God commanded," *eneteilato* (Ex. 24:8; Heb. 9:20); the new covenant in Christ "legally enacted," *nenomothetetai*; (Heb. 8:6). See Witsius, p. 25.

72 R. F. Weidner says that in the covenant of promise God bound Abraham and his seed to a godly life and obedience to His will (Gen. 17:1-2; 18:19). the same condition laid on Israel and accepted by her (Ex. 19:5,8; 24:3,7), *ibid.*, 73 75.

73 Murray, p. 266. Cf. Roehrs, p. 587, "the potential response to the covenant is in no way the basis for the establishment of the covenant."

74 P. 140. Cf. Weidner's view that the law does not demand only external conformity, mere legality, but morality. "On the contrary the law insists on the disposition of the heart, when it says, 'Thou shalt not covet' (Ex. 20:17). It de-

mands the external as coordinate with the internal," p. 75. Similarly, Dr. Roehrs, p. 589, says that the purpose of the Sinai covenant stipulations and regulations was to teach that, in the restored relationship with God, man's one concern is to recognize and express the total claim of God

upon him; it supplied many outward forms by which to express his inner life and communion with God.

75 Milton, p. 140.

(To be continued)

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## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

**BRINGING UP CHILDREN.** "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Isa. 1:2). In too many homes in America today the heartbreaking cry of this verse could be echoed. Juvenile delinquency seems to be still on the increase. Not merely from broken homes or homes where the parents themselves are delinquents, but from so-called respectable homes come young people who rebel against their parents and other authority. It is not merely the aftermath of war and the by-product of divorce. More and more it seems to be well-nigh universal in America. More and more we are reaping the fruit of an educational system that leaves God out of the picture. How can we expect children to obey and respect constituted authority when they are given no basis for obedience other than the arbitrary word of the parent or other person in authority? By excluding religion completely from the school, God-ordained authority cannot be taught, and ethics are left hanging in the air. Rebellion follows as a matter of course. The only remedy is a school where every hour sees each subject in its proper relation to the Triune God, and commands are to be obeyed because God has ordained it. Merely adding the teaching of the Bible to a pagan system is not sufficient. Each subject must be seen in its true relation to God's government of the universe, otherwise the correct impression cannot be made on the mind of the student. No sacrifice is too great to organize and support the Christian school.

— Rev. Floyd E. Hamilton in Daily  
Manna Calendar

"Who need fear men who is in league with God?"

— John Trapp

"If our liberality and charity are wider than the Bible, they are worth nothing."

— J. C. Ryle

"A Jew lives in you and me and in every human heart by nature."

— Geerhardus Vos

"Wheels are tapped with a hammer on the railway that their soundness may be tested. Not only does affliction thus try our characters, but prosperity does the same."

— Charles H. Spurgeon

"An awakening by mere natural conscience is very different from an awakening by the Spirit of God. No man ever fled to Christ from mere natural terror. 'No man can come to me,' saith Christ, 'except the Father which hath sent me draw him.' Seek a divine work upon your heart."

— Robert Murray McCheyne

"There are many among us who live in the daily practice of sins, some who carry on small dishonesties, or occasionally use small minced oaths, who walk in the counsel of the ungodly. O brethren! if this be your case, it is quite plain that you have never had a divine awakening. When a man is made anxious about his soul, he always puts away his open sins."

— Robert Murray McCheyne

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## *Approaching the Bible for Study*

By the Rev. John H. White

The most important and yet abused element of the Christian life is the use of the Scripture. The Bible has priority as a means of grace. The love of God and the Bible go together. Yet for many Christians the process of Bible reading and study is a frustrating experience. Many Christ-

ian groups are presently concerned about methods of Bible study. But before one considers a method of Bible study, we must have a proper approach to the Scripture. We are often guilty of a wrong approach to the Bible.

One wrong approach views the Bible as a

golden treasure chest where gems are stored. It is our task to dig these gems out of the Bible and to view them in their splendor. If God had intended us to view the Bible in this way then He would have given us the Bible printed on cards. For the person who approaches the Bible in this way, the full context of the Bible has little or no meaning.

A second approach is to view the Bible as a book that contains maxims of morality. This is often seen in a Bible study method entitled "Character Study". The lives of certain men and women provide examples, either negative or positive, of moral behavior. The difficulty is however, that it is hard sometimes to determine whether a particular action is to be condemned or approved. There are often incidents where God commands something to be done which can hardly be considered examples for our behavior. Samuel hewed Agag the king of the Amalekites to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal (I Sam. 15:33). What example do we learn from that?

A third approach to the Bible looks for proof texts for theological truth. A person using this approach goes here and there in the Bible gathering verses that prove a particular theological position. The problem with this approach is that there seems to be so much unsystematic, historical material in the Bible. If God had intended us to view the Bible in this way, He would have given it to us in dictionary form.

There is no question that the Bible does provide inspiration, admonition, and instruction. Yet it is clear that there is something lacking in each of these approaches. Let us try to set forth a proper approach to the Bible.

When we study the structure of the Bible itself, two things become clear. In the first place it is clear that the form of the Bible is historical. In the second place, it is clear that it is the unfolding of the plan of redemption. God is moving to restore man to the garden of Eden and his place as vice-gerent in God's world.

## I. THE HISTORY OF REDEMPTION AND REVELATION

The Bible is not a bare chronicle of events, nor is it a book of moral precepts, philosophy or even theology. It is primarily the history of redemption. Its major theme is redemption. The Bible is essentially the story of God moving to restore His people, and through them, His world to Himself. It is God's creative and redeeming word that brings the events to pass. God the Sovereign Lord of history presents meaning to those events that occur. If we note this history of redemption, a fourfold pattern unfolds:

a. This history of redemption and revelation is progressive. We must recognize that the Bible hasn't completed itself in one exhaustive act, but

unfolds itself in a series of successive and related acts. This Bible has not fallen like a huge block out of heaven, but has been given in a series of progressive stages.

b. That history follows the structure of promise and fulfillment. The pattern of that progressive revelation is that first God speaks, then He performs. First comes His word of promise, then there follows His act of fulfillment. God works by action in the historical process to bring His promises to fulfillment. So a pattern of the Scripture unfolds; first the lingual promise of God, then the action of God to fulfill it. When God promised the birth of Isaac, Abraham and Sarah laughed at God in unbelief. But the answer of the Sovereign God was: "Is any word impossible for God?" (Genesis 18:14)

c. That history of redemption is explained and reviewed. Once we see the pattern of promise and fulfillment, we also note that revelation from God explains and reviews the meaning of God's redemptive actions. For example, the crucifixion is promised by the lingual word of God — it is fulfilled in His word of action on Calvary and its meaning and application are expanded and applied in the epistles. The pattern is first, the Word of promise, then the fact of fulfillment by action and then the interpretative word. Geerhardus Vos suggests that one can divide the whole of Scripture into this threefold pattern. The Old Testament contains predictive preparatory word, the gospels the redemptive revelatory fact, and the epistles the subsequent final interpretation.

d. That history of redemption and revelation is both organic and epochal. This progressive history is organic. It moves from seed form to the attainment of full growth. That is not to say that each part is imperfect. But that we must view each stage of its growth in the light of the seed and the full grown plant. For example the protoevangel of Genesis 3:15 is totally meaningless unless it is seen in its total context. We know, in terms of its seed form, that man was called into covenant fellowship with God but because of sin through the serpent that fellowship has been broken. As we look at the full grown plant, we realize that it is Jesus Christ who deals the death blow to Satan at Calvary and will completely destroy the evil one at His second coming. Genesis 3:15 can only be properly understood when we take in view the organic nature of Scripture.

Though this pattern of the Scripture is organic, it is not uniform. God's dealings with His world through men are not mechanical, but seasonal. So the Scripture is also epochal. An epoch is an event that is dependent on all that goes before but that marks a new development. So the great epochs of redemption in the Scripture can be rather easily discerned: the creation

to the Fall, the Fall to the flood, the flood to calling of Abraham, the calling of Abraham to the Exodus, the Exodus to the organization of the nation, the organization of the nation to the monarchy, the monarchy to the captivity, the captivity to the coming of Christ, the first coming of Christ to the second coming.

## II. THE UNITY OF THAT REDEMPTION AND REVELATION

In this vast history of redemption with all its patterns, the one sovereign purpose of God is being worked out. The Scripture contains one mighty unified revelation. This one purpose and message of God finds its focus and realization in Jesus Christ (II Timothy 1:9, 10). The grand climax to Jesus' ministry comes after the resurrection on the road to Emmaus. There Jesus taught His disciples that all of the Old Testament Scriptures had their focus in Him (Luke 24:26-27). Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He showed how this organic and epochal history had its fulfillment in Him. The active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ is the central and primary theme of Scripture. He is the one who comes in the fullness of time to bring man back to the place of fellowship, to give him access to the tree of life and to give him the power and the authority to do again what Adam was commanded to do; namely, subdue the earth and have dominion over it.

The Old Testament is the study of God as the Lord and His people as His servants. God appears to Israel to rule over them and to reveal Himself to them. He comes as the covenant Lord to save His people. In Christ, the Lord comes to save His people. He comes to deliver from Egypt, to bring into the promised land, and to dwell in the tabernacle. But finally He comes in the person of Jesus Christ to seal His covenant with His own blood. All the patterns and promises of God are yea and amen in Him (II Corinthians 1:20).

Approaching the Bible in this manner emphasizes God's work of redemption. It sees man's response for what it is — a response to the prior work of God. Our interest in the Old Testament record is not moralistic lessons or in what men did, but in what God did. This approach to the Bible also centers our thinking and worship upon Jesus Christ. All of the Old Testament persons and institutions are called forth on the stage of redemptive history to play a role that involves the anticipation of Jesus Christ. They enable us to understand the person and work of Jesus Christ. For example, Moses as one person who is a prophet, priest and king, is willing to give up his life representatively, that the guilty Israelites might live, shows us the principle of substitution. Also, when we approach the Bible in this way we are enabled to see the symbolism of the Biblical record. That symbolism involves not only the more obvious symbols of the worship patterns, but the symbols God has placed in history. Such Biblical signs as the tree of life, the water, the rock, the ladder of Jacob, the walls of Jericho, the Exodus etc. can now be seen with a freshness and thrill.

Seeing the Bible as the history of redemption which focuses in Jesus Christ not only gives all these benefits but above all it enables us to know God. To know God does not involve simply knowing a catalog of facts about Him, but rather to have the reality of His person and work interwoven into the total experience of our lives.

For the material in this article the author acknowledges his deep indebtedness to the following: Edmund P. Clowney, **Discovering Biblical Theology** (Westminster Seminary, 1964); **Preaching and Biblical Theology** (Eerdmans, 1961); Gustav Friedrich Oehler, **Theology of the Old Testament** (Zondervan, 1956); Herman Ridderbos, **When the Time was Fully Come** (Eerdmans, 1951); Geerhardus Vos, **Biblical Theology** (Eerdmans, 1948).

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## *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 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 for books to the manager of this magazine.

THE BURDEN OF SOREN KIERKEGAARD, by Edward John Carnell, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 49502, 1965, pp. 174. \$3.50.

The fact that Kierkegaard is much in vogue

has produced a rash of studies. Carnell writes from the standpoint of what is often called the neo-Evangelical movement. He gives us an accurate survey of two basic themes of Soren Kierkegaard, the subjectivity of truth and the concept of "existential living." Carnell is fair and

clear presenting us with a positive look at the melancholy Dane.

The closing chapter does point out the nihilistic tendencies of Soren Kierkegaard's doctrines of the individual. But what is rather annoying is that Carnell refuses to shed light here on the real implications of the anti-metaphysical character of Kierkegaard's thought. No extended place is given either to a discussion of Kierkegaard's Christology or his concept of Biblical revelation. That Kierkegaard was a genius no one denies, but what Carnell fails to give us is sufficient evidence that Kierkegaard ever professed Christ in a way consonant with what Scripture refers to as saving faith.

In simple words, are we to look to Soren Kierkegaard merely as a second Socrates or a great Christian theologian? This question which is unanswered in Carnell has to be faced before we assimilate ideas into our own Christian theology.

R. W. Nickerson

**THE FAMILY IN DIALOGUE**, by A. Donald Bell. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1968, pp. 168. \$3.95.

Why a man as academically qualified as Dr. Bell should write a book so verbose and oversimplified is hard to imagine. He states that he has written a layman's guide for successful marriage and family life; apparently his laymen are expected to have the mentality of a ten year old. The work abounds in vague generalities and romanticizings. The chapter on the "honeymoon" does not even mention the difficult problem of sexual adjustment in the early days of marriage. Only the chapter about the young child shows any outstanding merit. Triteness plagues the whole book. Christian morality is frequently referred to, but no detailed study of relevant Scripture passages is presented in any depth. In trying to cover far too much in one little work, Dr. Bell has only succeeded in compounding shallowness.

— R. W. Nickerson

**THE RESURRECTION AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**, by W. J. Sparrow Simpson, D.D. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1968, pp. 462, \$6.95.

This is a reprint of a book first published in 1911. As such, it has no reference to the views of Barth, Brunner, Bultman, Tillich, etc. Nevertheless, it does contain the views of the twelve disciples and Paul as witnesses to the resurrection. Of special note is the fact that the disciples had no concept of the personal resurrection of Jesus — until after it happened. That is to say, the idea of a dead Messiah was inconceivable — in spite of the fact that Jesus taught repeatedly that His death was necessary. Yet after it had occurred,

the resurrection became central in their preaching and teaching. The author traces both the biblical theology of the resurrection as well as its historical and systematic development. As such I found the book to be a solid evangelical work and an aid in sermon preparation.

— Donald Weilersbacher

**YOUR TEEN-AGER AND YOU**, by Anna B. Mow. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1967, pp. 95. \$2.95.

In this work the author is always on the verge of saying something unique, but never quite gets beyond the realm of banalities about love and marriage. Her thesis that spiritual love is the foundation of marital bliss is frequently stated, but tritely developed. Her use of Scripture and theological language is shallow and often misleading. In spite of these glaring weaknesses, the work contains many practical insights and displays a genuinely Christian attitude toward personality development. But the problems of the teen-ager are not given enough attention, so the relevancy of the whole work is brought seriously into question.

— R. W. Nickerson

**SOURCEBOOK FOR MOTHERS**, by Eleanor Doan. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1969, pp. 278. \$5.95.

This work is just what it claims to be: "A compilation of readings, banquet ideas, toasts, poems, seed thoughts, devotional talks, plays, dialogues." Its particular purpose is to aid in the celebration of Mother's Day which the author labels as "next to Christmas, the most popular special day of the year." Some of it is sheer doggerel apparently copied from the insides of a thousand greeting cards; other contributions display real merit. There is an evangelical Christian cast or overtone which tends to enrich certain contributions, but others evidence a super-idealistic piety. The second half of the book which deals broadly with practical suggestions to recognize mother is of genuine value and far exceeds the usefulness of the first half which is mainly bad poetry.

— R. W. Nickerson

**THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHURCH**, by S. M. Lockridge. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1969, pp. 64. n.p.

If one enjoys the oratorical style of Spurgeon (and I do), he will find many pithy and pointed words worthy of quotation here. But the book is subtitled: "Provocative Discussions of Vital Modern Issues." These he will not find. The noted black pastor who write this book does give us ten worthwhile sermons with great evangelical zeal. But no direct, in-depth applications

to current social and religious problems are provided. The work might well have been written in 1869 instead of a tension-filled century later.

— R. W. Nickerson

**THE CROSS AND FLAME**, by Bruce Shelley. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 49502. 1967, pp. 191. \$3.95.

The express purpose of this book is to encourage believers by recounting how God's grace worked in history through those we now look upon as martyrs for the faith. The treatment is popular rather than scholarly. As a result certain "Quotations" are taken at face value even where there is just cause to dispute their historicity. The chapters dealing with the Early Church live up to the author's goal which is set down in a well-written introduction. But his pro-Anabaptist bias displays itself all out of proportion in the chapters centering around the Reformation. Here the Anabaptists are made out to be simon-pure heroes, the only true Protestants of the Reformation. In the account of the martyrdom of the next century, the Scottish Covenanters do not even merit "honorable mention." Presumably because they did not share the extreme view of church-state separation the author lauds. The later chapters on 20th century martyrs for the faith are both interesting and challenging, but the slanted polemic destroys the intrinsic value of the whole book.

— R. W. Nickerson

**A HIS READER: ESSAYS ON LOVE**, by Walter Trobisch and others. Inter-Varsity Press, 130 North Wells, Chicago, Illinois, 60606. 1968, pp. 120. \$1.00.

The basic thrust of this collection is preventive and not remedial; the guidelines it provides are well worth any young person having "under his belt." The minister too can find constructive ideas and "quotes" suitable to instruct the youth of his congregation. The contributions of Walter Trobisch are exceptionally literate applications of Biblical truth. Arthur Holmes on "Marriage" shows great Biblical depth, but falls short of the mark in the next article on divorce. The essays of Vernon Grounds are superficial and psychological with no real exegetical foundation — a great disappointment from a man of his standing and qualifications. Keith Hunt's brief "Different" is a strong appeal to sane Christian attitudes concerning love and marriage. Of the three books in the series, this one displays the greatest merit. IVCF itself has made a significant contribution in this important area of study and the book proves the worth of what they are doing.

— R. W. Nickerson

**A HIS READER: ESSAYS ON PRAYER**, by

A. W. Tozer and others. Inter-Varsity Press, 130 north Wells Chicago, Illinois, 60606. 1968, pp. 89. \$1.00.

What this work lacks is a basic theology of prayer. Although a number of articles are helpful, they could well have been written by others than those espousing Evangelical Christianity. The three outstanding pieces are Tozer's "Missing Jewel;" Lantz's "Conversational Prayer Meetings;" and "Some Pray and Die!" While useful, this book needs to rise above personal piety to a depth-study of the Biblical character of prayer.

— R. W. Nickerson

**A HIS READER: ESSAYS ON GUIDANCE**, by Joseph Bayly and others. Inter-Varsity Press, 130 north Wells, Chicago, Illinois, 60606. 1968, pp. 103. \$1.00.

This is the least valuable of the three volumes in the series, the greatest weakness lying in the repetition of ideas from essay to essay. There is some tendency to pietism along the lines of "full surrender" Christianity which is not balanced by an understanding of the Kingly office of Christ whereby "he subdues us unto himself." The basic approach toward guidance is along Biblical lines rather than subjectivism, however, the norms established are only superficially developed. While the articles by Oerter, Samuel and Pike deserve special mention, the last word on guidance has certainly not been said. The fact of God's sovereignty as the Predestinator, which comes to expression in Jos. Bayly's excellent preface, fails to materialize as a dominant theme in the book itself.

— R. W. Nickerson

**MAN'S GUILTINESS BEFORE GOD**, by Thomas Goodwin. Sovereign Grace Publishers, P. O. Box 2211, Wilmington, Del., 19899. 1960, pp. 376. \$6.95.

This book is actually a reprint of volume X of James Nichol's series of Puritan Divines under the title, **An Unregenerated Man's Guiltiness Before God. In Respect of Sin and Punishment.** To quote from Roger Nicole's introduction to this work would best give one an idea of the type of person Thomas Goodwin was. "Thomas Goodwin has commonly been acknowledged as one of the most brilliant lights of the whole puritanical movement. Thomas Goodwin's dogmatic treatises abound in valuable exegetical insights, and his expositions are rich mines (often deep and wordy) for doctrinal discussions. As any reader will quickly observe, Thomas Goodwin was a staunch and consistent Calvinist."

If anyone has a question concerning God's teaching of sin in the Bible, this book will open his eyes. In thirteen books (chapters) Thomas

Goodwin presents outstanding insight and understanding on the topic of sin. Why are all men sinners?; how much of a man is affected by sin?; and how vain are unregenerated man's thoughts? These are just a few questions Mr. Goodwin amply answers. However, Thomas Goodwin, writing during the puritanical movement, wrote as a Puritan — very deep and often verbose. It is said that Rev. Al Martin, an avid reader of Puritan works, spent an entire year pondering over the pages of this work before he could say that he had somewhat digested its riches. Jay Green, author of *Through Green Eyes* says, "Goodwin is at the top of my list of authors. . . Goodwin's treatment takes you on a detailed and illuminated trip through the sinful corridors of your mind and heart, thus arming you to control your lusts and to fit yourself to give God glory."

It is my opinion that all Christians should at least acquaint themselves with this work of Thomas Goodwin and any of his others — maybe even take a year and really digest this work! With many of our modern writers wanting new morality or man's goodness praised more, this book will stop the tidal wave of such rubbish and blindness to God and His Word!

— Bruce R. Backensto

NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY, EXPOSITION OF GALATIANS, by William Hendricksen. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1968, pp. 260.

William Hendricksen now has seven volumes ready on the New Testament; and if they are all done as well as this one, I am going to purchase them all. He is well known for his excellent book, *More Than Conquerors*, which deals with the book of Revelation. He is reformed all the way and an outstanding exegete.

In his commentary on Galatians, Hendricksen has twenty-six well-used pages for an introduction. He answers five basic questions: I. Why is this epistle important? II. To whom was it addressed? III. When, where, and why was it written? IV. Who wrote it? V. What is its theme? Its Outline? Hendricksen devotes ten pages on which he presents in debate form the resolution that Galatians is addressed to the churches in North Galatia. He presents the affirmative, negative, rebuttal for affirmative, rebuttal for negative and then the "report of one of the judges (the author of this book. The readers are the other judges). . .". The author holds the South Galatia view which, in my opinion, is the view that wins the debate and the view held by most reformed thinkers today. I believe W. H. Ramsey is one of the strongest proponents for the South Galatia theory; however, many good Christian scholars have held the North Galatia theory — Calvin being one of them with Kirsopp Lake's

criticism of the South Galatia view tending to keep peoples' minds open to the issue (remarked Sherman E. Johnson). To answer the question, When, Hendricksen states that two views were common — early date (50 A.D.) or late date (60 A.D. or afterward) — but that the latter is not often met except in the case of the North Galatia theorists. An early date is generally held by those who accept the South Galatia theory yet different dates are given. Hendricksen holds 52 A.D. as the date and the place to be Corinth just prior to I Thessalonians. I believe Hendricksen handles all of these basic questions very well and quite scholarly. He has given at least ten authors as reference for each view considered — "North or South churches" or "early or late date".

The body of the book is preceded by an outline of Galatians and then Hendricksen handles each chapter under the theme he believes they come in his outline; i.e. chapters one and two are under the theme "This gospel's orientation: . . .", chapters three and four "Its vindication: . . .", and chapters five and six "Its application: . . .". Then according to his outline he deals with the verses as they appear in the text. He lists the verses he is considering, his own exegesis of them, in much the same way as John Murray in his commentary on Romans. At the end of the commentary he gives his entire exegesis of Galatians.

Hendricksen gives valuable insights into many passages and he may be trusted. I believe Hendricksen's commentary is a must for ministers and students of the Word of God, especially for those who don't know or have forgotten their Greek!

— Bruce R. Backensto

ZEN-EXISTENTIALISM, by Lit-sen Chang. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 185, Nutley, New Jersey, 07110. pp. 254. \$5.95.

The sub-titles of this book, "The Spiritual Decline of the West," and "A Positive Answer to the Hippies," give us the gist of its contents. It is not primarily a book for those interested in Oriental religions. It contains a clear and thoroughly Scriptural analysis of contemporary cultural, philosophical, and theological trends which have made Zen very appealing to young western minds.

The author, Lit-sen Chang, an ardent "enlightened" Buddhist scholar until almost fifty years of age, is eminently qualified to give us the heart of Zen. "Zen," he says, "has a peculiar fascination on minds weary of conventional religion and philosophy." "Seeing into one's own nature," "unity of man and the universe," "the way of liberation," "enlightenment," and "liberates our natural energies and compels us to express our faculty for happiness and love" are some words

and phrases which make Zen seem very attractive. But after informing us of the history, meaning, elusive nature, and the iconoclastic stance of Zen the author calls it "mind murder," "a technique by which to achieve a mental breakdown," "frustration that leads to the crumbling of the edifice of logical thought," and "mystical self-intoxication." Zen's iconoclastic stance, which is so attractive to this generation, is described in these words: "Smash whatever you come across, regardless of whatever it is from within or without. . . . Anything that has the resemblance of an external authority is rejected by Zen. Absolute faith is placed in a man's own inner being" (p. 33). "Zen wants to live from within, not to be bound by rules, but to be creating one's own rules" (P. 34).

However, the major portion of the book gives from a Reformed point of view an enlightening analysis of modern thought which has prepared the way for reception of Zen in the West. The failure of humanism which is likened to a bouquet of flowers that looks beautiful but can do nothing but wither because it is cut off from the roots, the failure of modern philosophy which has stumbled down the road to the dead-end of nihilism, the failure of modern religion which has become syncretistic and then secular in its "God is Dead" aberration are topics which are discussed. Some of the men who come up for discussion are Paul Tillich, Harvey Cox, Paul Van Buren, and John A. T. Robinson. The author tells of the futility of modern culture, philosophy, and shows how Zen is the same old empty existentialism which is now being cast off.

We are therefore given in the last chapters a tremendous challenge to go forth with the great saving message of the Bible; for in Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." We are called upon to forsake the empty goal of "seeing into one's nature" and instead are challenged to seek the highest goal of knowing and glorifying God.

In Appendix I the author briefly gives his own remarkable testimony of passing from death to life by the grace of Christ. Appendix II is about LSD. Another Appendix is entitled "Where is Modern Theology Going" by Carl F. H. Henry.

We highly recommend this book to all who want real insight into modern thinking, and who want a fresh appreciation of the true value of the Gospel for modern man.

— Gene W. Spear

**Faith and the Physical World: A Comprehensive View**, by David L. Dye, Ph. D. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49502. 1966. pp. 214, paperback, (no price given).

This book attempts to reconcile the alleged conflict between science and the Bible. With that

objective in mind, Dr. Dye first endeavors to set forth the legitimate scope, methods, and assumptions of scientific investigation. These he compares with the Christian presupposition concerning the nature of God, the revelation of God in Christ, and a comprehensive world view of both physical and spiritual reality. Then the author attempts to relate the data of physical investigation to the Bible; specifically, the nature of human personality, the resolution of guilt, and the means of finding the purpose of life. Finally, an attempt is made to treat specific problems: (a) Biblical interpretation, (b) Origins, and (c) Aberrations.

With regard to principles of Biblical interpretation, Dr. Dye stresses the importance of the Bible as history. He states some of the theories of "higher criticism" and concludes that they are not in harmony with the results of modern archaeological investigation. He points out that only the original manuscripts of the Bible are inspired and infallible; therefore, "lower criticism" of the text of extant manuscripts is absolutely essential. Dr. Dye opposes the demythologizing of the Bible by Bultman, Tillich, etc.

In dealing with the problem of origins, the author believes that the word "yom" in Genesis 1 should be interpreted as periods of creative activity rather than six 24 hour days. He accepts evolution as a proven (tentative and consistent explanation) biological principle. Consequently, he concludes that all things came from God, were developed according to God's laws of genetic change and natural selection. Then at some point in history, God took a sub-human primate and made a man out of him. "That is, **He put a spirit and a personality in which was enough like God's own that he could have fellowship with God.**" p. 148.

Finally, there is a short section on aberrations: emotionalism, intellectualism, legalism, and balace (or normalcy).

— Donald Weilersbacher

**THE ZONDERVAN PICTORIAL ATLAS**, ed. by E. M. Blaiklock. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1969, pp. 506. \$9.95.

Handsomely produced, edited by an outstanding Biblical scholar and author, this is an excellent book. The many photographs of scenes in Bible Lands and archaeological sites add great interest to the treatment in the text. The maps are of high quality. A unique feature is a series of maps with transparent plastic overlays to show the features of the same area at different periods of history. The work is well indexed. Included is a full index of Scripture references.

The reviewer was unable to find Philadelphia (Asia Minor) listed in the Index of places. It is confused or rather incorrectly identified with

Rabbath-Ammon in Transjordan, which was called "Philadelphia" in Roman times (Page 479). Dr. Blaiklock could not possibly have made such a blunder as this. Apparently the Index was compiled by someone who went about it clerically but without knowledge of Bible history and geography.

— J. G. Vos

**THE ZONDERVAN TOPICAL BIBLE**, ed. by Edward Viening. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49502. 1969, pp. 1114. \$9.95.

This is not really a Bible, as the title would seem to imply. Rather, it is a topical Bible dictionary with nearly 6500 entries on persons, places and subjects, from Aaron to Zuzim. On some subjects a considerable amount of Scripture text is directly quoted. For example, the entry "Jesus, the Christ" fills 71 pages, most of this being Scripture text topically arranged, including many Old Testament prophecies of Christ. The entry "Predestination" consists entirely of Scripture texts (2½ pages). The entry on "God" has 69 pages, nearly all of them filled with Scripture text material. On the other hand, such a controversial matter as "Trichotomy" is not listed. Six pages of texts on Repentance fail to distinguish between the basic meanings of the three Greek words so translated in the New Testament (change of mind, sorrow for sin, turning around).

The reviewer questions whether this is the best way to study the Bible. However much Scripture truth is certain to confront the user of this volume, and it can accomplish much good.

— J. G. Vos

**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL MATERIALS.** Great Commission Publications. 7401 Old York Road, Philadelphia, Pa., 19126. 1970. Illustrated descriptive catalog and order form free on request. Complete sample kit with one copy of each book and item, \$4.65 postpaid, returnable for credit or refund if in good condition and within three weeks.

In the reviewer's opinion these are easily the best Vacation Bible School materials available. They are geared to four different age groups, with teacher's and pupil's materials for each, running through a three year cycle of subject matter. The materials are beautifully printed on good quality paper, they are pedagogically superior and they are Biblically sound. In fact they are almost the only Vacation Bible School helps and materials known to this reviewer that are consistently true to the Reformed Faith.

If your congregation is planning a Vacation Bible School, send for the catalog and sample kit and see for yourself. The materials in the sample kit contain three or four hymns. We understand that by specifying "Reformed Presbyterian Edition" in ordering materials it is possible to obtain helps with Psalms instead of hymns.

As in former years, these Great Commission VBS materials are free from "pictures of Jesus" — a feature that will be approved by most readers of Blue Banner Faith and Life.

— J. G. Vos

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In writing for free copies of reprints, readers living in U.S.A. should send a 6 cent stamp for postage. Canadian and overseas readers need not send stamp.

**Studies in the Covenant of Grace.** Series of 35 Bible lessons from the 1967 issues of the magazine Obtainable from Reformed Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 738 Rebecca St., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221. \$1.00 plus postage.

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**J. G. Vos, Editor and Manager**  
3408 Seventh Avenue  
Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania 15010, U.S.A.

Though sun and moon and stars be not, the heavens a vanished scroll,

The pillars of the earth are His. Be fixed in God, my soul.

The waves may roar, the nations rage, and yet at His command

At the four corners of the earth the four great angels stand,

And swiftly hasteneth the day foretold in His sure Word,

The kingdom of the world shall be the kingdom of the Lord.

(Author unknown. Adapted)

## 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.

## This Is the True God

By F. W. Pitt

The Maker of the universe  
As man for man was made a curse.  
The claims of laws which He had made  
Unto the uttermost He paid.

His holy fingers made the bough  
Which grew the thorns that crowned His brow.  
The nails that pierced His hand were mined  
In secret places He designed.

He made the forest whence there sprung  
The tree on which His body hung.  
He died upon a cross of wood,  
Yet made the hill on which it stood.

The sky that darkened o'er His head  
By Him above the earth was spread.  
The sun that hid from Him its face  
By His decree was poised in space.

The spear which spilled His precious blood  
Was tempered in the fires of God.  
The grave in which His form was laid.  
Was hewn in rocks His hands had made.

The throne on which He now appears  
Was His from everlasting years,  
But a new glory crowns His brow,  
And every knee to Him shall bow.

## What Then?

By J. Whitfield Green (adapted)

When the great plants of our cities  
Have turned out their last finished work;  
When the merchant has sold his last yard of silk  
And dismissed his last tired clerk;  
When the banks have rolled in their last dollar  
And paid out their last dividend;  
And the Judge of the world says:  
"Close for the night,"  
And calls for a balance — what then?

When the choir has sung its last anthem,  
And the preacher has made his last prayer;  
When the people have heard their last sermon,  
And the sound has died out on the air;  
When the Bible lies closed on the altar.  
And the pews are all empty of men;  
And each soul stands facing his record,  
And the Great Book is opened — what then?

When the actors have played their last drama,  
And the mimic has made his last fun;  
And the movie has flashed its last picture,  
And the billboards displayed their last run;  
When the crowds seeking pleasure have vanished,  
And gone out into darkness again;  
And a world that rejected its Saviour  
Is asked for a reason — what then?

When the bugle dies out in the silence,  
And the long, marching columns are still;  
When the millions of earth are gathered  
From ocean and valley and hill;  
When the day that has no morrow  
Has come to the last, last end;  
And the voice of God from the heaven  
Says, "It is done!" — what then?

## PSALM 32 : 1-7

C.M.D.  
Vox Direct

1. What bless-ed-ness for him whose guilt Has all for-giv - en been!  
3. When I kept si - lent, my bones aged; My groan - ing filled each day.  
Then You did all my sin for-give And take my guilt a - way.

When his trans-gres-sions par-doned are, And cov - ered is his sin!  
4. Your hand op-pressed me day and night; My mar - row dried a - way.  
6. For this to You while You are near Let all the god - ly pray.

2. O blest the man 'gainst whom the LORD Counts no in - i qui - ty,  
5. Then I made known to You my sin, Hid not my guilt - i - ness;  
The great de - luge shall not touch him. 7. You are my hid - ing place.

And in whose spir-it there is not De - ceit or treach-er - y.  
I said, "I my trans-gres-sions all Will to the LORD confess."  
You will pre - serve me and sur - round With vic - t'ry's songs of praise.

(Reprinted from Praise: New Adventures in Psalm Singing. Copyright 1969 by The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. Copies of the booklet are available at 25 cents plus postage from Christian Education Office, 738 Rebecca Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15221 U.S.A.)



# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 25

JULY-SEPTEMBER, 1970

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# The Body that Shall Be

By J. G. Vos

Unlike most other religions, Christianity affirms not merely the immortality of the soul but the resurrection of the body. Affirmed in the so-called Apostles' Creed, this truth is part of the universal faith of all branches of Christianity. Implied in God's covenant with Abraham (see Luke 20:37, 38), it is also explicitly taught in the Old Testament (Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2, set forth more fully in the teaching of Jesus Christ (John 5:28, 29), and receives its classic exposition in the 15th chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

The resurrection body will be a real body. Paul calls it "a spiritual body". This does not mean a spirit nor a spirit-body. The word **spiritual** is not contrasted with **material** but with **natural** (1 Cor. 15:44). While it will not be a body of flesh and blood (verse 50), still it will be a body. Just as in this present earthly life, man is a spirit and has a body, so in heaven man will be a spirit and will have a body. We may infer that as in this life our body is our indispensable link with our environment, so in eternity the new body will be our perfect and adequate link between our personality and our environment.

When Paul calls the new body **spiritual** this does not mean thin, ethereal or ghost-like. It means connected dynamically with God the Holy Spirit. The new body will be indwelt and used by the Holy Spirit in a much more perfect and effective way than can be the case with our present "natural" body of flesh and blood. All efforts to explain away the resurrection body by reducing it to the category of spirit or mind are contrary to the clear teachings of the Word of God.

Scripture teaches that the new body will be in some sense identical with the present body. There is a mysterious but real bond of identity and continuity between the two. That which is "planted" is in some sense identical with that which is raised (1 Cor. 15:43). Just what this bond of identity is we do not know, therefore any attempt to define it can only be speculative.

Certainly this bond of identity cannot consist in the identical atoms of matter in our present body going to make up our eternal body, for with the decay of the earthly body its atoms may be dispersed and may later become parts of the bodies of other persons. The science of genetics may suggest an interesting possibility. Your body is exactly what it is, and different from all other human bodies, because of the precise assemblage of a multitude of genes on the chromosomes which are present in every cell of your body. With the decay of the present body following death, this genetic pattern perishes. But it still exists as a reality in the mind of God who created you — who created you to be exactly what you are, and different from every other human being that ever lived or ever will live. It may be that when the resurrection day comes, and God gives you a new, immortal "spiritual" body, every factor in your present genetic make-up will have its transformed counterpart in "the body that shall be." Thus the body with which you will arise will be truly your body, and no one else's, recognizably and demonstrably **your own**, even though not containing a single atom now existing in your "natural" body. This is suggested as a possibility. Where Scripture is silent, we dare not make dogmatic pronouncements. If God chooses to use whatever may remain of the present "natural" body, miraculously transforming it into the eternal "spiritual" body, this is certainly not beyond the power of God, though it raises some problems in our minds about bodies which have perished in the sea, in atomic blasts and other ways which apparently leave no definite remains.

Scripture always presents the resurrection of the body, not the mere immortality of the soul, as the object of Christian hope. Not the intermediate state which follows death, but the tremendous change which comes with the resurrection of the body. The "Apostles' Creed" was not written by the Apostles, but the men who did write it had a true grasp of Scripture when they affirmed, not mere immortality, but the resurrection of the body followed by the life everlasting.

---

Somebody did a golden deed;  
Somebody proved a friend in need;  
Somebody sang a beautiful song;  
Somebody smiled the whole day long;  
Somebody thought "'Tis sweet to live";  
Somebody said "I'm glad to give";  
Somebody fought a valiant fight;  
Somebody lived to shield the right;  
Was that "somebody" you?

(Author unknown)

Mock on, mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau;  
Mock on, mock on; 'tis all in vain!  
You throw the sand against the wind,  
And the wind blows it back again.  
And every sand becomes a gem  
Reflected in the beams divine;  
Blown back they blind the mocking eye,  
But still in Israel's paths they shine.  
The Atoms of Democritus  
And Newton's Particles of Light  
Are sands upon the Red Sea shore,  
Where Israel's tents do shine so bright.

— William Blake

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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NUMBER 3

## *The Singing of Psalms in Worship*

By the Rev. G. I. Williamson

The purpose of this article is to present the evidence in support of the following proposition; namely, that in the worship of God the inspired book of Psalms should be used to the exclusion of the uninspired compositions of men. It will be observed that the use of uninspired songs at other times and circumstances than that of divine worship is not under consideration. It is in no way suggested that the uninspired writings of men are without value or usefulness. In fact we believe that there is a proper place for uninspired songs in human affairs. But here we are considering a very special activity in which men engage (than which there can be no higher,) — the worship of God. It is our hope that frankly stating the purpose of this article at the beginning will not incline the reader to disregard the evidence before it has been examined.

### I. The Regulative Principle of Worship

What is the proper way to worship God? This is an age-old question, and historically there have been two divergent answers. (1) One of these is that of the Roman Catholic Church (followed in principle by Greek Orthodox, Lutheran and Anglican Churches) namely, that it is proper to worship God **as we will** so long as there is no direct statement in the Bible forbidding us. (2) The other is that of the Reformed Churches, which is, that it is proper to worship God **only as He wills**, and this means only in ways that he has commanded, instituted or prescribed in His word. The contrast is plain: the one says — what is not forbidden is permitted; the other says — what is not commanded is forbidden.

That the latter is the position maintained by our Reformed Confessions and Catechisms is undeniable, as the following quotations will show. Let us hear first the testimony of the Belgic Confession:

"We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God. . . the **whole manner of worship God requires of us is written in them**. . . Neither may we consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or sta-

tutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all." (Art. VII).

Again, in distinguishing the true Church from the false this Confession says that "all things are managed according to the pure Word of God" in a true Church, whereas the false Church "adds to and takes from" the things "appointed by Christ in His Word. . . as it thinks proper." (Art. XXIX). And in another article we read that "those who are rulers of the Church. . . ought studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, **has instituted**. And therefore we reject human inventions. . . which **man would introduce** into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever." (Art. XXXII).

To the same effect precisely the Westminster Confession of Faith says that,

"The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so **limited** by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and **devices of men**, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, **or any other way not prescribed** in the Holy Scripture." (Ch. XXI. 1). And again we read: "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His Word; **or beside it, if matters faith, or worship**." (XX. 2).

The Catechisms of the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches teach this same principle. The Heidelberg Catechism says, "That we (may) in no wise make any image of God, **nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word**." (Q. 96). The teaching of the Westminster Catechisms (Larger and Shorter) is the same. "The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any wise approving, any religious worship **not instituted** by God himself as also the "corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever." (L.C. 109). "The second commandment forbiddeth the

worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in His Word." (S.C. 51).

Zacharias Ursinus, one of the two authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, gives us a clear indication of what is meant by Question 96. "Those who worship God otherwise than He will be worshipped, imagine another God, one differently affected from what the true God is; and in this way they do not worship God, but a figment of their own brain, which they persuade themselves is affected in this manner." And again, "to imagine a different worship of God from that which He has prescribed, is to imagine another will of God." On the other hand when we do only what God has commanded, Ursinus says; "Obedience to these commandments is, and is called the worship of God, because they are not human, but divine precepts." As John Calvin, the great reformer said, "Persons who introduce newly invented methods of worshipping God, really worship and adore the creature of their distempered imaginations, for they would never have dared to trifle in such a manner with God, if they had not first feigned a god conformable to their own false and foolish notions." (Institutes, I, iv).

It is sometimes said that this is an 'extreme' position. Some are of the opinion that in taking this position our Reformed Fathers were over-reacting against the abuses of Roman Catholicism. It will be our concern to show that in taking this position our Reformed Fathers were not over-reacting to the errors of Rome, but only acting properly upon the clear teaching of Scripture. Let Scripture speak for itself!

In Deuteronomy 12:32 we read: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." The History of the Bible confirms the fact that — so far as God is concerned — this is the regulative principle of all true worship. When Cain brought an offering to the Lord other than "the firstling of the flock and of the fat thereof" God did not accept it. "Unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect." (Gen. 4:5). Cain decided to worship God according to his own will, rather than the will of God. But God would not be worshipped except as He commanded. Again, in Leviticus 10:1, 2, we read: "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." The words "which he commanded them not" mean that God had not commanded them to do what they did. They were supposed to worship God as He commanded, not as they wished. By this rule God rejected their worship.

When the Lord condemned the corrupt worship of erring Israel, He asked (by the prophet

Isaiah,) "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand?" (Isa. 1:12). They worshipped as they pleased, not as God required. How could God accept the worship given? "They did not listen, nor bow their ear, but walked in the plans and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward." (Jer. 7:24) Thus the Lord declared (by Jeremiah) "This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who walk in the imagination of their heart. . . shall even be like this girdle which is good for nothing." (13:10) And again, the reason given for this strong condemnation is that they offered worship "which I never commanded nor spoke," no, "neither did it come into my mind." (19:5). Israel's apostasy from true worship can be summed up in these words: "which I did not command them." Because they were not satisfied to do what God commanded, and only what God had commanded, they were condemned.

It is sometimes said that the New Testament Church is not bound by this same strict principle. It is admitted that God formerly required His Church to worship Him strictly as He commanded. But now, it is said, this is no longer the case. God is not as strict as He used to be say some. A brief survey of New Testament teaching will show that this is a very mistaken view.

Jesus said, "Go ye . . . and teach all nations, baptizing them. . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Mt. 28:19, 20). Is not this solemn requirement that the Church teach all things that Christ has commanded, at the same time a solemn prohibition against teaching anything that He has not commanded? If, in the worship of God, we observe all that Christ has commanded, ought we not also to scrupulously avoid anything and everything that He has not commanded? Jesus said that the Pharisees worshipped God "in vain." (Mk. 7:7). And why was their worship rejected of God? Because "laying aside the commandment of God" they preferred "their own traditions." (Mk. 7:7, 8). They worshipped God in vain because they worshipped God as they wished, rather than as He required. In the same way, the Apostle Paul warned the Colossians: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping. . ." (Col. 2:18). By voluntary. . . worshipping" the Apostle simply refers to worship offered voluntarily (that is, because men wished to offer it) rather than because God commanded it. (Col. 2:22, 23). These "things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility" He said, but "they are of no value." Will worship is worship offered because men will, rather than because God commands. But as far as God is concerned when men worship as they will, they do not worship Him, but rather worship their own will.

No doubt Jesus was rude — by modern stand-

ard — when He said to the woman at the well, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." (John 4:22). But Jesus was only being truthful. "For God is a Spirit," He said, "and they that worship Him **must** worship Him in spirit and in truth." (v. 22) True worship was impossible for the Samaritans as long as they worshipped God as they wished. They would have to worship God as He commanded, or they could not find acceptance with Him. "For the Father seeketh such to worship Him," said Jesus. (v. 23) "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." But when people persist in worshipping God as they will, rather than as God wills they are not "true worshippers."

In Romans 1:21-25 the Apostle Paul condemns every false kind of worship that has been invented by men. He also reveals the source of such false worship. Men become "vain in their imagination," He says. They invent what they vainly imagine to be 'good ways' to worship. They worship as they will, not as God commands. But when they do this, they really "worship and serve the creature more than the Creator," says Paul, and for this reason "they are without excuse." They are without excuse because there is no excuse for departing from the rule which says "we must not worship God in any other way than He has commanded in His Word."

In the Old Testament we have the matter stated in an unforgettable way. "If thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." (Ex. 20:25) If the ancient Israelite would think that He could improve upon the worship commanded of God by carving a more beautiful altar, He was to know that even one mark added by the hand of man to that which was commanded by God was a complete contamination as far as God was concerned. When men try to improve the worship of God **as commanded by Him** (even one little addition) they ruin that worship, rather than improve it. When our Reforming Fathers refused to "worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word" they were only doing that which Scripture so plainly taught them to do.

As has been truly stated, "God who is a most pure Spirit and absolute Sovereign is the sole object of worship. Nothing that has not come from Him as its source is fit to be returned to Him as its end. Autonomous human reason and will, sense, emotion and imagination are not competent to originate acts or methods of worship. God as the supreme Law-giver claims for Himself the prerogative of appointing the ordinances of His worship. How then can it be anything other than presumption in a subject of this absolute Sovereign to offer as worship anything which He has

not prescribed? That God allows worship that He has not prescribed is contrary to the Scripture." (O. P. Min. 13, p. 106).

Out of due regard for the principle that true worship is only that which God has commanded, Reformed and Presbyterian Churches originally used the psalms as the praise book for divine worship. The Westminster Assembly declared "the singing of psalms" one of the "parts of the ordinary worship of God," (West. Conf. XXI. 5), and supervised the preparation of a psalter version for this purpose. The Synod of Dordt had also virtually excluded uninspired compositions of men from divine worship. And this was not only the original practice of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches, but as Dr. George W. Robinson says, "the singing of Psalms continued to be the general practice of the Reformed Churches until well on into the eighteenth century, when the hymns began to be introduced, and, in time, practically superseded them in most of these Churches." (The Psalms in Worship, p. 511)

The question then is this: was the original position of the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches correct? Or is the present day practice better, that is, more scriptural, than that of former days? It has been recognized that "the (Westminster) Confession does not provide for the use of any materials of song other than 'psalms' in the worship of God." (O. P. Min. 13, p. 105) Does the scripture require revision of our historic Confession at this point?

## II. The Commandment of God

If true worship is worship commanded by God (as our Confessions and Catechisms maintain,) the crux of the matter becomes this; is there a command in the New Testament that, in addition to the inspired psalms, the Church should make and use uninspired psalms, or hymns, or songs, for the worship of God? Does the New Testament provide us with clear and certain **proof that God requires or commands the production and use of uninspired compositions**, as it certainly does provide us with proof that God requires the use of the inspired psalms?

We say that God 'certainly does provide us with proof for the use of inspired psalms in divine worship,' for so far as we know this is not denied by orthodox Reformed and Presbyterian Churches. Even such Churches as have introduced the use of uninspired hymns acknowledge this requirement. For example, the Christian Reformed Church, when introducing uninspired hymns for the first time, admitted that during the previous "77 years of its existence (it had) sung practically nothing but Psalms in public worship." (Psalter-Hymnal, 1934, p. iii.). And in revising Article 69 of the Church order to allow for this new introduction of uninspired hymns, it still acknowledged that

"the singing of the psalms in divine worship is a requirement." Similarly, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, in adopting the Committee recommendation to use uninspired hymns, yet admitted that "the psalms were divinely inspired for the very purpose of praise." (O. P. Min. 14, p. 58.). It would appear, therefore, that there is no dispute that when James the Apostle said, "sing psalms" (5:13), he meant the psalms of the Bible. By "psalms" James meant what the Bible itself denotes by that term. This much is clear. But when we consider texts in which "hymns" and "songs" are mentioned (i.e. Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:19) the difficulty begins. For there are those who argue that these texts not only **require** the use of inspired psalms, but also **allow** the production and use of uninspired songs and hymns in divine worship. To this matter we now give our attention.

When Paul the Apostle went forth to preach the gospel to the Gentiles he did not find the way unprepared. In the providence of God synagogues could be found everywhere. In them the scriptures were read and expounded each Sabbath. And it was Paul's custom to seek out these synagogues first, wherever he went. 'Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days, reasoned with them out of the scriptures.' (Acts 17:2, Cf. 13:14, etc.). The translation of the Old Testament which Paul found ready for his use in these synagogues was called the "Septuagint" (Abbreviated: LXX.) This Greek version had been in circulation for nearly three hundred years. (Almost as long as the King James version has been known in the English speaking world.) It was this Greek Bible which the Berean Jews searched daily with all readiness of mind as they tested the teaching of Paul. (Acts 17:11). And we may be sure that Paul's teaching was agreeable with this version of the Old Testament. Paul's enemies accused him of departing from the Old Testament, but He said, "This I confess. . . that after the Way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets." (Acts 24:14).

But this indicates something very important. As Dr. B. B. Warfield has said, "The writers of the New Testament. . . all had in their hand the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, and. . . derived their Greek religious terminology from it." (**The Person and Work of Christ**, p. 443). Paul used the words known to his listeners from the Greek version of the Bible. He used the language of familiar scripture with a meaning determined by that scripture. Therefore the precise point of our inquiry comes to this: what did the Apostle Paul mean when He instructed the Churches to sing "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" in the worship of God? What do these terms mean in the language of scripture itself?

The texts in question are as follows:

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Eph 5:18, 19).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Col. 3:16).

The proper interpretation of scripture terms requires that we discover, not **what we mean** by these terms when we use them today, but **what the inspired writer meant** when He used them. And it is one of the oddities of biblical interpretation that this rule is commonly observed with reference to the term "psalms," and commonly disregarded with respect to the terms "hymns" and "songs." For the fact is that **all three of these terms** are used in the Bible to designate various selections contained in the Old Testament psalter. In the Greek version of the Old Testament familiar to the Ephesians and Colossians the entire psalter is entitled "Psalms." In sixty-seven of the titles within the book the word "psalm" is used. However, in six titles the word "hymn" is used, rather than "psalm," and in thirty-five the word "song" appears. Even more important, twelve titles use both "psalm" and "song," and two have "psalm" and "hymn." Psalm seventy-six is designated "psalm, hymn and songs." And at the end of the first seventy two psalms we read that "the hymns of David the son of Jesse are ended." (Ps. 72:20). In other words, there is no more reason to think that the Apostle referred to psalms when he said "psalms," than when he said psalms in the book of psalms itself. He was in the habit of using the terms "hymns" and "songs," for the simple reason that all three were biblical terms for psalms in the book of psalms itself. We are in the habit of using the terms "hymns" and "songs" for those compositions that are not psalms. But Paul and the Christians at Ephesus and Colossae used these terms as the Bible itself uses them, namely, as titles for the various psalms in the Old Testament Psalter. To us it may seem strange, or even unnecessary, that the Holy Spirit would use a variety of titles to describe His inspired compositions. But the fact is that He did so. Just as the Holy Spirit speaks of His "commandments and his statutes and his judgments" (Deut. 30:16, etc.), and of "miracles and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22), so He speaks of His "psalms, hymns and songs." As commandments, statutes and judgments are all divine laws in the language of scripture; as miracles and wonders and signs are all supernatural works of God in the language of scripture; so psalms, hymns and songs are the

inspired compositions of the Psalter, in the language of scripture itself.

The New Testament evidence sustains this conclusion. On the night of the Last Supper Jesus and His disciples sang "an hymn" (Mt. 26:30). Bible expositors admit that this was "the second part of the Hallel (Psalm 115-118)" which was always sung at the Passover. (New Bible Commentary, p. 835). Matthew called this psalm a "hymn" because a psalm is a hymn in the terminology of the Bible. To the same effect is the Old Testament quotation in Hebrews 2:12, in which the Greek word "hymn" is quoted from Psalm 22:23. In this quotation from an Old Testament psalm, the word "hymn" is used to denote the singing of psalms because the Old Testament makes no distinction between the two. But if Scripture itself says that psalms are hymns, and that hymns are psalms, why should we make any distinction between them? If we grant that the Apostle used biblical language in a biblical sense there is no more reason to think that he spoke of uninspired hymns in these texts (Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:19) than to think that he spoke of uninspired psalms, because hymns are inspired psalms in the holy scriptures.

But let us also consider the context in which these words appear. 1) We are commanded to be "filled with the Spirit," or to "let the Word of Christ dwell" in us "richly in all wisdom." The one statement evidently interprets the other. To be filled with the Spirit requires the indwelling of the Word of Christ. One cannot be filled with the one unless he is filled with the other. If the words with which we are filled are not those of the Holy Spirit, how can they be the means by which we are filled with the Holy Spirit? And how can the Spirit fill us with other than His own words? 2) Note that we are told **how** we must effect this filling with the Spirit and Word of Christ. We are to effect this by "speaking to" ourselves, or by "teaching and admonishing one another." It will be observed that this is something very different from self-expression. When we make compositions we express our own sentiments and convictions. But here we are told to teach and admonish one another by speaking to ourselves the Word of Christ. Self-instruction is very different from self-expression. To express what is in us is the very opposite of being instructed and admonished. And 3) observe, finally, the instrumentality by which we are to effect this, namely, "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." We are to teach and admonish one another with "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" in order that we might be filled with Christ's Spirit and Word. It certainly follows that these must be the psalms and songs of the Bible, for only these can properly be called the spiritual or inspired word of Christ. Only inspired words are appropriate for teaching and admonishing the Church of

God. To receive instruction or admonition from uninspired words is wrong. "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 4:19). It is sometimes said that we do not sing in order to be taught and admonished, but rather to express our own feelings in response to God's Word. But God does not command us to express our own feelings in response to His Word, rather He commands us to instruct and admonish ourselves by means of His words. Thus the context, as well as the precise terms themselves (i.e. psalms, hymns and songs) leads to the conclusion that only the inspired words of the biblical psalms are qualified and authorized for the singing of God's praise in divine worship.

Let it not be thought that we have overstated the case. Even those who advocate the use of uninspired songs in worship admit our basic argument. For example, The Orthodox Presbyterian Church — even though it decided to use uninspired hymns — acknowledged the fact that in the scriptures "psalms" "hymns" and "songs" are synonymous terms. "It is possible that each of these terms may refer to such psalms, since each is used in the LXX (Septuagint) in the titles of the psalms." (O. P. Min. 1947, p. 54.). Or again, "in the language of Scripture the word 'psalm' and 'hymn' may be used synonymously." (Ibid.). In other words, even those who have advocated the use of uninspired hymns have been quite unable to prove that God has commanded such anywhere in His Word. They have been unable to prove that Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 sanction anything more than the "psalms, hymns and songs" inspired by the Holy Ghost and contained in the book of Psalms.

Even if we follow the usual careless interpretation of these scripture titles for psalms, however, the conclusion is virtually the same. Even if we were arbitrarily to say that the "psalms" refer to the selections of the psalter, but the other terms refer to something else, we would still be commanded to use only the inspired songs of scripture. The Apostle carefully states that we are to sing only "spiritual songs." And there is no doubt that the term "spiritual" means "inspired." As Dr. B. B. Warfield of Princeton said (The Presbyterian Review, July 1880): "Of the twenty-five instances in which the word ('spiritual') occurs in the New Testament, in no single case does it sink even as low in its reference as the human spirit; and in twenty-four of them it is derived from 'spirit' (pneuma), the Holy Ghost. In this sense of belonging to, or determined by, the Holy Spirit, the New Testament usage is uniform." "The appropriate translation for it in each case is 'Spirit-given,' or 'Spirit-led,' or 'Spirit-determined.'" No doubt this term, appearing as it does with the three-fold designation for compositions of the psalter, qualifies all three, thus: spiritual psalms, hymns and

songs. But even if we overlook this, we still must recognize that the songs sung in Christian worship are to be only such as are divinely inspired. And if the psalms are to be inspired (as this view admits,) and the songs must also be inspired (as this qualifying term demands,) it would be necessary to assume that the hymns also are to be inspired. It would make sense if the Apostle were to distinguish between inspired psalms and uninspired hymns and songs. But it would be absurd to think that Paul would insist that psalms and songs be inspired and the hymns not. We can conceive of a distinction between psalms and other compositions whereby the one would be inspired and the other not. But we cannot conceive of a principle of discrimination which would require psalms and songs to be inspired but hymns not. To Paul and the Colossian and Ephesian Christians, then, the word "hymns" must have had a meaning qualitatively the same as the psalms and inspired songs with which it is classed. The word "hymn" like the word "psalm" must have been recognized without qualification as designating the same kind of inspired compositions as the others with which it is mentioned.

Let us summarize the assured teaching of these verses:

- 1) We are commanded to fill ourselves with Christ's Spirit and Word.
- 2) We are to effect this by mutual instruction and admonition in song.
- 3) The rule for this instruction and admonition is the psalter, because it contains inspired psalms, hymns and songs.

Or to put the matter in the negative:

- 1) We are not commanded to compose our own songs, nor to fill ourselves with the words or spirit of men.
- 2) We are not commanded to express our own thoughts or feelings, nor to be instructed or admonished by the thoughts or feelings originating from others.
- 3) We are not commanded to receive teaching and instruction by any other rule or instrumentality than that provided by the Holy Spirit in the book of inspired psalms, hymns and songs called the psalter.

### III. The Testimony of History

Scripture is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. As the Westminster Confession says:

"The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either

expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men." (I. 6).

The testimony of ancient history and tradition cannot be the source of doctrine or practice in a true Church, for doctrine and practice must be determined by scripture alone. However, the testimony of history is not without value. And this is especially true with respect to early Church history. For the fact is that the testimony of history confirms the view that God commanded only the psalms to be sung in divine worship. The evidence is as follows:

1) First, it is a noteworthy fact that there are no psalms, hymns or songs (other than those of the Bible) preserved from the Apostolic and Post-Apostolic period of Church history. Nor is there any evidence whatever that such were at that time in use. As Professor Schaff says, "We have no religious songs remaining from the period of persecution (i.e. the first three centuries) except the song of Clement of Alexandria to the divine Logos, which, however, cannot be called a hymn, and probably never was intended for public use." (*The Psalms in Worship*, p. 111). More recently, Professor K. S. Latourette admits, that "from a very early date, perhaps from the beginning, Christians employed in their services the psalms found in the Jewish Scriptures, the Christian Old Testament. Since the first Christians were predominately Greek-speaking, these psalms were in a Greek translation." (*A History of Christianity*, p. 206). And "until near the end of the fourth century," he continues, "only the Old Testament Psalms and the hymns or canticles" were sung, "the other hymns were for personal, family, or private use." (*Ibid.* p. 207). If Paul had commanded, or authorized the use of uninspired hymns or songs, it would certainly seem strange that none were known in the ancient Church. But if the Apostle had commanded that inspired psalms, hymns and songs be sung in the worship of God, there is nothing strange in the fact that uninspired songs were not used until the fourth century. It was not for some time that the Church began to worship God as it pleased rather than as God had commanded.

2) The second noteworthy fact is that when uninspired hymns first made their appearance, it was not among the orthodox Churches but rather the heretical groups. Professor Latourette says that "Bardaisan (Bardesanes,) suspected of heresy late in (the second) century, had a collection of one hundred and fifty hymns" of his own. (*Ibid.* p. 207). It was Arius, the greatest heretic of ancient times, who said, "Let me make a people's songs and I care not who makes their laws." Arius spread his evil doctrine by writing

hymns which appealed to the people of his day. And this seems to have been standard practice among the heretical movements. Augustine, as late as 430 A.D. testifies, "The Donatists make it a matter of reproach against us, that, in the Church, we sing with sobriety the divine songs. . . whereas they inflame the intoxication of their minds by singing psalms of human composition." (Confessions, ix. 4.). If the Church from the beginning had received authority from the Apostles to make and use uninspired hymns, it would be expected that it would have done so. But it did not. Rather, it was among those who departed from the faith that they first appeared. The Church which held steadfast to the faith also held steadfast to the singing of the psalms of the Bible. Surely we cannot believe that this was accidental.

3) In the third place, it is a fact that even when the uninspired hymns of men did at last begin to find acceptance among orthodox Christians, there was strong and persistent opposition to their introduction into divine worship. The Synod of Laodicea (A.D. 343) forbade "the singing of uninspired hymns in Church" as it also forbade "the reading of the uncanonical books of Scripture." (Canon 59). And as late as the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) this opposition to the introduction of uninspired hymns was reaffirmed. If the Apostle had encouraged the composition and use of uninspired hymns from the beginning, it would be difficult to explain how these early Synods could have opposed such a new and dangerous innovation. But if the Apostle had authorized and commanded only the singing of the inspired psalms, there is no mystery at all in this event.

To summarize: 1) there is not evidence that uninspired songs, hymns or psalms were ever used in the worship of the Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Church. Even historians unsympathetic to the singing of psalms admit that this is true. 2) They also admit that the first uninspired hymns were introduced by errorists, and for the purpose of leading God's people astray. (Because of the popular appeal of their compositions, they were often very successful.) 3) In spite of gradual weakening, there was persistent opposition in the orthodox Church to the introduction of uninspired psalms, hymns and songs in divine worship.

How we ask: how can these facts be explained, unless the Apostolic Church originally used only the psalms in divine worship? Why did the Apostolic Church produce no uninspired hymns preserved to us? (Indeed, why did they not produce inspired ones, if the Old Testament psalms were not sufficient?) Why did heretics lead the way in the composition and use of uninspired songs? And why did the Church so long resist the temptation to imitate the heretics by producing uninspired songs of its own? Why,

except that "from the beginning it was not so?" The one reasonable explanation is that Paul had commanded only the singing of inspired psalms, hymns and songs, and that God for a long time granted His Church strength to resist the temptation to worship Him "in any other way not commanded in His word."

#### IV. Objections to the Psalms

It is of no small importance that **textual proof** has never been demonstrated for the use of uninspired songs in worship. No one has yet found even a single scripture text to prove that God commands His Church to sing other than the psalms of the Bible in worship. And it is not because men have not searched diligently! A few years ago a Committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church made such a search. This Committee had a majority in favor of the use of uninspired hymns in worship. And yet, after an exhaustive search through scripture requiring a number of years to complete, such proof could not be found. The Committee Chairman admitted that it is "impossible to prove that uninspired songs are authorized in scripture." He even said that "to demand such proof before one can in good conscience sing uninspired songs is to demand the impossible!" (*The Presbyterian Guardian*, Vol. 17, p. 73.). This is a grave admission. But it is no more than the facts require. For the bare truth is that no one has found so much as a single text of scripture commanding the use of uninspired songs in divine worship. And remember, we are not to worship God "in any other way not commanded in His Word."

This is the reason that arguments for the singing of uninspired hymns in worship have really been only arguments against the singing of the psalms. This important fact is constantly overlooked. It is well to be aware of this as we proceed to examine some of the arguments advanced by those who advocate the use of uninspired songs in divine worship.

1) One of the most common arguments advanced by those who favor the use of uninspired songs in divine worship, is that "under the New Testament we have a greater measure of liberty as regards the content of worship than was true under the Old Testament." Such a statement sounds innocent enough. But is such a statement true? Is it not rather that under the New Testament, as under the Old, God may not be worshipped in any other way than He has commanded in His Word?" The Confession of Faith indeed says that "the liberty of Christians is. . . enlarged" over that of the Old Testament believers "in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish Church was subjected, and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the

law did ordinarily partake of." (XX, 1). But it is not a part of this greater liberty that New Testament believers may worship God as they please. Yet this is the real intent of this argument. The Church may now decide for itself what it will sing in the worship of God!

It may seem strange to say it, but far from being liberty, this is really tyranny. And it is tyranny of the worst sort. True liberty, as the Confession says, is to confess that "God alone is Lord of the conscience," and that He has left it "free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to His word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship." (XX, 2). Who decides which uninspired hymns shall be sung in the Church? Men decide: usually a small committee of men, on behalf of a Synod or Assembly. When these men have made their choice the Synod or Assembly imposes this choice upon the Church. The members of the Church are thus subject to the authority of a purely human decision as to what shall be sung in the worship of God. Yet even so, there is no unanimity. The uninspired hymns imposed upon the people of God by one Synod are unacceptable to another Synod. The song book of one Reformed Church differs from that of another. That which is approved at one time, and in one place, is rejected or even condemned at another time and in another place. The ever-changing content of the hymn-books proves only too clearly that Synods can, and often do, err! And all this is supposed to be 'liberty granted by God!' As if God would grant His Church liberty to proceed by 'trial and error' from one hymn-book to another, in an endless succession.

This is not liberty. It is tyranny. There is liberty only when the Church does what God has commanded. When the Church imposes upon its members that which God has not commanded, but only what men have decided, it is guilty of tyranny. Let us illustrate. When the Church sings only the psalms, hymns and songs of the Bible, commanded by God, no member of the Church can say that his conscience has been offended. But when the congregations are told to sing uninspired songs against which even a few object, there is a violation of conscience. No man should be directed to worship God in a way that violates his conscience unless it can be proved that God commands it. When God commands the conscience we have liberty. When men impose what God has not commanded we have tyranny.

2) Another argument for the singing of uninspired songs in worship, is that which is called "the analogy of prayer." This argument too, be it observed, is negative. It does not offer proof that God has commanded the singing of uninspired hymns, but merely seeks to prove that God does not command us to sing just the psalms. The argument, briefly, is that since God has not com-

manded us to use the prayers of the Bible as our prayers, neither should we feel bound to use the songs of the Bible as our songs.

This argument has the appearance of weight, without the reality thereof. For the truth is not "that God has not commanded" how we are to pray, but rather "that God has commanded us to pray prayers composed with the immediate help of the Holy Spirit." It is not true that God has not commanded us to pray in a particular way and so argue that we need not sing in a particular way either. For God has commanded us to pray in a particular way. "For we know what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Ro. 8:26, 27). God has provided us with a book of psalms so that we can sing according to His will. He has not provided us with a specific promise of the direct assistance of the Holy Spirit in order that we may pray according to His will. God's provision for prayer is different from His provision for song. But He has provided that which will enable both to be done according to His will. There is thus as much law, and as much liberty, in the one element of worship as in the other. In both, God provides that which will enable us to do His will and not our own.

The so-called "analogy of prayer" is a false principle, because prayer and the singing of praise are not really analogues. (a) In public prayer one speaks for all and so no prayer-book is needed, since the Holy Spirit is promised to enable prayer to be made according to God's will. But in public praise all must sing together, and an inspired book of praise has been given so that we may all sing those words of God which are according to His will. (b) In prayer we speak of our varying needs. But in praise we exalt the unchanging God. Each prayer must be different, but the appropriate songs of praise are the same from age to age. Our needs change, but God who is to be praised changes not. (c) If prayer and praise were really analogous, it would be as reasonable to argue that only the prayers of the Bible should be used (because only the psalms of the Bible are commanded to be sung,) as to argue from the reverse side of the matter. But the argument from analogy is not justified. And to avoid such confusion God has plainly commanded that which is proper for each element of worship. And for each element of worship the same principle applies: what God has not commanded is therefore forbidden.

3) A third argument for the singing of uninspired hymns is that "there is really no difference between uninspired hymns and the psalm versions that are generally in use." Again, be it

observed, the argument is negative. It is not said that God has not commanded us to the psalms. And no proof is given to show that God has commanded us to sing uninspired songs. It is only argued that there really are no inspired songs even if God has commanded that such be sung. The psalm versions, it is said, are not really inspired.

It is of course true that nothing is inspired by God except the original text of the Hebrew and Greek scriptures. As the Westminster Confession states, "the Old Testament in Hebrew. . . and the New Testament in Greek" are "immediately inspired of God" and "in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal to them." (I, 7). But the Confession also says that since "these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto and interest in the scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar (i.e. common) language of every nation unto which they come, that the word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner." (I, 8). In other words, while the original Hebrew and Greek text alone inspired and infallible, yet since God Himself commands that all men everywhere read and obey them, it is necessary that they be translated. This is true even though the translations are not immediately inspired by God, nor absolutely infallible by comparison with the Hebrew and Greek. Versions which are not absolutely infallible are absolutely necessary because of commandments expressed in the Hebrew and Greek text which is absolutely infallible.

It could be argued that since no version of the Bible is perfect, neither is any version of the Bible necessary. It could also be argued that since no version of the Bible is perfect, neither is there any difference between a translation of the Bible and the uninspired writings of men. But the argument would be false for this reason: a translation of the Word of God is in a real sense the Word of God. It is the Word of God in translation. Even in translation it does not cease to be the Word of God. And the same may be said of the psalms. When the psalms are translated from Hebrew poetry into English poetry, they do not cease to be the inspired songs of God. They do not become the uninspired songs of men merely because they are translated into English versions. There is such a thing as a faithful translation of the psalms.

Those who object to the singing of psalms argue that it is not necessary to sing only the inspired psalms commanded by God because no version of the psalms is perfect. But this is the same as saying that we do not need to do what God has commanded because we cannot do it perfectly. This argument is false. Duty is not

determined by ability. God commands us to be perfect. (Mt. 5:48). We know that we cannot be perfect in this life. (I John 1:8, 10). But this does not in any way cancel our duty to be perfect. Indeed, the mark of true discipleship is to strive to be perfect, or, in other words, to try earnestly to do what God requires. Similarly, God has commanded us to sing uninspired songs. We cannot do this perfectly. But this is no excuse for not trying. If anyone should argue that we need better versions of the psalms, we would agree. But if anyone should argue that since our psalm versions are imperfect we are therefore justified in using that which is uninspired, we cannot agree. Our psalm versions are far from perfect. But the remedy is not to add to the sin of doing what God commands in a slovenly manner, also the doing of that which God has not commanded at all. It is, rather, to seek afresh to do what God has commanded in a more perfect way. And it is to be remembered that those who still sing only the psalms, hymns and songs of an imperfect psalter version, can at least say that they are trying to do what God has commanded. Others can only say that they have decided that something else is better than that which God commands.

4) A fourth argument for the use of uninspired songs in divine worship may be called "the dispensational argument." Be it observed again: this is a negative argument. It insists that the Old Testament psalms are unsuited to the worship of the New Testament Church. It is argued that these psalms belong to an imperfect dispensation, and that they do not reflect the light of God's complete revelation. It is said that the New Testament revelation provides new truth which should be expressed in praise, and so new (albeit uninspired) songs are needed. But there is no proof offered to show that God commands us to make and use uninspired hymns. This argument merely seeks to condemn the inspired psalms which God has commanded us to sing. And the ground of this condemnation is that the psalms were written before Christ came to the world.

This argument contains one very dangerous assumption. It is the assumption that the Old Testament is inferior to the New Testament. It assumes that what was earlier was lower and what was later was higher. But the Bible teaches no such doctrine. It teaches, rather, that the whole scripture is equally high. The revelation of God is progressive. But it is progress from partial to complete, rather than from lower to higher. As Augustine said, "The New is in the Old concealed, and the Old is in the New revealed." The Modernist notion that the religion of the New Testament is an evolution from a more primitive religion in the Old Testament is in error. The religion that God began to reveal in Genesis, is the

same as that which He finished revealing in Revelation. Moreover, it is a part of this false assumption to imagine that what was written in the Old Testament, was written primarily for Old Testament times. This is categorically denied by Peter, who, speaking of the Old Testament prophets declares that "the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel" (I Peter 1:11-12). The Spirit who inspired Old Testament scripture was the spirit of Christ. And He testified, not some lower truths, but just the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow. Those who argue against the psalms insist that the Old Testament does not fully reveal the sufferings of Christ. But Peter says that they testify of this very thing, and that they wrote these things — not for themselves — nor for those who were living in their day — but for us. If the Old Testament writers wrote of His sufferings and the glory to follow, and if they wrote these things expressly for us, then it is evident that we do not need uninspired hymn writers to do this work over.

It is sometimes said that in the singing of the psalms one is denied the privilege of singing of the Savior who has now come. In other words, it is commonly alleged that there is not enough of Christ in the book of psalms. This is a really astonishing thing. For Christ Himself said that the book of psalms was written about Him. (Lk. 24:44). His own dying words were quoted from Psalm 22. The last fellowship with His disciples was in singing the great Hallel (Psalms 115-118) at the Last Supper. And then, by the mouth of His servant Paul, He commanded the Churches to keep on singing the psalms. And why not? He Himself, by the Holy Spirit, was the author of them. And the truth is that there is more of Christ in every psalm written by Him before He came to the world, than in any hymn written by mere men after He came.

Along the lines of this argument, it is said that there is, in the experience of the Christian believer, a response to New Testament revelation which brings forth thoughts and meditations inadequately expressed in the psalms. But it is interesting to note that mighty men of God have testified to exactly the opposite opinion. Athanasius, the champion of Christ's deity in the fourth century, said, "I believe that a man can find nothing more glorious than these Psalms; for they embrace the whole life of man, the affections of his mind, and the emotions of his soul. To praise and glorify God, he can select a Psalm suited to every occasion, and thus will find that they were written for him." (Treatise on the Psalms.) Basil of Caesarea said, "The book of

Psalms is a compendium of all divinity; a common store of medicine for the soul, a universal magazine of good doctrines, profitable to everyone in all conditions." Augustine asked, "What is there that may not be learned in the Psalter?" He called it "an epitome of the whole Scriptures." Luther called the Psalms "my little Bible." While John Calvin said, "not without good grounds am I wont to call this book an anatomy of all parts of the soul, since no one can experience emotions whose portrait he could not behold reflected in its mirror." Are these men mistaken? Is there something lacking in the psalms? Or is it perhaps something lacking in us, rather than in the inspired psalms, that makes us prefer the uninspired songs of men?

5) A fifth argument advanced for the singing of uninspired hymns is "that God 'inspires' men today to write compositions suitable for use in divine worship." Let it be once more observed: this is a negative argument. It does not offer proof that God has commanded us to sing uninspired songs. It merely alleges that the psalms of the Bible are not the only songs inspired by the Holy Spirit.

It is often said that Shakespeare was 'inspired', in much the same sense. But if we are to use the word 'inspired' to describe the natural poetic-flight of the spirit of man, we must then find another word to describe the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which He enabled certain men to write the Scriptures. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (II Pet. 1:21.) The inspiration by which David wrote the psalms was a miracle. Like the term 'miracle', the term 'inspiration' means something supernatural when considered in the biblical sense. Dead people are no longer raised from the grave (and will not again be, till the last day,) nor is water any longer changed to wine, nor water walked on by foot of man. Miracles in this sense have ceased. And so it is with inspiration, which is a miracle in the biblical sense. God's revelation is now complete. God does not inspire men today to write infallible words. God has promised His curse to anyone who attempts it. (Rev. 22:18). But, if anyone really were 'inspired' in the original biblical sense, he could add to the Bible. This is exactly what the inspired Apostles actually did. And we may be sure that if there were any psalms, hymns, or songs needed besides those that are given, God would have inspired His Apostles to write them, and would have placed them in the Bible. We cannot state the matter better than in the words of the Westminster confession: "all things necessary for. . . man's salvation, faith and life, . . . (are) set down in Scripture. . . unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men" (I. 6).

6) A sixth argument for the use of uninspired songs in divine worship is the argument from inference. This argument is to the effect that "there are some things proper in the worship of God which cannot be proved from direct and explicit statements of Scripture, but which can reasonably be deduced from Scripture." Examples which are often cited, are, the baptism of infants, and the admission of women to the Lord's Supper. It is argued that neither of these is commanded in the New Testament, but that they can be justified from good and necessary inferences. If these are proper in divine worship, it is argued, then so is the singing of uninspired hymns and songs.

This argument also is negative. What it really says is, that we cannot prove by infallible statements of Scripture that children should be baptized, or that women should receive the Lord's Supper, and that we therefore need not prove by infallible statements of Scripture that uninspired compositions may be sung in divine worship. If worship without explicit proof is acceptable in the one instance, it is not to be condemned in the other. So the argument goes.

But the truth is that we can prove by infallible and explicit testimony of Scripture that children are to be baptized, and that women are to receive the Lord's Supper. And the proof is no less compelling because it is Old Testament teaching. In Genesis 17:10 God expressly commanded that children receive the sacrament of circumcision. This commandment has never been revoked. When Paul says that we are circumcised by being baptized (Col. 2:11), he simply extends the Old Testament ordinance. But there is no need for a new commandment that children receive this, because there is already a clear commandment of God in effect. Because there is need to broaden the Old Testament ordinance (i.e. in applying this sacrament to females,) the Lord does not leave us to change it, but gives us His own command. Thus we are told (in Acts 16:15) that Lydia was baptized. Where an express commandment already exists, the Apostles give none because none is needed. Where an express commandment is needed, and does not exist, it is given. It is given because we may not worship God except as He has commanded. Similarly, it is unnecessary to seek a New Testament commandment admitting women to the Lord's Supper. The reason is that the Old Testament already says, "All the congregation of Israel shall keep it." (Ex. 12:47). The Apostles do not command women to partake of "Christ our passover" (I Cor. 5:7) because the Old Testament already contains the needed commandment.

This argument, so appealing at first sight, upon closer examination actually proves the very opposite of what is sought by those who advance it. For it is one thing to say that certain things

are not expressly commanded in the New Testament, but are proper to divine worship because they are already expressly in the Old Testament. It is quite another thing to say, that certain things are not expressly commanded in either the Old or New Testaments, and yet are proper to the worship of God. The baptism of infants and the admission of women to the Lord's Supper do not prove that uninspired hymns may be sung in divine worship without express commandment, but rather, that the express commandments of the Old Testament are sufficient without repetition in the New Testament. But this is precisely what we do not have. We do not have, in this matter, an Old Testament command that is lacking in the New Testament. The one thing that is proved by infant baptism and admission of women to the Lord's Table, is that nothing is proper in the worship of God without express command of God. Infants are baptized and women admitted to the Lord's Supper precisely and only because this is what God commands. This very fact requires that psalms alone be sung in divine worship, because this alone is what God has commanded.

7) A seventh argument for the singing of uninspired songs in divine worship is what might be called the argument of "progress". Thus it is said that throughout the history of redemption new situations, new developments, and new revelation brought forth new materials for worship. And this is true enough. The elaborate worship of the Tabernacle included many things unknown to Abraham. The yet more elaborate Temple of Solomon included many things not found in the Tabernacle. And certainly the worship of the New Testament Church marks an advance over that of the Temple of Solomon.

But there is one thing that this type of argument completely ignores. It ignores the clear teaching of scripture to the effect that in each of these 'advances' in the complexity and form of divine worship every last detail was instituted by the express command of God. Thus when the Tabernacle worship was instituted, God said to Moses, "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount." (Ex. 25:40). "According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." (Ex. 25:9). Even the men employed by God in the making of the instruments and decorations were inspired by the Holy Spirit, in order that they might do this work. (Ex. 28:3, 31:6, etc.). Nothing was devised by the men themselves, but only by the Holy Spirit. (Ex. 35:30-35). And contrary to common opinion, the same thing is true of the Temple of Solomon. "Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy

seat. And the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit. . . all this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern." (I Chr. 28:11, 12, 19). Not one single thing was originated by David. Absolutely all was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. Every new thing was introduced by God's express command.

In the same way, the worship of the New Testament Church was commanded by God. As Paul said, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (I Cor. 14:37). Nothing is to be done in the New Testament Church without the commandment of Christ. The new revelation which came through the incarnation of Christ did bring many changes. The ceremonial law was abolished, by divine command. (Acts 10:9-18). True worship was no longer confined to the Temple in Jerusalem. (John 4:21). Circumcision and the Passover were transformed into Baptism and the Lord's Supper. But nowhere did Christ furnish new inspired songs, nor did He give any command that men make and use uninspired songs in worship, Rather He did command, by the Apostle Paul, that we use the inspired psalms, hymns and songs that were already provided.

It is often said that **new** songs are mentioned in the Book of Revelation. And so they are. (Rev. 5:9, 14:3). But this is to be expected. When we get to heaven we will need new songs. For then we shall indeed have new revelation. But

let us not forget that these new songs will not be the uninspired compositions of men. They will be new songs written by the Holy Spirit. For we read that "no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth." (Rev. 14:3). To learn a new song taught by the Lord, is very different from writing a new song of our own. Certainly we ought to long for the day in which we will learn such new songs. But in the meantime we should be content to sing the songs that the same Holy Spirit has written for us to learn on earth. And whatever may be the wonder of those new songs that we will learn in heaven, they will not be more perfect than those that are already contained in the book of psalms. As the Psalmist himself truly said: "O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep." (Ps. 92:5). "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." "Thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." (Ps. 119:103, 130, 160).

"How shall the young direct their way?  
What light shall be their perfect guide?  
Thy Word, O Lord, will safely lead,  
If in its wisdom they confide.

Sincerely I have sought Thee, Lord,  
O let me not from thee depart;  
To know thy will and keep from sin  
Thy Word I cherish in my heart."

(Psalter, No. 237)

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## *Studies in the Book of Genesis*

### LESSON 27

#### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, continued

##### 10. Arrogant humanism frustrated by divine judgment at Babel. 11:1-9

We now come to the incident of the Tower of Babel. "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech" (11:1). What this original language of the human race was, is of course unknown. The suggestion that it was Hebrew is of course without foundation. The fact that the first book of the Bible is written in Hebrew does not prove that the first people of the world spoke Hebrew.

"And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there" (11:2). The center from which the human race began to spread over

the world after the flood was the region of Ararat, that is probably, the mountains of Armenia. There is some question as to whether the Hebrew word used in 11:2 should be translated "from the east" or "eastward." The identical Hebrew word is translated "eastward" in Gen. 2:8; cf. also 3:24; 12:8 and 13:11, in all of which the same Hebrew term is used. It seems evident, therefore, that it should be translated "eastward" in 11:2. The Babylonian plain (Shinar) is located southeast of the Ararat range, so it could properly be reached by journeying eastward. In those ancient days the Babylonian plain was extremely fertile and it is not surprising that the people who first reached it decided to settle there permanently.

"And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar" (11:3). In ancient Babylonia and Assyria,

there were two kinds of bricks, both of which have been uncovered in tremendous quantities by modern excavation. One kind of brick was dried in the hot sun. The other kind was fired in a kiln or furnace, producing a much more durable and permanent type of brick. It was this permanent type of brick that is mentioned in verse 3. Evidently the structure being built was to endure permanently. The "slime" mentioned was bitumen, which was to be used for mortar. The second sentence of verse 3 is obviously something inserted by Moses in order to make the meaning clear to people of his own day and afterwards. In Palestine, as well as in Egypt, large structures would be made of stone, which occurs abundantly in those lands. But in the Babylonian plain stone is scarce and hard to get. This note in verse 3 explaining about the unusual building materials used at Babel is perfectly in harmony with the idea that Moses wrote Genesis while living among a people who had only recently come out of Egypt.

"And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (11:4). The purpose of this tower and city was to form a center of unity for the human race, that would serve to keep the race together. This in itself was in defiance of the command of God to mankind to fill the world with people (9:1). It was God's will that the human race be spread abroad over the face of the earth, not that people remain concentrated and huddled together in one locality.

But behind the purpose of maintaining a center of unity, there was an even more sinister purpose. "Unity was to afford the possibility for founding a gigantic empire, glorifying man in his independence of God" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 71). They wanted to make themselves a name, that is, a reputation for fame and greatness. "God interferes with the execution of this plan, not so much, or at least not only, from opposition to its impious spirit, but chiefly from fidelity to His promise, that the sinful development of humanity will not again issue into a repeated catastrophe on the scale of the deluge. If this were not to happen, the progress of sin had to be checked. If the whole of humanity had remained concentrated, the power of sin would likewise have remained united, and doubtless soon again have reached stupendous proportions. Hence is was necessary to break up the unity of the race" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, pp. 71, 72). The power of sin is greatly increased when it is unified and concentrated; it is greatly diluted and weakened when it is divided up between many rival kingdoms and rival religions.

The unity of the human race, is of course the true ideal. If it had not been on account of sin, the original unit of the race would have never been broken. When sin shall have finally been

abolished, in the absolute and perfect kingdom of God, the redeemed humanity will again be a unity, without divisions, for the divisions will no longer be needed to checkmate and frustrate the power of sin.

But during the continuance of human sinfulness, it is absolutely necessary that sin be checked and limited by being divided up into many political units and many false religions. It is contrary to the will of God that the human race, while still sinful, be united in one single political sovereignty. The Old Testament prophets condemn all attempts at world-empire as contrary to the will of God; the very idea is pagan and immoral. God therefore maintains the divided condition of humanity, of which the division of human language is an important factor, as a way of preventing the concentrated development of sin under a single power.

Those who think that world government is the answer to the present day's pressing problems of war and peace, should stop and ponder seriously the lesson of the Tower of Babel. We can think of no more terrible opening for tyranny and oppression than a world-government set up on a secular or non-Christian basis. Those who seriously suppose that a single world government would be a blessing are far too optimistic about the moral condition of human nature; they fail to realize the deep sinfulness of the human heart. A secular or non-Christian world government might indeed bring world-wide peace, but it would be the peace of a world-wide prison or a world-wide cemetery. We have a prophetic picture of something of the kind in Revelation 13. Note that the blasphemous power there described is bitterly opposed to the Kingdom of God (verses 5-7), that it holds absolutely world-wide dominion over the human race (verse 7), that it maintains universal, world-wide, absolute peace (verse 4), and that it persecutes true Christians unto the death (verse 10). May God grant that we may never in our time have to face such a humanistic tyranny! Terrible as it indeed is, the threat of atomic warfare is not the worst threat that hangs over the human race. There is one thing even worse. May God grant that the free nations may not as blind men stumble into that worst of all evils!

"And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded" (11:5). The language here is, of course, anthropomorphic. God did not need to leave heaven to see what was going on at the scene of the Tower of Babel. The record speaks of God in human terms, to teach us truth about God. God, of course, is everywhere, and sees and knows all things always. The meaning of the statement in verse 5 is that God was deeply concerned about what was going on. He was fully aware of it and prepared to take whatever action was required to frustrate man's plans and to fulfill His own plans and purposes.

"And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (11:6). Human sin always leads man to try to become independent of God. This was the case even back in the time of Adam and Eve; they aspired to be "as God." Verse 6 shows the true spirit which was behind the architectural construction work going on at Babel in the plain of Shinar. The Tower of Babel was only the beginning. Once let this succeed, and one thing would follow another without any limits. What was really involved was man's atheistic desire to be independent, to be a law unto himself, to do that which was right in his own eyes, to stand on his own feet, to give answer to no higher Person or Power. Therefore we may properly describe this spirit as arrogant humanism. God fully discerned that this city and tower were only the entering wedge. If allowed to succeed, man would soon be started again on a career of atheistic wickedness such as had existed in the period before the flood.

Therefore God stepped in to frustrate man's purposes. The real issue at Babel is God versus man — the sovereign, gracious, wise, almighty God versus proud, haughty, godless **and united** humanity. God checked man's efforts by causing such differences of language that mutual communication became impossible. No more effective way could be thought of. Of course, God could have killed the people who were defying His will, but that would have frustrated the purpose of divine redemption, which required that the human race live on throughout the ages of history. So God confounded their languages, which caused no bodily harm to anyone, yet made the continued unity of the human race impossible. From now on they would have to go their separate and several ways, thus fulfilling the divine purpose to fill the earth with people. "So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city" (11:8).

A good deal of ridicule has been heaped upon this story in Genesis 11. It has been represented as incredible, as a myth invented to explain differences of language, etc. All this scorn is heaped on the narrative simply because it involves a miracle, a direct action of God in human history, apart from the operation of the forces of nature. To those who believe in a God who can and does work miracles, the story of Babel presents not the slightest difficulty.

The present world-wide differences of language are well-known. The science of philology has attempted to trace existing languages back to their parent languages, and so to trace all languages back to their original source. This study has been carried on with remarkable results. Human languages have, in general, been shown to belong to several great families of languages. Then there

are a number of separate languages which are unclassifiable. For example, the Basque language of the Pyrenees mountains between France and Spain is unclassifiable; it cannot be proved to belong to any of the great families of languages. One of the great families of languages is the Indo-European family, extending from India on the east to Ireland and Iceland on the west. All the languages of this family have come from a common parent language, called Primitive Indo-European. If we could trace them back far enough, we would come to a point where English, Russian and Sanskrit were identical. Another great family is the Semitic family of languages, extending in a broad belt across northern Africa and southwestern Asia, including Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaean, Phoenician, Assyrian-Babylonian and several others. These are all closely related, more or less, and must all have come from a common parent language. Another great family of languages is found in eastern Asia, including Chinese, Burmese and several others. Scholars have done remarkable work in showing these affinities between various languages. But it has always proved impossible to trace all languages back to one single source or parent language. The most that can be done is to establish definite groupings or families of languages. The search for a single parent language has proved fruitless and baffling.

We submit that no better explanation has been offered than that given by the Bible in Genesis chapter 11. God intervened by divine power to diversify man's languages, thereby frustrating the building of the tower, and also checking the more sinister purpose which lay back of the building of the tower.

"Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (11:9). The name Babel is commonly and properly taken to mean "Gate of God." That is, that is the meaning put on the name by the Babylonians themselves. (Babylon is simply "Babel" with a Greek ending added). But the original meaning of the name, as given in Gen. 11:9, is "confusion." The Hebrew verb "balal" means to confuse. From this verb the form "balbel" is derived, and this again is contracted into "Babel." From this incident the noun "Babel" has become a synonym for confusion and unharmonious, conflicting noise at the present day. A confused and noisy meeting is spoken of as "a Babel of confusion" or "as disorderly as Babel."

#### Questions:

1. What is known about the original language of the human race?
2. From what center did the human race spread after the flood?

3. How should the expression "from the east" in 11:2 be translated?

4. What two kinds of bricks existed in ancient Babylonia?

5. What kind was used for making the Tower of Babel?

6. How were the bricks joined together?

7. Why would the second sentence of verse 3 be included in the record?

8. What was the primary purpose of building the city and tower?

9. How did this purpose contradict the will of God?

10. What deeper purpose can be discerned behind the plan to build the Tower of Babel?

11. Why did God find it necessary to frustrate the purpose of building the city and tower of Babel?

12. When will the original true unity of the human race be restored?

13. Why would world-wide unity of the human race while man is still sinful be an evil rather than a good?

14. How do human divisions check the power of sin?

15. What should Christians think of present-day proposals for a world government?

16. What is meant by the statement that the Lord came down to see the city and tower which men were building?

17. What wrong desire does sin always lead people to have?

18. How may the spirit back of the building of the Tower of Babel be described?

19. What would be the result if the builders were allowed to succeed?

20. What was the real issue at Babel?

21. How did God frustrate man's plans and purposes?

22. Why have some scholars ridiculed the story of the Tower of Babel?

23. What effort have scholars made to trace the history of languages?

24. To what extent have these efforts in the study of language succeeded?

25. What attempt in the study of languages has always failed?

26. What is the Babylonian meaning of "Babel"?

27. What was the original meaning of "Babel", as shown by Genesis chapter 11?

28. What is the origin of the name "Babylon"?

## LESSON 28

### II. History of the Human Race from Adam to Abraham. 2:4 to 11:26, continued

#### 11. The line of descent from Noah to Abraham. 11:10-26

From among the various branches of the human race, God chose the Semitic branch to be the channel of redemption from sin and the channel of revelation of divine truth to mankind. We may inquire as to what special qualifications the Semites may have had which led God to choose them for these functions. Two special qualifications have been pointed out. First, the Semites had a passive and receptive psychology, rather than an active and productive one. (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 73). This fitted them to receive revelation from God in a unique way. In the second place, the Semites tended to make religion central in their life. This was true both in the case of the false, pagan religions and in the case of the true religion of Jehovah. "The Semites have become leaders in the world of religion, because religion was the leading factor in their life, no matter whether for good or for evil" (G. Vos, *Biblical*

*Theology*, p. 75). Of course, the Semites possessed these traits of character just because God had made them so. Just as God prepares a man — a Moses or a Paul — for a special work, so God can and does prepare a family, nation or race for a special function in His redemptive purpose. He molds and fashions them to meet His requirements for a particular purpose. God made the psychology and religious characteristics of the Semites what they were, in order that from them God could choose a certain group to be the channel of revelation and redemption.

Chapter 11:10-26 gives the line of descent from Noah to Abraham through the line of Shem. "These are the generations of Shem" (11:10). This formula, as we have already noted, means the introduction of a new subject or the treatment of something from a new point of view. It means a new start in the book. As always in the Book of Genesis, the subject matter is so narrowed down from the more inclusive to the more particular. In chapter 10 we read of the descendants of Shem in general; here in chapter 11 the subject is that particular line of the descendants of Shem from which

Abraham came. We shall not take time to discuss these names of Abraham's ancestors in detail. Some of these names have known meanings and can be translated; others remain mysterious to scholars.

One fact that should be noted is the gradual decline in the human life-span. Noah lived 950 years; Shem 600; Eber 473. With Peleg the life-span of man suddenly drops to 239. Terah lived to the age of 205; Abraham 175; Isaac 180; Jacob 130; Moses 120.

The list ends with a man named Terah, who had three sons, namely Abram, Nahor and Haran. There is a rather remarkable resemblance here to the history of Adam and Noah. Adam had three sons, Cain, Abel and Seth (that is, these three whose names are recorded; later he had other sons and also daughters); Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. Terah had three sons, Abram, Nahor and Haran.

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

#### 1. Abraham and his kindred in Ur of the Chaldees. 11:27-32

"Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran begat Lot" (11:27). Though the heading indicates that the history of Terah begins at this point, comparatively little is said about Terah, and the narrative presently becomes the history of Abraham. We note in Joshua 24:2 that Terah "served other gods." It is possible, as Leupold suggests, that at the time of leaving Ur, Terah broke with idolatry, and that this break with idolatry become complete in the case of Abraham, so that Abraham could be said to complete what Terah began, thus explaining how the story of Abraham could be called "the generations of Terah."

The three sons of Terah were mentioned in 11:26, and now in the very next verse, 11:27, they are mentioned over again, the obvious reason being that a new division of the narrative has begun, shown by the formula "These are the generations of . . .". Haran died after the birth of his son Lot, in Ur of the Chaldees. It is stated that "Haran died before his father Terah". The Hebrew says literally "Haran died in the face of his father Terah," the obvious meaning being that he died during his father's lifetime. The place, Ur of the Chaldees, is also specifically mentioned. Formerly very little was known about this city, but between 1922 and 1934 the site was extensively excavated by a joint expedition of the British Museum and the University of Pennsylvania, under the leadership of Sir Leonard Woolley. Most remarkable and astonishing discoveries were made, showing that Ur was the seat of an ancient and highly developed culture and civilization going back to about 3,000 B. C. Ur might be described as the London or Paris of Abraham's day. Al-

ready ancient in Abraham's time, it was a great center of human life. The jewelry and other objects — many of pure, solid gold — which were found deep in the soil at Ur, show a very high degree of artistic skill, and some would require the most expert craftsmanship to reproduce today, even with modern equipment. Among other things, Ur was famous as the principal location of the worship of the moon-goddess Nin-gal. This idolatrous character of the great city may have been one reason why the Lord commanded Abraham to go out from it to another country.

Those who are interested in reading for themselves the amazing story of the discoveries at Ur of the Chaldees are referred to Sir Leonard Woolley's book entitled "Ur of the Chaldees." This 160 page book, illustrated with photographs and drawings, can be obtained in a paper-bound edition for 50 cents plus 5 cents postage from Penguin Books, Inc., 3300 Clipper Mill Road, Baltimore 11, Maryland. The catalog number of the book in the Penguin series is A-27. A reading of this book will give an excellent idea of the place from which Abraham set out on his journeys.

"And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah" (11:29). The name of Abraham's wife was Sarai, which means "princess." She was presumably a woman of social standing and importance. We know from Gen. 20:12 that Sarai was Abraham's half-sister; in other words, she was a daughter of Terah by a different wife from Abraham's mother. Nahor married Milcah, who was his niece, sister of Lot and daughter of Haran. Milcah reappears in the history in 22:23. Who the Iscah mentioned in 11:29 was, we do not know, beyond the fact that she was a sister or half-sister of Milcah.

These marriages between close relatives would be regarded as both illegal and immoral today. We should, however, avoid the error of judging these early people by the standards that are valid at the present day. It was God's plan that the human race be descended from a single human pair — Adam and Eve. Obviously this plan made it necessary for close relatives to marry for a time. The laws against incestuous marriages are founded upon sound biological reasons, but evidently those reasons did not exist at the beginning of human history nor for a considerable time afterward. It is well known that marriage of close relatives greatly increases the tendency to inherit any bad characteristics of the parents. But at the beginning of human life on the earth, there was no accumulation of bad heredity that would be intensified by close marriages. As a matter of fact, there is no reason to believe that the marriages of Abraham and Nahor were regarded as improper in any way — on either social or religious grounds. There is no sugges-

tion in the record that it was wrong for them to marry these women.

#### Questions:

1. Which branch of the human race did God choose to be the channel of revelation and of redemption from sin?

2. What psychological trait of the Semites fitted them to be the channel of revelation?

3. What religious characteristic of the Semites fitted them to hold a unique place in the history of redemption?

4. How can we explain the fact that the Semites possessed this special type of mind and this special attitude toward religion??

5. What is the meaning of the formula "These are the generations of Shem" in 11:10?

6. What can be said about the meanings of the names listed in this passage?

7. What does the genealogy of Abraham show as to the life-span of the human race?

8. What were the names of the three sons of Terah?

9. What new history begins at this point in the book of Genesis?

10. What do we learn about Terah from Joshua 24:2?

11. What is the meaning of the statement that Haran died before his father Terah?

12. Where was Haran born, and where did he die?

13. When and by whom was Ur of the Chaldees excavated?

14. What kind of culture existed in Ur?

15. What form of religion was prominent in Ur?

16. What book tells the story of the discoveries at Ur?

17. What is the meaning of the name "Sarai"?

18. Besides being Abraham's wife, what was the relationship between Sarai and Abraham?

19. Whom did Nahor marry, and what was her relationship to him?

20. What would be the status of such marriages today?

21. Why were such marriages of close relatives not forbidden in the early times of the human race?

### LESSON 29

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

##### 1. Abraham and his kindred in Ur of the Chaldees. 11:27-32, continued

"But Sarai was barren; she had no child" (11:30). The fact that Sarai was barren became important later in the history, which explains why attention is called to this fact here at the beginning of the story of Abraham. The point is emphasized by the Hebrew parallelism: she was barren, she had no child. This use of parallel statements is common in Hebrew literature; for example "Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad". These are not two different statements, but one statement repeated in different words for the sake of emphasis.

The meaning of the name "Abram" is "Exalted Father" or some similar expression such as "My Father is Exalted." "Haran" may mean "mountaineer"; the meaning of "Nahor" is unknown.

"And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came into Haran,

and dwelt there" (11:31). We should note that not all the clan or tribe of Terah accompanied him out of Ur. Nahor and Milcah are left behind in Ur, although later on they went to upper Mesopotamia (Gen. 24:10). The fact that part went out, while part remained behind, would seem to suggest that there was a religious reason for the departure. It is possible that those who were ready to give up idolatry went out, while those who were willing to compromise with idolatry remained behind.

The first stage of the journey was a trip from Ur to Haran, a distance of about 600 miles. Haran was located northwest of Ur, not far from the great bend of the Euphrates River. Why the party settled down in Haran, and how long they remained there, we are not told. We know from Joshua 24:2 that Terah served other gods "beyond the river", and this evidently means at Haran, which is located beyond the Euphrates. Perhaps the facts are that Terah did not completely break with idolatry, so that it became necessary eventually for Abraham to part company with him and go with Sarai and Lot to the land of Canaan.

"And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran" (11:32). The facts of the record indicate that Terah died

60 years after Abraham departed from Haran. Terah was 70 years old when Abraham was born (11:26); Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran (12:4). Adding these two figures, we see that Terah was 145 years old when Abraham left Haran. But Terah was 205 years old when he died. Therefore he lived 60 years after Abraham left Haran.

This fact involves a serious difficulty, for in the Book of Acts, 7:4, Stephen in his speech before the Council states that Abraham left Haran "when his father was dead". How can this be reconciled with the fact that the Genesis record represents Terah living on for 60 years after Abraham left Haran? Stephen spoke by special inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:55). Moreover it is inconceivable that so good and accurate a Bible student as Stephen could have committed such a blunder as to contradict the Genesis record about Abraham and Terah. So we must reject the idea that Stephen was simply mistaken. But what then is the explanation? Or the various suggestions that have been offered, the best is that commended by Leupold, namely that Stephen meant "dead" in the sense of "dead to him." Because of Terah's adherence to idolatry he was as good as dead for Abram, and so Abram could leave him behind, sorry, indeed, for his father's lot but separated from him already as from one dead" (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, I, 401-2).

## 2. The history of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12

At this point there is a decided change in the character of the narratives in Genesis. The first eleven chapters cover long periods of time and many generations of people in barest outline, only the most important facts being related. From the beginning of chapter 12, on the other hand, the narrative becomes detailed. The next 39 chapters — chapters 12 to 50 — are largely the story of the lives of four men, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Whereas the entire period from the creation to Abraham took up only 11 chapters, the history of Joseph alone occupies 12 chapters. From the beginning of chapter 12 we have a detailed history of the covenant people of God, instead of the universal history of mankind which is given in chapters 1-11.

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (12:1). The original call of God to Abraham came to him while he was still in Ur of the Chaldees, as is definitely proved by Acts 7:2. This must be accepted as true even though there is no actual record in Genesis of a call of God coming to Abraham while he was still in Ur. Stephen's speech, and the Book of Acts, are part of the inspired and infallible Word of God as truly as is Genesis.

The call related in 12:1, however, came to Abraham in Haran, not in Ur. This is shown by the fact that he was to leave his father's house. On the departure from Ur his father accompanied him; when he left Haran he left his father behind. Note that Abraham was commanded by God to leave three things behind him: (1) his country; (2) his kindred; and (3) his father's house. This involved a triple sacrifice of what men hold dear, for the sake of obedience to the will of God.

"Unto a land that I will show thee" (12:1). From Hebrews 11:8 we know that Abraham went out, "not knowing whither he went." But just what does this mean? The original departure from Ur was a departure "to go into the land of Canaan" (11:31). Therefore Abraham must at least have known the general direction in which he was to go when he left Haran, and that he was headed for the land of Canaan. He did not, however, know definitely that Canaan was to be his final destination. Actually he went clear through Canaan to Egypt, and back into Canaan again. It was only later that he learned exactly what land was to be his inheritance; on leaving Haran this was not told him.

As the Epistle to the Hebrews points out, Abraham's leaving Haran was an act of faith. For the final and permanent destination, he had to depend on faith in God's promise, not on information already given him.

Before closing this lesson, we should consider briefly the importance of regarding the stories of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as historical. Many people today, influenced by modern religious unbelief, are ready to say that large elements of these stories are not historical; that is, that they are mere stories or folklore, and not really true. A prominent school of Bible interpretation, which is becoming increasingly popular today, holds that stories such as these in the Bible can be historically false and religiously true at the same time. They regard the stories as historically false, at least in part, but at the same time as religiously true. This is a subtle sophistry in religion which was unknown in former times; it was left for the twentieth century to invent it. In former times people either believed the Bible or they disbelieved it, but it did not occur to people to say that it could be both true and false at the same time. The present writer is opposed to this modern tendency. We believe that the Bible is either historically true, or it is religiously worthless.

And there is perfectly good evidence that the stories of the patriarchs are historically true. No good reason exists for denying this, even though some people have a sinful zeal for finding things to object to or contradict in the Bible. Moreover, the inspiration and infallibility of the New Testa-

ment, and the teachings of Jesus Christ, are at stake in this question. The New Testament as a whole, and Jesus Christ in particular, treat and regard the patriarchs as historical. Therefore to deny the historical truthfulness of the patriarchal history is to deny the trustworthiness of Christ as a teacher of truth. And that means to destroy the Christian faith.

#### Questions:

1. Why is it stated at this point that Sarai was barren?
2. Why does the Hebrew say the same thing over again in different words?
3. What is the meaning of the name "Abram"?
4. What is the meaning of the name "Haran"?
5. What members of Terah's clan remained behind in Ur?
6. What may have been the reason why these were left behind?
7. What was the first stage of the journey?
8. About what distance was travelled in this stage?
9. What may have been the reason why Abraham parted company with his father Terah?
10. How long did Terah live after Abraham left Haran?
11. How old was Terah when he died?

12. What difficulty concerning Abraham and Terah is involved in Stephen's speech in Acts 7?

13. What is the most probable solution of this difficulty?

14. What change in the character of the narratives of Genesis takes place at the beginning of chapter 12?

15. Where was Abraham when the original call of God came to him?

16. How can this be shown to be true?

17. Where was Abraham when the call related in 12:1 came to him?

18. What statement proves that this was the case?

19. What is the meaning of the statement in Hebrews 11:8 that Abraham went out "not knowing whither he went"?

20. According to Hebrews, what was Abraham's principle in going out from his country?

21. What is the attitude of many modern people to the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

22. What is the attitude of the New Testament, and the teachings of Christ, to the stories of the patriarchs?

23. What distinction between historical truth and religious value is made by some popular teachers of the present day?

### LESSON 30

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

##### 2. The history of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

We come now to the great promises made by God to Abraham. These are repeated later in fuller form; in chapter 15 they are confirmed by a covenant of God made with Abraham. In chapter 12 where the promises are first made, they are as follows: 1. Abraham will be blessed and will become a great nation. 2. God will bless those that bless Abraham, and will curse those that curse him. 3. In Abraham shall all the families of the earth be blessed. All of those promises, of course, were to be fulfilled in the future. The third promise, that in Abraham shall all families of the earth be blessed, is definitely Messianic. It is through Jesus Christ, the true Seed of Abraham, that all the families of the earth shall receive blessing. "All families of the earth" does not necessarily mean every particular household or family circle. The meaning is that the redemption which shall come through the Seed of Abra-

ham shall not be limited to those literally descended from him, but shall be world-wide, transcending all barriers of race and geography. That "families" here means races, tribes or nations is shown by the usage of the word in 10:5, 20, 31. The "families" of the world were divided by sin; they shall now be blessed by redemption. God's calling of Abraham to be the founder of a special, separated people had for its background the universal purpose — the plan of God to provide a world-wide redemption. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son".

Next we may inquire as to the meaning of the promise, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." This promise was not made because of Abraham personally, but because of his unique place in the divine plan of redemption. Because, in that plan, Abraham is what he is, to bless Abraham is to bless the God of Abraham, and to curse Abraham is to curse the God of Abraham. To be really in favor of Abraham is to be in favor of the plan of redemption in which he had such an important part. To be opposed to Abraham is to be opposed to that

plan of redemption, and to the God whose plan it is.

In the Hebrew two different words are used for "curse" and "curseth". One word describes God's righteous act of cursing; the other is used for man's sinful cursing. Those who object to the Old Testament idea of God, alleging that the Old Testament portrays a God of wrath whereas the New Testament speaks of a God of love, forget that the wrath of God is not the same thing as human anger, and God's cursing is not the same as man's cursing. Everywhere the Bible takes care to guard the righteousness of God. It is true that God is a God of love, but nowhere does God's love cancel His righteousness.

"So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him; and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran" (12:43). Here Abraham's obedience to the will of God is emphasized. He departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him. Whether it was difficult for him to do this, whether or not it involved an inward struggle, we are not told. The important fact is that when Abraham knew what the will of God was, he acted accordingly. How Abraham felt about it is not specially important. In our own day and age, religion has become far too subjective. People say that they "feel" they should do this or that, or they "do not feel" that they should do this or that. Or they "feel" that they should accept a certain doctrine or principle, or they "do not feel" that they should do so. Nowhere does the Bible encourage us to go by our feelings. Back of this idea of believing or doing as we "feel" we should is the error that all religious truth and all moral standards are derived from within the human personality. This is an idolatrous, man-worshipping, man-centered age that we are living in. People object bitterly to the idea of a standard of faith and life imposed on them by the authority of God, external to their own personality and binding whether they like it or not. Even ministers in preaching sermons sometimes say "I feel that such-and-such is the case", where they should say "The Word of God says that such-and-such is the case." Many who have this manner of speaking are no doubt true believers, but they have been unconsciously influenced and swept along by the man-centered, subjective spirit of our times. At bottom this attitude is rebellion against the authority of God.

Lot went with Abraham when he left Haran. Like Abraham, Lot was a believer in Jehovah, the living and true God. The fact that Lot went with him would doubtless make it easier for Abraham to leave his kindred and his father's house. Even though we later learn that there was a wide difference in character between Abraham and Lot, this does not appear at the time of leaving Haran. We note that at the time Abraham was 75 years old. While he would be rated an old man today,

he was actually only in middle life when measured by the life span of his time.

"And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came" (12:5). We note here that Abraham was a wealthy man. The term "substance" means all kinds of personal property or movable possessions. The language used indicates that there was much property, and also a great number of people attached to the clan of which Abraham was the chief or patriarch. The word "souls" here means simply "persons." These persons doubtless included servants, born to the household or purchased, and their children.

The events of the journey from Haran to Canaan are not related, so we may conclude that nothing important for the purpose of the history occurred during the trip. In due time the clan arrived in the land of Canaan, or Palestine.

"And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land" (12:6). The place here referred to as Sichem is that commonly called Shechem, the first important stopping place of Abraham on his trip into the land of Canaan. This place, unlike others where stops had been made, became important because in this place God revealed Himself to Abraham. Shechem was in central Palestine, west of the Jordan River, about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, and about halfway between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. It was located between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, near the location of the present-day town of Nablus.

"The plain of Moreh" should be translated "the oak of Moreh" or "the terebinth of Moreh." "Moreh" means "teacher" or "instructor". Why this spot was named "Moreh" we are not informed. But at any rate it was a well-known landmark. Leupold suggests the idea that in ancient days some worshipper of Jehovah "had under this oak admonished and instructed the people." Of course, this is only possible, not certain.

In writing this history, Moses adds: "And the Canaanite was then in the land." This statement has been taken by some scholars as written, not by Moses, but by some later scribe or editor living after the Canaanites had been conquered and destroyed. However it is not necessary to hold this, as the expression can be explained on the supposition that Moses wrote it. God is about to promise Abraham that he will inherit this land of Canaan. In order to realize what a great promise this was, and what a challenge it was to Abraham's faith, we must remember that at the time of speaking this was no empty country waiting to be claimed, but one already owned and filled with the Canaan-

ites. Abraham is asked to believe that the power of God will take this land of the Canaanites and give it to his descendants.

“And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him” (12:7). This promise is in addition to those given in verses 2 and 3. There Abraham was promised that he would become a great nation; here he is promised that the land of Canaan shall be possessed by his seed. This promise, of course, was not fulfilled during Abraham's own lifetime, nor, indeed, until the time of Joshua centuries later. Abraham believed and accepted by faith what could not be seen nor proved by reason.

“And there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.” An altar was a place of slaughter for the offering of sacrifices. Though it is not stated that Abraham offered sacrifices, this is clearly implied by the mention of an altar. In fact, the offering of sacrifices was what made a pile of stones an altar. Here we see that Abraham believed in the religion of salvation by divine grace. The heart of his religion was the shedding of the blood of a substitute for man's sin. He is moved to offer sacrifice by gratitude to Jehovah for the gracious promises given to him.

#### Questions:

1. What promises did God make to Abraham in chapter 12?
2. Which of these promises is definitely Messianic?
3. What is the meaning of the word “families” in 12:3?
4. What is the meaning of the promise that all the families of the earth shall be blessed in Abraham?
5. Why will God bless those who bless Abraham, and curse those who curse him?
6. What is the difference between God's cursing and man's?
7. What truth about Abraham is emphasized in 12:4?
8. Why is it wrong to believe and act according to our feelings?
9. What false idea lies back of the common notion that we should believe and act as we feel like believing or acting?
10. What was the relationship between Lot and Abraham?
11. How old was Abraham when he left Haran?
12. At what stage of life was Abraham at this time?
13. What is meant by “substance” in 12:5?
14. What is meant by “souls” in 12:5?
15. What was the economic status of Abraham on leaving Haran?
16. Where was Shechem located?
17. Why is Shechem specially mentioned, whereas other stopping places on Abraham's journey are passed by in silence?
18. What is the correct translation of “the plain of Moreh”?
19. What does “Moreh” mean?
20. Why should the record mention the fact that the Canaanite was then in the land?
21. What new promise did God give to Abraham at Shechem?
22. What is implied concerning Abraham's religion by the fact that he built an altar unto the Lord?

### LESSON 31

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

##### 2. The history of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

“And he removed from thence upon a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord” (12:8). Bethel is some 20 miles south of Shechem and about 12 miles north of Jerusalem. We note that Abraham and his clan lead a nomadic life, moving from place to place. From 28:19 we learn that the name Bethel was not given to this place until

the time of Jacob, Abraham's grandson. It was not called Bethel in Abraham's time, but Moses in writing the history gives it the name by which it later came to be known. “Moses diligently records such well-authenticated events of Abram's life in order to awaken an anticipation for the land in the hearts of the Israelites who are journeying toward this land, as well as to let historic spots be vested with sacred memories after Israel has come into possession of the land” (Leupold, Vol. I, pp. 420-1). Once more Abraham builds an altar and (it is implied) offers sacrifice unto the Lord. This offering of sacrifice would of course be a public act and thus would constitute a public witness to Jehovah, the living and true God.

"And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south" (12:9). The Hebrew verb used here means literally "pulled up stakes", meaning the taking down of the tents for a move. The south is the dry region of southern Palestine called the Negeb. While it may have had more water in Abraham's time, four thousand years ago, today it is very arid and of little use except for pasturing sheep.

Next, in verses 10 to 20, we have the record of Abraham's journey to Egypt. In this story we see Abraham definitely in a bad light. Yet it is one of the evidences of the divine inspiration and truthfulness of the Bible that it does not idealize its heroes and great men, but tells the plain truth about them, even when the truth is discreditable to them. Other ancient records tend to tell less than the whole truth about their heroic characters; the Bible tells the bad along with the good. In chapter 20 and again in chapter 26 we have similar situations. The presence in the sacred writings of Israel of three such instances of cowardice and untruthfulness cannot be accounted for except by realizing that the Bible is divine truth and describes people as they really were, not as later generations might wish them to have been. The narrative is strictly objective and unbiassed.

There was a famine in southern Canaan, so Abraham went to Egypt "to sojourn there", that is to stay there until the famine would be over. Upon entering the territory of Egypt, Abraham becomes fearful that the Egyptians will kill him in order to gain possession of Sarai his wife, who was very beautiful. Abraham asks Sarai to tell people that she is his sister. While this was literally true, in that Sarai actually was Abraham's half-sister (see 20:12), still Abraham's intention was to deceive, therefore he asked Sarai to tell what was a lie in intention.

Abraham realized, of course, that foreigners entering a country may be badly treated. He realized, also, that beautiful women would be coveted, and that the husbands of such might be killed. There is no doubt that his estimate of Egyptian morals and social standards was correct. Still, it was certainly wrong for Abraham to seek to avoid trouble by resorting to untruthfulness. And we cannot avoid concluding that there was an element of base cowardice in the patriarch's plan. To save his own life, he was proposing to pose as Sarai's brother, not her husband, so that if some Egyptian wanted Sarai, he could have her without the necessity of killing Abraham. He was proposing that Sarai make all the sacrifices and meet all the dangers, in order to save his own life. While Abraham is a hero of faith, there is no faith and no heroism displayed in his conduct at this time.

The question has been raised how Sarai could be considered "a fair woman to look upon" at this

period of her life when she was already 65 years old. That she was that old is proved by a comparison of 12:4 with 17:17. When Abraham was 100 years old, Sarah was 90. Therefore she was ten years younger than he. At the time of leaving Haran, Abraham was 75 years old. Therefore Sarai was 65 at the time. She lived to the age of 127 years (see 23:1). Leupold points out that at 65 Sarai was only middle-aged, and had never borne any children, so it is not at all incredible that she may have been very beautiful.

Sarai evidently agreed to Abraham's proposal that she tell the Egyptians she was his sister. The Egyptians note her beauty and she is commended to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and then taken into Pharaoh's household. Pharaoh then begins to regard Abraham as his brother-in-law. "And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels" (12:16). These evidently were partly gifts from Pharaoh to Abraham. It seems strange that menservants and maidservants are mentioned between he asses and she asses. We would think it more natural to list all the kinds of animals first, and then the humans. A possible explanation of the peculiar order of listing may be that Abraham acquired these various kinds of possessions in this order. The language used does not imply that all that is listed was given by Pharaoh to Abraham; it only means that he came to possess all these.

"And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues, because of Sarai, Abram's wife" (12:17). This development was the result of God's grace toward Abraham. As a matter of fact, Pharaoh was in the right, for he had acted honestly, while Abraham was in the wrong, for he had been dealing in falsehood. We do not know what the plagues or afflictions were that came or the house of Pharaoh. But clearly they were sent by God to lead to getting Sarai out of Pharaoh's palace and back to Abraham, her husband. It must be remembered that in God's plan Abraham and his wife were to be the ancestors of the people of Israel, and of Jesus Christ.

"And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, she is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way" (12:18, 19). How did Pharaoh come to understand that the plagues that were troubling his house were on account of his having taken Sarai into his establishment? It may have been conscience; it may have been that Sarai herself finally told the truth. In speaking to Abraham Pharaoh seems rather self-righteous; at least, he places his own conduct in as favorable a light as he can. Abraham might have replied, in answer to Pharaoh's question about why he had used

deceit, that he had good reason to fear he would be killed on account of his handsome wife. But, so far as the record indicates, Abraham did not make this reply. Instead, he accepts Pharaoh's rebuke, and is rather hastily dismissed from the king's presence. Leupold remarks that Abraham's silence shows that he realized he deserved the king's rebuke.

"And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had" (12:20). Apparently these men appointed by Pharaoh were to go with Abraham to the border of Egyptian territory. Pharaoh is evidently afraid of further plagues, so he is careful to appoint men to get Abraham safely out of the country. We may say that Abraham was rebuked by Pharaoh, and Pharaoh himself was rebuked by God. Psalm 105:14, 15 may be intended as an inspired comment on the incident we have been studying.

#### Questions:

1. Where is Bethel in relation to Shechem? to Jerusalem?
2. When was the name Bethel actually given to this place?
3. Why should Moses carefully record such details as the exact names of places in the life of Abraham?
4. What did Abraham do near Bethel?
5. What is the literal meaning of "journeyed" in 12:9?
6. What is the character of the region called "the south"?
7. Why did Abraham go to Egypt?
8. How can we explain the presence in the record of a story which is discreditable to Abraham?
9. As he approached Egypt, what fear preyed on Abraham's mind?
10. What solution of his problem did he decide to adopt?
11. What two criticisms can be made of Abraham's conduct here?
12. How old was Sarai at this time? How do we know this?
13. Why is it not incredible that woman of this age should be regarded as very beautiful?
14. What was Sarai's attitude toward Abraham's proposal to use deceit?
15. What happened to Sarai after she and Abraham entered Egypt?
16. Of what did Abraham's possessions consist at this time?
17. How may some of these possessions have been acquired?
18. How can the peculiar order of listing Abraham's possessions be explained?
19. Who did the greater wrong, Abraham or Pharaoh?
20. Why was it important, from God's point of view, to get Sarai out of Pharaoh's palace?
21. How may Pharaoh have come to find out that Sarai was a married woman?
22. What rebuke did Pharaoh administer to Abraham?
23. After discovering that Sarai was Abraham's wife, what action did Pharaoh take?
24. What Psalm may be an inspired comment on this incident?

### LESSON 32

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

##### 2. The history of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

"And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south" (13:1). This was following Pharaoh's dismissal of Abraham after the incident involving Sarai his wife. "Into the south" of course means "into the south of Canaan"; it cannot mean "into the south of Egypt." Though Abraham was journeying northward, he entered into the south. That is, he entered the region called "the Negeb" or "the southland."

"And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold" (13:2). Again it is emphasized that Abraham was a very wealthy man. This may serve to remind us that it is not money, but the love of money, that is sinful.

"And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first; and there Abram called on the name of the Lord" (13:3, 4). "On his journeys" means by stages, making stops from time to time. Again Abraham worships Jehovah, perhaps especially because he felt the need to repent of his un-

truthfulness, and also to express thanks to God for getting Sarai back safely.

We come next to the separation between Abram and Lot (13:5-13). Like Abraham, Lot was a man of great wealth, having flocks, and herds, and tents. "And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together" (13:6). We must remember that Abraham and Lot lived a nomadic life which required abundant grassland for pasturage. The combined flocks and herds of Abraham and Lot required more pasture for grazing than could be found in one area. Therefore a separation became inevitable.

"And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land" (13:7). Though Abraham and Lot themselves maintained cordial relations, their servants became mutually hostile. There began to be disputes about pasture rights. Moses in writing the history reminds the reader that the Canaanites and Perizzites were then in the land. That is, it was not an empty, uninhabited country with plenty of room; it was already for the most part claimed and held in possession by the Canaanites and the Perizzites. Newcomers such as Abraham and Lot, therefore, could not move wherever they might choose, but would have to content themselves with land not already possessed or utilized by the earlier inhabitants.

The mention of the Canaanites and Perizzites is important for another reason also. These two nations were heathen idolaters, of course. Abraham and Lot were worshippers of the true God. For contention to arise between two chiefs who were worshippers of Jehovah would be a shame and dishonor to the name of the Lord in the presence of the pagan inhabitants.

It is thought that the Canaanites were those who lived for the most part in walled cities. Just who the Perizzites were we do not know. They may have been people who lived in villages or in the open country. Or they may have been earlier inhabitants than the Canaanites.

"And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren" (13:8). We note here that the initiative in preventing strife was taken by Abraham, not by Lot. Luther comments that in chapter 12 (where Abraham obeys God's command to leave his country) we have an example of Abraham's faith, while here in chapter 13 we have an example of Abraham's good works, which were the result of his faith. Abraham, as the older man, and the one whom God had especially commanded to go to the land of Canaan, certainly could have claimed prior

rights over Lot and simply insisted that Lot take whatever land was left. After all, God had promised the whole land to Abraham, not to Lot. But Abraham seeks peace and good will, so he takes the initiative in dealing generously with Lot.

"Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left" (13:9). We note here that Abraham was very courteous in speaking to Lot. Twice he says "I pray thee", which we might translate by "please." Realizing that God has promised him the whole land, Abraham is willing to be generous with Lot, who after all is a close relative of his. He gives Lot his choice of the available areas. Abraham himself will take whatever is left after Lot has made his choice. "Brethren" here, of course, means simply "kinsmen" or "relatives."

Abraham was generous and gave Lot the first choice of territory. "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou contest unto Zoar" (13:10). At this point begins a gradual deterioration in the character of Abraham's nephew, Lot. Lot's decision has sometimes been misinterpreted, as if he left Abraham nothing but barren country that could not support livestock. This was not the case. What Abraham received was also good, though Lot took the more desirable land for himself.

"The plain of Jordan" means, not the entire Jordan valley, but the southern end of it, perhaps from the region of Jericho southward and extending as far as Zoar, which was just south of the Dead Sea. Moses in writing the history states that this region was well watered every where "before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah," a statement which certainly implies that after the destruction of these cities it was different. The vivid description of the area as resembling the garden of the Lord and the land of Egypt is in sharp contrast to the present-day appearance of the region. Accordingly, we are to understand that in the time of Abraham this was a fertile and beautiful area. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah changed it to a barren waste.

Lot journeyed eastward, leaving Abraham alone. "And Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom" (13:12). So the separation between these two men was made complete. The land of Canaan becomes Abraham's habitation, while the Dead Sea region becomes Lot's. "And Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom." This can be translated "pitched his tent as far as Sodom." Although Lot originally chose this re-

gion because of its abundant water supply and good pastures, it now becomes clear that the city life of Sodom and Gomorrah had some attraction for him. He moves his tent nearer and nearer to Sodom, until he is at the very gates of the city. When we next see him, he has left off living in tents and is situated in a permanent house inside the city of Sodom.

"But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (13:13). It is evident that Lot was actuated by material rather than spiritual considerations. He is attracted by the fertility of the region, but is not deterred by the spiritual perils involved. God's opinion of the inhabitants of Sodom was that they were exceedingly sinful and wicked. What Lot thought about them we are not told at this point, but at any rate he evidently did not think their wickedness was serious enough to keep him from living near them. In the New Testament we are informed that Lot was a righteous man, and that he was deeply grieved by the wickedness of Sodom which surrounded him (2 Peter 2:7, 8). Lot, therefore, is an example of a righteous man who trifles and compromises with sin. Without himself committing the sins that made Sodom so evil, he nevertheless associates himself with the city and citizens of Sodom. He certainly was not thinking of how best to glorify God, nor of a wholesome spiritual and social environment in which to raise his family, when he moved to Sodom. It is too often true at the present day that material gain and worldly advantages blind even Christian people to spiritual perils and the evil of the world. What God thought of Sodom and what Lot thought of Sodom were two different things. What a spiritual contrast there was between Abraham and Lot!

"And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (13:14, 15). Probably Abraham was saddened by Lot's attitude and departure from him, even though the separation was unavoidable. Now God steps in to comfort and reassure his servant Abraham. Though he has lost a little through Lot's selfish choice, he will gain much more through the gracious promises of God. So the whole land of Canaan is promised to Abraham's seed, "for ever." The Hebrew word translated "for ever" is *olam*, which can have various meanings. Sometimes it means "to eternity," sometimes "for an unlimited but long time." Sometimes, as in Exodus 21:6, it means only for the rest of a person's natural lifetime. Here in Gen. 13:15, we may understand it as meaning "permanently," not in the sense of "eternally," but in the sense of "for an unlimited but long time."

This promise of the land of Canaan to Abra-

ham of course implies the condition of faith on Abraham's part and on the part of the descendants of Abraham. As long as their attitude toward God was one of faith and obedience they possessed the land of Canaan. When they had broken God's covenant and repudiated their obligations to Him, they lost possession of the land and were carried into captivity. Again, when the Jews rejected and crucified Jesus Christ, they lost possession of their land and were destroyed and scattered. It follows that this promise of God to Abraham is not an unconditional promise that the natural descendants of Abraham shall perpetually possess the land regardless of their faith. There is no promise in the Bible that guarantees possession of Canaan to an unbelieving and Christ-rejecting Israel.

#### Questions:

1. Where did Abraham go on leaving Egypt?
2. Why was it not sinful for Abraham to be a rich man?
3. What is meant by the expression "on his journeys"?
4. Why would Abraham specially want to worship the Lord at this time?
5. Why was it not possible for Abraham and Lot to continue living together?
6. What incident prepared the way for the separation between Abraham and Lot?
7. What is the point of the statement of 13:7 that the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land?
8. Why would a dispute between Abraham and Lot be specially dishonoring to the name of God?
9. Who took the initiative in preventing further strife?
10. What expression twice used by Abraham indicates his courtesy in speaking to his nephew?
11. What fact shows Abraham's generosity?
12. What is meant by "brethren" in 13:8?
13. At what point can deterioration in Lot's character first be noted?
14. What is meant by "the plain of Jordan"?
15. What was the character of this region in Abraham's day?
16. What historical event changed the character of the region?
17. What is the character of this region of the world today?

18. Besides the water supply and fertility, what seems to have attracted Lot toward Sodom?

19. What was the character of the people of Sodom?

20. What does Lot's moving to Sodom reveal concerning his character?

21. What does the New Testament say about Lot in relation to Sodom?

22. To what perils was Lot evidently blind?

23. What effect would Lot's choice have on Abraham?

24. What is the meaning of the word translated "for ever" in 13:15?

25. What condition is implied in God's promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham's seed?

26. How can it be shown from history that this promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham's seed was not an unconditional promise?

27. Does the Bible guarantee that an unbelieving and Christ-rejecting Israel has a right to the land of Canaan?

### LESSON 33

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

##### 2. The history of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

"And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered" (13:16). Here the Lord promises to Abraham a very numerous posterity. The language used is of course not to be taken literally. It is a hyperbole, that is, an exaggeration for the purpose of emphasizing a truth. The point is not that Abraham's descendants will literally be as many as the particles of dust on the surface of the earth, but rather, that just as the dust of the earth cannot be numbered, so Abraham's posterity will be innumerable — past human ability to count.

"Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (13:17). Here God invites Abraham to travel through and inspect the land of Canaan which shall be given to him for an inheritance. Abraham's obeying this command of God would serve as an evidence or proof of his living faith in the Lord. Although at the time the land was possessed by the Canaanites, by faith Abraham knew that eventually it would belong to his seed. We should realize that he had this knowledge only by faith in the promise of God. There was nothing in the existing circumstances or situation to lead him to think that his descendants would inherit this land for their own.

"Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord" (13:18). Lot moved his tent toward Sodom, but Abraham moved his to the plain of Mamre. Apparently this was after the trip of inspection of the land which God had commanded him to undertake. Who Mamre was we do not know; he may have been a prominent man of that day. More important is the fact that at this place Abraham built

an altar unto the Lord. This was not only an act of devotion to God, expressing faith and gratitude, but also a public witness to everyone that Abraham's religion was very different from the idolatry of the Canaanites. Abraham's building of the altar was not only an act of worship, but also a public profession of faith.

We now come to the fourteenth chapter which records the first battle mentioned in the Bible. Here we see Abraham in a different light — not merely as a man of faith but as an active and highly competent head of a clan. Indeed, we could almost say that in this chapter Abraham ranks as a king, for he deals with kings on a basis of equality. Also, this chapter reveals Abraham as a very able military leader, and as a very wise man in his dealings with his fellow men.

"And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations: that these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar" (14:1, 2). Here we have the names of nine kings, four of them from the Tigris-Euphrates region and five of them from the region around the lower Jordan valley and the Dead Sea.

Some scholars have held that the Amraphel mentioned here is identical with the great Babylonian lawgiver and king Hammurabi. This identification however is doubtful and involves serious problems both of spelling and of chronology. Arioch king of Ellasar may be Eri-Aku king of Larsa, the latter being identified with Rim-Sin king of Larsa. With regard to Chedorlaomer king of Elam, we are not able to make any positive identification. Elam is south of Assyria and east of the Tigris river. Nor do we know just who Tidal king of nations was.

With regard to the five kings of the Dead Sea region, Sodom and Gomorrah probably were located where the waters of the southern part of

the Dead Sea are today. Admah and Zeboim were cities of the same region and presumably destroyed at the same time as Sodom and Gomorrah. Bela or Zoar was located just south of the present southern limit of the Dead Sea.

"All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea" (14:3). Does "all these" mean the kings from the east, mentioned in verse 1, or the kings of the Dead Sea region, mentioned in verse 2, or does it mean both groups together? According to the grammar of the passage, it is probable that the kings of verse 1 are meant. Leupold translates: "All these allied themselves for an expedition to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea)" (Leupold, Vol. I, p. 449). Probably the vale of Siddim means the southern end of the Dead Sea. This southern end was presumably not under water in the time of Abraham, before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed; but in the time of Moses who wrote the history, it was already part of the Dead Sea.

"Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled" (14:4). Here we have a brief statement about how the war started. For a dozen years Babylonian and Elamite power had been dominant over Palestine. Chedorlaomer was himself an Elamite but was at the time ruler over Babylonia (Shinar). Through this period of twelve years the kings of the Dead Sea region regularly paid the required annual tribute. Then for reasons not stated, at the end of the twelve year period, they decided to refuse payment. When he learned of this rebellion, Chedorlaomer decided that it was time to force the rebellious kings to submit.

"And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him . . ." (14:5). Twelve years the tribute was paid. In the thirteenth year the revolt took place. Then it took Chedorlaomer some time to prepare for a military expedition to bring the rebels into line. Accordingly, this punitive attack took place in the fourteenth year. Chedorlaomer had made careful preparations, lining up three other kings — Amraphel, Arioch and Tidal — as his allies.

"And . . . Chedorlaomer . . . smote the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzim in Ham, and the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, and the Horites in their Mount Seir, unto El-paran, which is by the wilderness" (14:5, 6).

This expedition is not mentioned in the Babylonian records that have been discovered. This, however, need cast no doubt on the historical truthfulness of the record as we have it in Genesis. It is a well known fact that ancient kings were not in the habit of having records made of military expeditions in which they were defeated. They wanted to be remembered for their successes, not for their failures. And this particular

war turned out very badly for Chedorlaomer and his allies.

The route taken by the kings from the east is remarkable. They did not take the shortest and most direct route to the Dead Sea region nor did they take the customary and most travelled route. The shortest route would be to start from Babylon and cut straight west across the desert. That way however was not practicable in ancient times because of the scarcity of water. The customary route was to follow the fertile crescent, up the Euphrates valley, across to the Mediterranean, and down the Syria-Palestine coast toward Egypt. Chedorlaomer and his allies entered Palestine from the north, as customary, approaching from the area of Damascus. Then they turned eastward and campaigned through what is today called Transjordan — the part of the land located east of the Jordan River — until they reached a point considerably south of their objective, which was the southern end of the Dead Sea. From this point, they returned to attack Sodom and Gomorrah.

As they marched southward through Transjordan, they subdued in turn the Rephaim, the Zuzim and the Horites. We do not know exactly who these peoples were, though we do know something about them. The Rephaim were of the earlier inhabitants of the land of Canaan, who held it prior to the Canaanites. The place called Ashteroth Karnaim seems to have been located in Bashan, some twenty miles east of the Sea of Galilee. The Zuzim are thought to be the same as the Zamzumim who are mentioned elsewhere (Deut. 2:20). The Emim were also very early inhabitants of Palestine. Shaveh Kiriathaim means "the Plain of the Twin Cities." The exact location is not known; it may have been north of the Arnon, on the east side of the Jordan.

From Shaveh Kiriathaim the eastern kings marched in a wide curve, eastward, southward and westward again, arriving at a point straight south of the Dead Sea — the mountains of Seir, and El-paran" which is by the wilderness." Here they attacked the Horites or "cave dwellers." The exact location of El-Paran is not known, but it may have been Elath on the Red Sea, or it may have been on the northern border of the Sinai peninsula.

"And they returned, and came to En-mishpat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwell in Hazezon-tamar" (14:7). En-mishpat means "well of judgment" or "fountain of judgment." The later name, which Moses inserts in the record, was Kadesh, that is, Kadesh Barnea, which was an important place in the wanderings of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan. It was located about 100 miles southwest of the present southern limit of the Dead Sea. Moses states that the

eastern kings smote the country of the Amalekites; he does not say that they smote the Amalekites. This is important, for as we know from Gen. 36:12 that the Amalekites were descended from Esau, Abraham's grandson, there could not have been any Amalekites in Abraham's time. What is meant is that Chedorlaomer and his allies smote the people living in the region which later became the country of the Amalekites.

#### Questions:

1. What did God promise Abraham concerning the number of his descendants?
2. Is the statement about Abraham's seed to be taken literally?
3. What did God command Abraham to do at this time?
4. What action on Abraham's part would afford evidence of his faith?
5. How could Abraham be sure that his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan?
6. After moving his tent to the plain of Mamre at Hebron, what act did Abraham perform which showed his devotion to God?
7. Besides being an act of devotion to God, what purpose was served by Abraham's building an altar?
8. What new light does chapter 14 throw on the personality of Abraham?
9. How many kings are named in 14:1, 2?
10. From what two regions did these kings come?
11. What is known or thought as to the identity of some of these kings?
12. Where were Sodom and Gomorrah probably located? What may be the reason why archaeologists have never found the ruins of these cities?
13. What kings were probably included in the expression "all these" in 14:3?
14. What was the probable location of the valley of Siddim?
15. How long did the kings of the Dead Sea region pay tribute to Chedorlaomer?
16. What decision did they make?
17. What was Chedorlaomer's reaction to the news from Palestine?
18. What is remarkable about the route followed by Chedorlaomer?
19. What would be the most direct route from Babylonia to the Dead Sea? Why would this route not be a practicable one to take?
20. What was the usual route between Babylonia and Egypt?
21. From what direction did the eastern kings enter Palestine?
22. What region did they attack first?
23. What is known about the Rephaim and the Zuzim?
24. Where was Ashteroth Karnaim located?
25. What is the meaning of the name Shaveh Kiriathaim?
26. How far south did the eastern kings go?
27. What is the meaning of the name En-misphat?
28. What is meant by "the country of the Amalekites"?
29. Why is it impossible that there were Amalekites there in Abraham's time?

### LESSON 34

#### III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joesph. 11:27 to 50:26, continued

##### 2. The history of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

Last of all, before attacking Sodom and Gomorrah, the eastern kings attacked and defeated the Amorites who lived in Hazezon-tamar. "Amorites" was sometimes used as a general, inclusive name for the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan. Sometimes it means the most important tribal division of the Canaanites. They lived in various areas, both north and south. Hazezon-tamar means "pruning of a palm" or perhaps "the sandy region of palms." 2 Chron. 20:2 proves that

this place was identical with En-gedi, which was located on the western shore of the Dead Sea, almost directly east of Hebron. Now the eastern kings thought that they had disposed of all minor enemies that were worth conquering. Accordingly, from En-gedi they proceed to their main objective, namely Sodom and Gomorrah.

"And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim; with Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of El-

lasar; four kings with five" (14:8, 9). Why did the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah and the neighboring cities wait until so late before actually taking the field against the invading kings from the east. Certainly they must have known of what was going on, and that the real cause of the war was their own refusal to pay the usual annual tribute to Chedorlaomer. It is possible that the evil, dissipated mode of living which was characteristic of these cities made them reluctant to fight until they absolutely had to. Even then it was only a token defence; they were not strong enough to resist the powerful force from Babylonia. If they had been sensible they would have paid the tribute year by year, rather than risk attack by powerful forces which they could not expect to overcome.

The battlefield was the valley of Siddim. This apparently means the area which is today covered by the waters of the southern third of the Dead Sea. Evidently in those days it was not yet undated.

"And the vale of Siddim was full of slime pits" (14:10). Here slime pits means pits of bitumen. This bitumen or "pitch" was a natural mineral found in the region. This substance resembles asphalt and when warm would be gummy or sticky.

"And the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain" (14:10b). This statement cannot mean literally that the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fell into bitumen pits and there died, for in verse 17 we see that the king of Sodom survived the battle. Rather, the meaning seems to be that when the battle began to go against them, some of the Dead Sea kings took the cowardly way of escape by hiding in some of the bitumen pits, while the rest of their forces, as far as possible, escaped to the hills.

"And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed" (14:11, 12.) The defeat of the kings in the valley of Siddim had of course left the cities defenceless. All defending forces had been defeated and scattered. Accordingly the victorious eastern kings now proceed to loot the cities, Sodom and Gomorrah. Everything that they considered worth carrying away they took, together with all available food supplies. When the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and the scattered remnants of their army would return later, they would find a very distressing situation.

The eastern kings also took numerous prisoners, as is shown by verse 16. Among these, they took Lot, Abraham's nephew. Presumably Lot's wife and daughters were also taken captive at

this time. Then the conquering forces took their departure.

Lot, Abraham's nephew, had been taken prisoner. Presumably he would be taken to Babylonia and there sold as a slave. It would be a sad and painful way of returning to the land where he was born. And if it had not been for Abraham, and the God of Abraham, that is what would no doubt have happened to Lot. Though Lot compromised with the world, and did not serve God as he should have done, still it was through the mercy of God, implemented by prompt action on Abraham's part, that Lot was rescued.

"And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram" (14:13). An escaping soldier of the Sodomite army brings news of the battle and the looting to Abraham. Abraham is called "the Hebrew," a term which means "man of the other side", that is, a man from beyond the Euphrates. Later the term Hebrew came to be used as a designation of nationality in contrast to other nationalities, such as the Amorites who are mentioned in this same verse.

Apparently Chedorlaomer and his allies had not attempted to conquer these local chiefs mentioned in verse 13. Perhaps they thought them not numerous or important enough to be worth a battle. However, they were to learn later that Abraham was considerably more of a military leader than were the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Mamre, Eshcol and Aner, local Amorite chiefs, are mentioned as being "confederate with Abram." This fact has been cited by some as justifying religious fellowship and co-operation between Bible-believing Christians and modernists who are really unbelievers or adherents of a false religion (Unitarianism). If Abraham was confederate with these Amorite chiefs, who of course held a false religion, then why cannot Bible-believing Christians of the present day participate in the ecumenical movement of the National and World Councils of Churches, even though it is known to be dominated by men who are apostate from the Christianity of the Bible?

In answer to this question, it should be said that there is no evidence whatever that Abraham participated in any religious fellowship with these local Amorite chiefs. The league or confederation between them was of a civil nature, pure and simple. He did not join in their sacrifices, nor they in his. It was a civil league for mutual defence against military foes. Christian people can properly co-operate with unbelievers in civil matters, but religious fellowship between Christians and unbelievers is strictly forbidden by the Word of God (1 Cor. 10:21, 22; 2 Cor. 6:14-18). A Bible-

believing Christian may join a sheriff's posse to apprehend kidnappers, even though other members of the force are unbelievers; he may not have religious fellowship with unbelievers.

"And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan" (14:14). Here Lot is called Abraham's brother, which of course means his kinsman; actually, Lot was Abraham's nephew. Abraham took immediate action. Here is the great hero of faith, showing on this occasion that faith can be a very practical thing and can lead to very decisive action.

Abraham might have reasoned that Lot was not worthy of being rescued. The rescuing expedition would of course involve considerable danger, as well as great hardship and expense. He might have reasoned that what had happened to Lot had served him right for his selfish, worldly attitude. But Abraham is a truly great man and does not let such considerations stand in the way of his doing the right and generous thing under the circumstances. Accordingly, he immediately organized a relief expedition and pursues the eastern kings.

The record speaks of 318 trained men, born in Abraham's household. The fact that they were born and reared in his household would mean that Abraham could depend on them in case of critical emergency. If Abraham had 318 men that could immediately serve as soldiers, his entire establishment — men, women and children — must have numbered a thousand or more.

#### Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the term Amorites?
2. Where was Hazezon-tamar located, and what was it later called?
3. What may be the explanation of why the

kings of the Dead Sea region did not go out to fight sooner?

4. Where was the crucial battle fought?
5. What is meant by slime pits?
6. How did the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah escape death at the hands of the conquering army?
7. What happened to the rest of the defending forces?
8. What did the eastern kings take from Sodom and Gomorrah?
9. What relative of Abraham was taken captive by the eastern kings?
10. What happened to Lot when the eastern kings entered Sodom?
11. If Abraham had not intervened, what would probably have been the final fate of Lot?
12. Who brought Abraham news of the battle and of what had happened to Lot?
13. What is the meaning of the term "Hebrew"?
14. What local Amorite chiefs were allied to Abraham?
15. Why does Abraham's alliance with these Amorite chiefs not justify Bible-believing Christians joining the National and World Councils of Churches?
16. What action did Abraham take when he learned of what had happened at Sodom?
17. What does this action show about Abraham's character?
18. How many men did Abraham take to pursue the eastern kings?
19. What does the number of the men indicate as to the total size of Abraham's establishment?

### LESSON 35

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

##### 2. The history of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:12, cont.

Abraham pursued the withdrawing eastern kings as far as Dan. This raises the question of what Dan this was. The place commonly called Dan, as in the expression "from Dan to Beersheba", was at the northern limit of Palestine, about ten miles north of the Waters of Merom. It has been commonly supposed that it was this Dan to which Abraham pursued the eastern kings. However, Leupold points out that there was another Dan, mentioned in 2 Samuel 24:6 as Dan-jaan, and per-

haps referred to in Deut. 34:1. This Dan-jaan was located in Gilead, that is, the region east of the Jordan, considerably south of the other Dan. Dan-jaan would be perhaps 20 miles from the southern end of the Dead Sea (Leupold, I, p. 459). It is possible that Abraham pursued the fleeing kings to this Dan-jaan. However, Dr. Nelson Glueck (The River Jordan, pp. 73-78), is of the opinion that it was the northern Dan, near one of the sources of the Jordan River. He thinks it probable that Abraham's pursuit was a lightning northward raid up the Jordan valley.

"And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand

of Damascus" (14:15). Abraham here shows his ability as a military strategist. Of course his 318 men could not compare in numbers with the forces of Chedorlaomer and his allies. Therefore Abraham must make up in some other way what he lacks in strength of numbers. He decides upon a surprise attack, and divides his force against the enemy. "One can visualize the manner in which the victorious army returning back home lay scattered about, secure in the thought of having none to attack them, flushed with victory and, perhaps, with drink; no sentinels posted; nothing farther from the thoughts of all than an attack" (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, I, p. 460).

Abraham's bold strategy was successful. Chedorlaomer and his allies were taken completely by surprise. It had apparently never entered their thought that, after all their successful conquests, Abraham the Hebrew might take them by surprise as they were returning home to Babylonia. We are not given the details of the battle, but it must have been swift and certainly it was decisive. Here we see the hand of God revealed in history. Man proposes, but God disposes. These mighty kings now discover that a few people by faith in the true God can accomplish wonders.

"And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people" (14:16). Lot, Abraham's nephew, was alive and well, and even his property was recovered. Abraham also freed the women who had been captured. "The people" may mean soldiers of Sodom and Gomorrah who had been taken prisoner.

The question has been raised whether Abraham was justified in undertaking this expedition. In answer to this it may certainly be stated that he was fully justified in doing so. Certainly Sodom and Gomorrah were wicked cities, and certainly Lot was doing wrong in living in Sodom. But on the other hand, by what right did Chedorlaomer and the other eastern kings claim sovereignty over, and annual tribute from, cities located far from their own country in the land of Canaan? This claim of Chedorlaomer was nothing more than inexcusable imperialism and was based on no higher consideration than the old lie that "might makes right." Whether Sodom and Gomorrah were wicked cities or not was not the question at issue at the time. That came up later and God indeed destroyed these cities because of their wickedness. But at the time we are considering, Abraham was defending people, including his own nephew, against selfish aggression.

"And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale" (14:17).

Abraham now returns triumphant from the expedition. The king of Sodom, who had saved his life by hiding in a bitumen pit, now comes out publicly to welcome the returning hero Abraham. Just what place is meant by the valley of Shaveh is not known. Presumably the added identification of it as "the king's dale" made it clear to ancient readers of Genesis. It is thought that it may have been the valley of the brook Kidron, to the northeast of Jerusalem. If this is correct, the king of Sodom travelled a considerable distance to welcome the returning Abraham. Presumably he had already received advance news of what had happened in the far north.

Next we are introduced to Melchizedek, one of the most remarkable and mysterious characters of Scripture. "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God" (14:18). The name Melchizedek means literally "king of righteousness" (cf. Hebrews 7:1, 2). The word Salem means peace, but is here used as the designation of the city over which Melchizedek ruled. Salem is an abbreviated form of the name Jerusalem. So his name was "king of righteousness" and his title was "king of Jerusalem." In addition to this, it is stated that he was the priest of the most high God (El Elyon). Thus this man combined in his own person the two offices of kingship and priesthood — something unknown among the Israelites, where these two divine institutions were always kept distinct and separate. In this respect, as is explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Melchizedek typifies Christ, who is both king and priest in one person.

Who was Melchizedek? How does it come that a king of a city located in a country given over to idolatry is priest of the Most High God? Later we find Jerusalem inhabited by a strong tribe known as the Jebusites, who are finally conquered by king David, almost a thousand years after the time of Abraham. Just who the inhabitants of Jerusalem were in the days of Abraham we do not know. However, it is safe to say that Melchizedek was a believer in and worshipper of the true God. He is one of those who had maintained the original monotheism from the time of Noah. Another example of the same adherence to primitive monotheism may be seen in the case of Job, though we do not know exactly when he lived. Melchizedek is proof that at the time of Abraham belief in the one true God had not been completely and universally extinguished by pagan polytheism.

Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine. This was a gift to Abraham and his men, returning from the far north. Melchizedek "expresses his friendship and perhaps his religious kinship with Abram by offering the most common form of meat and drink" (Leupold, exposition of Gen-

esis, I, pp. 463-4). It was a public token of support and approval. Some Bible students have treated this offering on the part of Melchizedek as a type of the Lord's Supper, because of the mention of bread and wine. However, there is no basis for this idea. This was not a sacrament but rather a token of honor, friendship and support.

Leupold mentions an extra-Biblical Jewish tradition to the effect that Melchizedek was none other than Shem, the son of Noah, and states that there is no reason to accept this. If we accept Usher's chronology, it would follow that Shem was still living at the time of Abraham. But the notion that Melchizedek was the same person as Shem must be rejected as a Jewish fable.

#### Questions:

1. What was Abraham's first stopping place in his pursuit of the eastern kings?
2. What two possibilities exist as to the location of the Dan mentioned in verse 14?
3. What route did Abraham probably follow in his northward trip?
4. Where did Abraham finally overtake the fleeing kings?
5. What was Abraham's strategy for the attack?
6. What was the outcome of the encounter?
7. How can Abraham's success be explained?
8. Was it right for Abraham to go on this expedition?
9. Besides the people who were rescued, what was recovered?
10. Who came out to meet Abraham as he returned home?
11. What may have been the location of the valley of Shaveh or the king's dale?
12. What is the meaning of the name Melchizedek?
13. What was Melchizedek's official position?
14. What is the meaning of Salem?
15. What is the full form of the name Salem?
16. Besides being king of Salem, what official position did Melchizedek hold?
17. In what special way does Melchizedek typify Christ?
18. How can we explain the existence of a king in a city of Palestine who believed in and served the true God, at a time when idolatry was prevalent everywhere?
19. What did Melchizedek present to Abraham?
20. What was the meaning of this presentation?
21. What should be thought of the idea that Melchizedek's gift typified the Lord's Supper?
22. What should be thought of the Jewish tradition that Melchizedek was the same person as Shem the son of Noah?

### LESSON 36

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

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

At this point we must mention another mistaken idea concerning Melchizedek. The Epistle to the Hebrews (7:3) speaks of Melchizedek as "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; . . .". This language has been interpreted to mean that Melchizedek was literally without father, mother, etc., and therefore that he was more than a human being, and was in fact a theophany, or a manifestation of Christ, the second person of the divine Trinity, before our Lord's incarnation.

This view has been held by many sincere Christians, but it must be rejected as a mistaken interpretation. The point of the passage in

Hebrews is not that Melchizedek was Christ, but that he **resembled** Christ in certain respects. If he actually was the Son of God, it could not be said of him that he was "made like unto the Son of God." The Epistle to the Hebrews treats Melchizedek as a type of Christ. But if he was a type of Christ, then he cannot have been Christ Himself. The connection between a type and its antitype is not identity, but similarity.

Actually, the language used concerning Melchizedek is not to be taken literally. The statement that he had no father or mother, etc., merely means that his genealogy, birth, death, etc., are not recorded in the pages of Scripture. Concerning Abraham, we know his genealogy, his birth and also his death; concerning Melchizedek, we know none of these things. He appears suddenly in the pages of Old Testament history, and as suddenly vanishes again. Except for a single mention in Psalm 110, we do not meet him again

until we come to the Epistle to the Hebrews. So, as far as the written record was concerned, he was without father, without mother, etc.

This fact that, so far as the written record was concerned, Melchizedek was without parents, beginning or end of life, peculiarly fitted him to be a type of Christ, the Son of God in His office of priest. That is why Psalm 110 speaks of Christ as a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Christ is an eternal priest. His priesthood has no end. The Israelite priests of the tribe of Levi could typify Christ's priestly office in some respects, as, for example, his offering a sacrifice to atone for human sin. But the Jewish priests could not typify Christ's perpetual or eternal priesthood, for the simple reason that none of them held the office of priest very long. Each in turn died and was succeeded by someone else. But Christ continues permanently as priest. Hence Melchizedek, who, so far as the record goes, is a timeless figure, could typify Christ as a timeless or eternal priest. This interpretation of the statements about Melchizedek is quite in line with the rest of the Epistle to the Hebrews in its treatment of the Old Testament. We may conclude, then, that Melchizedek was only human, and actually had parents, was born, died, etc., though these facts are not recorded about him in Scripture. He was in certain respects like Christ, but he was not identical with Christ.

"And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all" (14:19, 20). No doubt Abraham would always remember this scene. Here is Melchizedek, the honored priest of God Most High, pronouncing a solemn blessing on Abraham. The Epistle to the Hebrews uses this incident to prove that Melchizedek's priesthood is higher than that of Aaron, and therefore that Christ's priesthood (being after the order of Melchizedek) must be higher than that of the Jewish priests. For it is a recognized principle that blessing is bestowed by superiors on inferiors, not the other way around (Hebrews 7:7). Here Melchizedek blessed Abraham; therefore Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. But the Jewish priests, from Aaron on down, were descended from Abraham. Therefore their priesthood was of a lower order than that of Melchizedek.

"And he gave him tithes of all." This means, of course, that Abraham gave Melchizedek one tenth of all the loot that had been recovered from Chedorlaomer and his allies. Here we have a clear recognition, on Abraham's part, of the valid religious office and high religious dignity of Melchizedek. This is the first mention of the practice of tithing in Scripture, and it is a very interesting one. It is mentioned again in the life of Jacob (Gen. 28:22).

The remaining verses of chapter 14 record the conversation between Abraham and the king of Sodom, after Abraham's successful completion of his rescue mission. In verse 17 we are told that "the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and of the kings that were with him at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale." It is probable, but not certain, that this was the same king of Sodom as the one mentioned earlier, who fell in the slime pits of the vale of Siddim (verse 10). In verse 21 the king of Sodom addresses Abraham, saying, "Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself." This was a reasonable proposal, as Abraham had gone to much trouble and expense and had incurred no little danger in his rescue expedition. The king of Sodom could expect to get his people back but he could not lawfully claim the return of all the looted goods. So the king of Sodom, recognizing his great indebtedness to Abraham, is prepared to let Abraham keep the goods.

Abraham, however, refuses to keep the goods which had been recovered. He replies to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." Abraham was not a covetous man, and he had not undertaken this expedition from motives of material gain. But there was an even more important consideration. "Abram desires to stand out clearly as a man who prospers only because of God's blessing . . . Least of all could Abram accept a generous bestowal from a man of the calibre of the king of Sodom, a purely sensual materialist and idolater" (Leupold). Calvin comments that it was useless for the king of Sodom to try to show due gratitude to Abraham, as long as he remained ungrateful to God, "by whose severity and clemency he remained alike unprofit-ed."

Abraham mentions having sworn an oath: "I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord." This is the first reference in the Bible to the swearing of an oath. Evidently swearing an oath was something already ancient and well known; there is no reason to suppose that this is the first oath sworn in human history. Abraham speaks as if the king of Sodom would readily understand his meaning. Note that even in this ancient day the manner of swearing an oath was by lifting the hand towards heaven, "to show that we appeal to God as a witness, and also as an avenger, if we fail to keep our oath" (Calvin).

Some have wondered why Abraham should consider this occasion important enough to warrant swearing a solemn oath by the name of the Lord. Calvin states that two reasons may be given why Abraham acted as he did. First, to convince the king of Sodom that he really meant what he said;

the king of Sodom, being a heathen and therefore accustomed to a low standard of truthfulness, might not have been convinced without a solemn oath in the name of Abraham's God. Second, it was important to Abraham to make it clear to everyone that his motives in waging war were not mercenary or selfish ones. Abraham's refusal to keep the goods was not caused by pride but by principle.

In swearing, Abraham called the Lord "God Most High" (**El Elyon**), the same divine name used by Melchizedek in verse 19. Thus a testimony was borne that Abraham's God was the same as the God worshipped by Melchizedek king of Salem.

There was one exception to Abraham's refusal to accept any of the recovered loot. The chiefs who had accompanied Abraham were to take their portion. Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, Abraham's allies, were not bound by Abraham's oath, and they were of course free to make whatever settlement or arrangement they might see fit between themselves and the king of Sodom.

Leupold comments that the close of chapter 14 shows that Abraham was not only courageous but also extremely considerate of the honor of the Lord, and that his faith was utterly unselfish.

#### Questions:

1. What does Hebrews 7:3 say about Melchizedek?
2. How has the statement that Melchizedek was "without father, without mother", etc., sometimes been interpreted?
3. Why is it impossible to hold that Melchizedek actually was Christ?
4. What is the real point of the statements in Hebrews 7 about Melchizedek?

5. After Genesis 14, where do we next meet Melchizedek in the pages of Scripture?

6. How could Melchizedek specially typify Christ's priesthood?

7. What blessing did Melchizedek pronounce on Abraham?

8. What truth does the Epistle to the Hebrews draw from the fact that Melchizedek blessed Abraham?

9. What did Abraham give to Melchizedek?

10. What proposal did the king of Sodom make to Abraham?

11. Why was this a reasonable and natural proposal to make?

12. What was Abraham's reply to the king of Sodom?

13. What may have been Abraham's reasons for replying as he did?

14. In what way was Abraham's statement to the king of Sodom specially solemn?

15. Where is the practice of swearing an oath first mentioned in the Bible?

16. Why is the hand lifted up in swearing an oath?

17. Why was Abraham warranted in using a solemn oath on this occasion?

18. What name of God did Abraham use in his oath?

19. What special testimony was borne by the use of this name?

20. What exception did Abraham specify in his refusal to accept any of the recovered property?

### LESSON 37

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

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

We now come to chapter 15 which records God's covenant with Abraham. The word "covenant" has appeared earlier in Genesis, at 6:18 and several times in chapter 9, in connection with the history of Noah. The provision made by God for Adam and Eve to come into full religious communion with Himself was truly a covenant, having all the elements of such a provision, yet the word "covenant" is not used of it in the Genesis record. In the history of Abraham the term "covenant" — Hebrew **berith** — is now introduced. This is one

of the great concepts of the Bible, and without a grasp of its meaning, it is impossible truly to understand the message of the Scriptures. The student is referred to the series of articles on **The Covenant-Idea in Scripture** in this magazine, starting in the April-June 1953 issue and coming to a conclusion in the July 1955 issue (Vol. 8 No. 2 through Vol. 10 No. 3). Mr. Frazer shows that the covenant-idea is rooted in the sovereignty of God, and that the rather common notion that the covenant is simply an agreement is wrong.

"After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (15:1). The vision here mentioned is the fifth re-

corded revelation of God granted to Abraham. The question may be raised why this revelation of God came at this particular time. One possibility is that Abraham was somewhat fearful that Chedorlaomer and his allied kings would come back later to take vengeance on him. The fact that God's statement opens with the words "Fear not" and goes on to add "I am thy shield" seems to fit in well with this idea. Another possibility is that now that Abraham was remarkably successful, he might expect to be envied by local kings and chiefs. Calvin suggests the foregoing possibilities. Leupold admits that there is some probability in them, but adds that the rest of the chapter indicates that the fear which Abraham was to avoid was not a fear of military enemies, but a fear of remaining childless.

Abraham is not to fear, precisely because God is his shield and his exceeding great reward. The word "shield" conveys the idea of protection. Those who are shielded by God are always perfectly safe. "In calling Himself his 'reward' He teaches Abram to be satisfied with Himself alone. And as this was, with respect to Abram, a general instruction, given for the purpose of showing him that victory was not the chief and ultimate good which God had designed him to pursue; so let us know that the same blessing is promised to us all, in the person of this one man" (Calvin). Calvin adds that "since God ascribes to Himself the office and property of a shield, for the purpose of rendering Himself the protector of our salvation; we ought to regard this promise as a brazen wall, so that we should not be excessively fearful in any dangers."

God declares that He Himself is Abraham's exceeding great reward. It is not merely that those who belong to God shall have a reward; it is that God Himself is their reward—He is their everlasting portion and possession. Here we see the God-centered character of the Biblical religion. People today speak of religion as a matter of values. Religion is wanted today for the benefits that can be expected from it — it can check crime, curb juvenile delinquency, prevent a third world war, promote social justice. Yet if we want religion only for such reasons as these, actually we are not religious at all. To serve God for what can be gotten from God (by the individual or by society) is not really to serve God at all. Really to serve God, we must serve Him for His own sake. The greatest benefit that God can give His own is the possession of Himself in the covenant bond. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." Much that is called religion today is really only selfishness or at best humanistic concern for the welfare of society. Only when God is known and loved for His own sake does religion really exist.

This revelation of God came to Abraham in the form of a vision. The word used is not the

ordinary word for vision, but a rare word which occurs only three times in the Bible (Gen. 15:1; Num. 24:4, 16; Ezek. 13:7). Visions were something like dreams yet different from the latter. A vision was a supernaturally induced state in which God caused the person to see certain things. The person would know definitely and without any doubt that the source of the vision was God. Sometimes in visions actions took place, both on the part of God and also on the part of the recipient of the vision. This is the technical meaning of the term "vision." Later in the Old Testament the term "vision" came to be used also in a more general sense, as equivalent to "special revelation", regardless of the exact mode of revelation. The modern, purely metaphorical use of the term "vision" is not found in the Bible. This purely modern usage regards "vision" as equivalent to "intelligent and imaginative foresight", as when someone says: "By voyaging westward across the Atlantic, Columbus showed himself to be a man of vision." Endless confusion and harm results from the all too common importing of this modern usage into the Bible, and interpreting the word "vision" in the Bible as having this wholly modern meaning. Countless sermons have been preached on the text "Where there is no vision the people perish," which completely miss the real meaning of this text and read into it a modern meaning which is really foreign to the Bible. The text really means that without the gracious, special revelation of God the people perish. It has nothing to do with the idea that the local merchants and professional people ought to be community-minded.

"And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir" (15:2, 3). God first give Abraham an opportunity to express the thoughts that were troubling him, before revealing to him the promises which would afford new comfort and hope. Abraham wonders what God could give him; he is going on through life childless; as a runner approaching the goal in a race, he thinks of himself as having only a little distance yet to go.

The patriarch adds that his only heir is "this Eliezer of Damascus." In the Hebrew it is "my heir is Damascus Eliezer." This seems to imply that Eliezer originally came from Damascus. From this statement of Abraham grew the entirely unhistorical tradition that he once lived in Damascus and even was king of that city. "One born in my house" may be translated "one belonging to my household"; in the Hebrew it is "a son of my house." That is, Eliezer was not Abraham's son but his servant or slave. Leupold remarks that though this was tragic for Abraham, it shows the comparatively good treatment accorded to ser-

vants at that time, and in Abraham's establishment, for in the absence of children of the master, the children of the chief servant were regarded as heirs.

As to the problem of how Eliezer could be both a Damascene and also one born in Abraham's house, (1) he may be said to be "of Damascus" merely because his father or ancestors came from there; or (2) he may be called "son" of Abraham's house merely because he was attached to that household, not because he was really born in it.

"And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir" (15:4). This statement of God indicates that He approved of Abraham's wish to have a child of his own. The word "behold" in this verse, and the similar usage of it elsewhere, calls attention to the fact that something very remarkable and important is about to be related. A special, direct revelation of God is always a fact of outstanding importance, so attention is called to it by the word "behold" (sometimes translated "lo"). The language used proves to Abraham that God's promise that he would have a son is to be taken literally: "he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir."

"And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be" (15:5). This, of course, is still in the vision. Abraham is directed to look at the starry heavens and see if he can count the stars. The point of the comparison is the impossibility of counting either the stars or the descendants of Abraham. All allegorical meanings, such as the notion that this verse proves that the descendants of Abraham shall be a heavenly people, are unwarranted. The only point of comparison is innumerability.

We must now consider the question as to the meaning of "thy seed" in this promise of God to Abraham. Calvin states that the posterity of Ishmael and of Esau cannot be counted, because the legitimate seed of Abraham was limited to those descended from Isaac through Jacob; yet even many of the descendants of Jacob became covenant breakers and cut themselves off from the divine redemptive promise and became aliens from the faith of their fathers. Calvin concludes that the term "seed" in this verse means "the whole people whom God has adopted to Himself. But since many were alienated by their unbelief, we must come for information to Christ, who alone distinguishes true and genuine sons from such as are illegitimate. By pursuing this method, we find the posterity of Abram reduced to a small number, that afterwards it may be the more increased. For in Christ the Gentiles also are gathered together, and are by faith ingrafted into

the body of Abram, so as to have a place among his legitimate sons."

"And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (15:6). Here we have the first occurrence of the word "believe" in the Bible. "None of us would be able to conceive the rich and hidden doctrine which this passage contains unless Paul had borne his torch before us (Rom. 4:3)" (Calvin). Here at this early point of the Bible we find taught the doctrine of free justification by faith. All forms of human works and character as grounds of a right standing before God are excluded. Man gets a right standing before God in one way alone, by faith which grasps God's redemptive promise.

The Bible never regards faith from the psychological sense which is so common at the present day. Today we are told by many people that it is the attitude of faith that is important, regardless of who or what is believed. People speak of faith as if it meant something like "morale" or "self-confidence" or "courage", and they say that a man's theology is not important, so long as he has an attitude of faith. Nothing of this sort is to be found anywhere in the Bible. In the Bible it is not the act or attitude of faith that is important, but the **object** of faith — the doctrine that is believed, or the Person in whom one believes. Let us not be deceived by the many references to "faith" in the liberal religious propaganda of our day.

"And he counted it to him for righteousness." In New Testament terminology this might be paraphrased: "And he justified him through it." "Righteousness" means conformity to the moral requirements of God. By reason of his faith Abraham is regarded as a righteous person by God. The idea is not that God accepts faith as a substitute for real righteousness, but that when a person has true faith, God "imputes" or credits the perfect righteousness of Christ to that person.

The Pharisees were quite blind to this truth that Abraham was justified by faith, and the Jews have been blind to it ever since. And even in nominally Christian circles, nothing is more common than to find the Biblical truth of justification by faith denied or distorted. Calvin remarks that "in all ages, Satan has labored at nothing more assiduously than to extinguish, or to smother, the gratuitous justification of faith, which is here expressly asserted . . . Just as we understand that they to whom iniquity is imputed are guilty before God; so those to whom He imputes righteousness are approved by Him as just persons; wherefore Abram was received into the number and rank of just persons, by the imputation of righteousness."

#### Questions:

1. Where does the word "covenant" first appear in the Bible?

2. Why is the provision which God made for Adam and Eve to enjoy religious fellowship with Himself rightly called a covenant?

3. In what fact is the Biblical covenant-idea rooted?

4. What may have been the reason why God revealed Himself to Abraham at this particular time?

5. Taking chapter 15 as a whole, what is the fear which God warned Abraham against?

6. What is the idea conveyed by the word "shield"?

7. What is the importance of God's promise in 15:1 to us today?

8. What reward was promised to Abraham?

9. How is religion often wrongly regarded today?

10. What is man's chief end, or real purpose in existence?

11. What is meant by the term "vision"?

12. How is the word "vision" used later in the Old Testament in a broader sense than that of Gen. 15:1?

13. How is the word "vision" often used today?

14. How does this modern usage of the word "vision" differ from the Biblical usage of the term?

15. What thought was troubling Abraham at this time?

16. Who was Abraham's only heir at this time?

17. What is the meaning of the expression "one born in my house"?

18. What may be the reason why Eliczer is said to be "of Damascus"?

19. What is the importance of the word "behold" in 15:4?

20. Why did God command Abraham to look at the stars?

21. What is meant by "thy seed" in God's promise to Abraham?

22. What important Bible word occurs for the first time in 15:6?

23. How did Abraham come to be counted righteous before God?

24. How is faith often wrongly regarded at the present day?

25. In distinction from modern religious thought, how is faith regarded in the Bible?

26. What important doctrine, fully revealed in the New Testament, is illustrated by the history of Abraham at this point?

27. Why has Satan always labored to abolish or distort this particular doctrine?

28. How is justification defined in the Shorter Catechism?

### LESSON 38

#### 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.

"And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" (15:7, 8). This is still part of the vision. God has yet more to reveal to Abraham. By reminding him that God is the one who brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees, God causes Abraham to realize that his whole life is part of a divine plan. This plan is only partly completed; but God will carry it all to completion. So He promises Abraham that He will give him the land of Canaan to inherit it. The patriarch naturally asks for some token whereby he shall be fully assured of this inheritance. This request on Abraham's part is not to be regarded as indicating doubt, or lack of faith in God's promise, but rather the desire for

an even fuller conviction than he already had. There are various analogies in the Bible, such as Gideon's request for a sign (Judges 6:17 ff.) and the question asked by Mary (Luke 1:34). Such requests proceed not from the unbelief but from faith. Calvin states that the protracted delay in fulfilling the promise was a difficulty to Abraham's faith, so that his request for a token was not an improper one. "The more certainly Abram was persuaded that God was true, and the more he was attached to His Word, so much the more familiarly did he disburden his cares into God's bosom" (Calvin). Calvin adds that the instances in the Old Testament of some of God's saints requesting signs of miracles (as Hezekiah and Gideon) does not constitute any warrant for us in this New Testament dispensation to do the same; rather, he says, "let it suffice us to seek for such confirmation only as the Lord Himself, according to His own pleasure, shall judge most eligible."

"And he said unto him, Take me a heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old,

and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away" (15:9-11). What is stated here is the procedure for establishing a covenant. At this point we shall quote from the series of articles on **The Covenant-Idea in Scripture** by the Rev. Frank D. Frazer as found in the April-June 1954 issue of this magazine, page 65 (Vol. 9 No. 2):

"'On the day Jehovah **made a covenant** with Abram.' This is the first occurrence in Scripture of the expression **'karath b'rith,'** translated in our English version, **'made a covenant.'** The verb, **karath,** in its simple active form always means 'cut off'; as, for example, a piece of anything, a limb of a tree, a tree from its roots; hence, 'cut down' a forest, etc. In effect, it means 'cut in two'; therefore as applied to a living body, it implies a **violent death** and a **shedding of blood.** In its passive and causative forms usually applied to persons, it means 'cut off' from the presence of God, from the covenant people, from the land of the living, by the act of God. It is often used for the execution of divine judgment; the death penalty; the curse of the covenant for disobedience. Yet this heavy and awful significance of the word has been obscured by an inadequate and confusing translation, **'make a covenant.'** In our English usage, 'make a covenant' refers to the composing, and agreeing to certain terms, and the sealing of these by the parties. Here the reference is to a symbolic transaction by which Abram was to know **how** God Himself **mediated,** and so validated and put into effect, His own unilateral Covenant of Grace. . .

"There it is, pictured in symbols. See the heifer, the she-goat, the ram, the dove and the pigeon; **dead, cut in two, their blood poured out.** For Jehovah had said to Abram **'Take for Me . . . and he took for Him** all these and divided them in the midst.' **'Take for Me,'** since God Himself would provide the mediating victim. Here are not five victims, but all the kinds of animals afterwards used in sacrifice, each an appointed symbol of the one mediating victim, who would vicariously suffer the death demanded by the first covenant.

"Then, as the sun was setting, a manifestation of the divine presence appeared to Abram in his sleep. God told him his seed should be sojourners in a land not theirs, subjected to the oppression of evil; but that God would in due time, by judgment of their oppressors, separate them and bring them forth to possess their own inheritance. When it was dark, **'Behold a furnace of smoke, even a torch of fire, that passed between those pieces.'** (Here were not two symbols, but one: the verb 'passed' is singular, whence we are to understand

that the furnace and torch are one; the furnace appeared to be both smoking and blazing with fire.) **'For our God is a consuming fire'** (Deut. 4:24. Heb. 12:28). He is also **'the Light of the World,' 'the Light of Life'** (John 8:12). Compare **'the flame of the sword'** (Gen. 3:24).

"Thus, in symbol, the curse of the broken covenant was executed; not upon the guilty sinner, but, by the determinate counsel of God, upon a clean, sinless **substitute** which God Himself provided; and then, by His visible presence and action sanctioned the whole procedure as a true picture of how His covenant promises are made good, according to the greatness of His love and the exactness of His justice. **'On that day'** Jehovah showed Abram **how** he was to know of a surety that the covenant was mediated, validated and put into effect for him and for his seed forever. This true symbolism of the sacrifice was kept by the faithful seed of Abraham until the fulness of the time had come, when in reality **'the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world,'** **'was manifested in the flesh, and offered Himself without spot to God, to bear the sins of many — one sacrifice forever.'**

The record states that when the birds of prey came down upon the bodies of the killed animals, Abraham drove them away. The question may be raised, was this still a part of the vision, or was Abraham now awake and did he drive away real birds? We may further ask, was the bringing, killing and arranging of the animals and birds actually done with real animals and birds, or was all of this part of the vision only? These questions are easy to ask, but very difficult to answer. We shall quote from G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, pp. 84-5:

"In Gen. 15 . . . the night-time is repeatedly spoken of (vs. 5, 12, 17); and undoubtedly vs. 12-17 describe a real visionary experience. In vs. 1 the word 'vision' occurs: **'The word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision, saying. . .'** Now the question arises: how much of the following occurrences does this cover? Does it relate to vs. 1-12 or is it used by way of anticipation of vs. 12-17? The latter is difficult, because the participle 'saying' links what immediately follows it closely to the expression 'came in a vision' (vs. 1). And a chronological difficulty also arises if vs. 2-12 are to be understood as plain unvisionary discourse. The marking of the points in time at which the several items happened is such as to be hard to conceive in ordinary waking experience. In vs. 5 it is night, for stars are shining. In vs. 12 the sun is 'just going down.' In vs. 17 'the sun went down.' In a vision the ordinary laws of the sequence of time do not hold good. Consequently to place the whole disclosure in a vision removes the chronological difficulty, and enables us to consider the whole as a continuous narrative, the discrepancies of time notwithstanding. On this view

the vision does not begin with vs. 12; the seeing of the starry heavens in vs. 5 already belongs to it. And yet the 'deep sleep' and the 'horror of a great darkness' (vs. 12) so unmistakably describe the phenomena of a vision coming on, that we shall have to speak of a vision within a vision, something like the play within the play in 'Hamlet.' Still, the difficulty is not decisive. The sleep and the horror of a great darkness may perhaps stand for a heightened abnormal psychical state within the already abnormal visionary state as such. If the above, however, should appear too complicated, a simple though drastic, remedy is afforded by understanding the word 'vision' in vs. 1 as meaning generic revelation. To be sure, this does not remove the chronological difficulty between vs. 5 and vs. 12; for this it will be further necessary to place an interval of at least one day between the two points mentioned."

The above quotation will be sufficient to show the great difficulty of deciding just how much of Gen. 15 was included in the vision experience, and how much, if any, was experienced by Abraham while awake. There is, however, no question about verses 12-17 being a vision experience.

In this deep and mysterious supernatural vision it is revealed to Abraham that his descendants shall suffer for a long time in a foreign land. We should remember that the starting point of all this was Abraham's complaint about being childless. Before Abraham has any descendants at all, it is revealed to him by God that his posterity shall suffer much and long. "It is, however, to be observed, that before one son is given to Abram, he hears that his seed shall be, for a long time, in captivity and slavery. For thus does the Lord deal with His people; He always makes a beginning from death, so that by quickening the dead, He the more abundantly manifests His power" (Calvin).

God adds that He will later judge the nation that oppresses Abraham's descendants, and the people shall be brought out with great substance. Moreover, Abraham himself shall die in peace in a good old age, before these events take place. The expression "thou shalt go to thy fathers" is properly understood as meaning more than merely the fact that Abraham would die and be buried. For his ancestors were not buried in the land of Canaan at all. "So we find here a clear testimony to belief in an eternal life in the patriarchal age" (Leupold).

"But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (15:16). The Amorites were the most important tribe of the Canaanites. Because of this fact, the term "Amorites" is frequently used in the Bible as a general term for the inhabitants of the land of Canaan before its conquest by Israel. These Amorites were very wicked, but their guilt

had not yet reached its extreme development. The language used, however, indicates that they were already, in Abraham's time, approaching the point at which divine judgment must fall upon them. God in His goodness allows them a few more generations in which to repent of their wickedness. In his divine foreknowledge He realizes that they will not repent, and must therefore be destroyed. But this is not to be done until they have had the additional opportunity to repent.

We may wonder how a period of about 400 years can be regarded as four generations, as we are accustomed to regard a generation as about 30 years. We should realize that Abraham lived to the age of 175 years old, Isaac to the age of 180 years, Jacob to the age of 147 years, and Joseph to the age of 110 years. In view of these facts, it is not at all unnatural that the time of Israel's return from Egypt should be spoken of as "the fourth generation."

When we meet people who say they cannot believe that a good God would command the extermination of the Canaanites, we should remember that this extermination was an act of divine judgment executed only after long opportunity for repentance had been abused, and the people had only become worse.

#### Questions:

1. What may be the reason why God reminded Abraham that He had brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees?
2. Why would Abraham naturally want a token or explanation from God as to his inheritance of the land of Canaan?
3. What Bible analogies exist to Abraham's request?
4. What would be the effect on Abraham's faith of the long delay in the fulfilment of God's promise?
5. In response to Abraham's request, what instructions did God give?
6. What is the literal meaning of the Hebrew word translated "made" in the expression "made a covenant"?
7. What is the significance of the fact that the animals and birds were killed?
8. Why were these five kinds of living creatures specified by God?
9. What revelation as to the future of Abraham's descendants was given by God at this time?
10. How was the divine presence manifested to Abraham in his sleep?
11. How can it be shown that the "furnace of smoke" and the "torch of fire" were one and the same symbol of God's presence?

12. Since the certainty of Abraham's inheriting the land of Canaan depended on a blood atonement provided by God, what does this teach concerning all blessings which we receive from God?

13. What difficulty exists as to the interpretation of the statement of 15:1 that "the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision"?

14. If we regard the vision as beginning at verse 12, what chronological difficulty is involved in the reference to the stars (verse 5) and the sun (verse 12a)?

15. If we regard the vision as beginning at verse 1, then what must we believe about the experience related in verses 12-17?

16. What great fact about Abraham's descendants was revealed to him in the vision?

17. What truth about life after death is implied by the statement that Abraham should go to his fathers in peace.

18. Who were the Amorites? Besides the actual Amorite tribe, how is the term "Amorites" used in the Old Testament?

19. What was the moral condition of the Amorites in the time of Abraham?

20. How could a period of about 400 years be regarded as four generations?

21. Why did God decree the extermination of the Amorites?

22. Why was the extermination of the Amorites not contrary to the goodness of God?

### LESSON 39

#### 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 "smoking furnace" and the "burning lamp" which passed between the pieces of the sacrificial animals, represented the presence of God passing between them, for establishing the covenant. Leupold rightly reminds us that covenants made by God with men are not mutual agreements as between man and man. They proceed wholly from God, who takes the initiative and the responsibility for putting the covenant into operation and carrying it out completely.

"In that same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaim, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites" (15:18-21). Ten tribes or nations are enumerated here. We shall say something about them presently.

The term "the river of Egypt" in the Old Testament usually means, not the Nile, but a small stream which marked the boundary between Canaan and Egypt, running into the Mediterranean Sea about 50 miles south of Gaza. This small stream or wady is usually dry, but contains water after a period of rains. But in Gen. 15:18 the expression "the river of Egypt" can hardly mean this small brook, for it is contrasted with the Euphrates, which is one of the great rivers of the world. Therefore in Gen. 15:18 it must be the Nile which is meant. The promise that Abraham's descendants would inherit territory from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates need not be

understood as meaning that Israel's inheritance would extend to the actual water's edge of the Nile River. It is simply a way of saying that Egypt would constitute the southwestern border of the promised land. "These two major rivers were the easiest way of designating within what limits Israel's boundaries should lie" (Leupold). In much the same way we often say that Philadelphia and Washington are cities on America's east coast and Los Angeles is a city on America's west coast, while actually each of these cities is located miles from the ocean.

We sometimes meet with the statement that the promise made to Abraham in Gen. 15:18 has never yet been fulfilled, therefore the fulfilment must be still future. This, however, is not in accordance with the historical facts. As a matter of fact Israel twice in its history possessed all the territory promised to Abraham: first during the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 8:65), and again during the reign of Jeroboam the Second of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 14:25). The failure of Israel to hold this territory permanently, of course, was due to religious apostasy from God.

The listing of precisely ten tribes or nations here may be symbolic, indicating that a complete land was to be given to the posterity of Abraham. Actually there were other tribes, such as the Hivites, which are not mentioned in this verse. Moreover, some of those which are mentioned seem to overlap (Amorites and Canaanites).

The Kenites were originally inhabitants of the southern region, but later they lived also in the northern part of the land. Judges 1:16 informs us that Moses' father-in-law was of this people. About the Kenizzites little is known; possibly they too lived toward the south of Canaan. The name of the Kadmonites is derived from the word meaning "east", therefore it is thought that they lived

toward the east of Canaan. The Hittites are well known. Their main territory was in Asia Minor, or what is today Turkey. But there were also Hittites in Palestine. It was from Hittites or "sons of Heth" that Abraham purchased the field and cave of Machpelah for a cemetery. The Perizzites have already been mentioned in Gen. 13:7, along with Canaanites. The name Perizzites may perhaps mean something like "village dwellers", thus distinguishing them from those Canaanites who lived in fortified cities. Next the Rephaim are mentioned (the ending -im indicates the plural of a masculine noun in Hebrew). The Rephaim were evidently of the earlier inhabitants of Palestine, holding the land before the Canaanites came. The Amorites were mountain-dwellers, and a principal tribe of the Canaanites. Practically nothing is known about the Girgashites, except that they were a tribe of the land of Canaan. The Jebusties were a people living in and near Jerusalem, which they held until the time of King David, nearly a thousand years after the time of Abraham.

We now come to the birth of Ishmael (chapter 16.) Abraham and his wife Sarai being yet childless, Sarai proposes a plan by which a true heir may be provided. This is a history of deviating from faith in God's promise by the use of human methods out of harmony with the will of God. The action taken indicates a defect in the faith both of Abraham and of Sarai. The aim or end sought was good, namely, to provide a true heir of Abraham through whom the divine promise could be fulfilled; but the means used to attain the end were wrong and blameworthy.

At this time Abraham had been in the land of Canaan for about ten years (16:16 compared with 16:3 and 12:4), and he was 86 years of age. We might think Abraham already a very old man, but when we remember that he lived to the age of 175 years, we will realize that he was just about at the mid-point of his long life, for he still had 89 years to live.

According to common ancient custom, in a case like that of Abraham and Sarai, the wife could give her maid to her husband as a secondary wife, in the hope of begetting offspring. The children born would, of course, be claimed by the mistress as her own. Though such a procedure was certainly sanctioned by common custom and involved no social stigma or disapproval, still it cannot be pronounced right from the moral point of view, as it is not in accordance with the original institution of marriage. However, it is not surprising that Sarai thought of this method and apparently did not hesitate to adopt it.

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children: and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar" (16:1). As Hagar was an Egyp-

tian, she had no doubt been obtained when Abraham and Sarai were in Egypt (chapter 12).

"And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai" (16:2). This proposal involved some self-sacrifice on Sarai's part, which may perhaps partly explain the fact that Abraham so readily agreed to her proposal. Leupold suggests that Hagar herself may have been a true believer and have piously wished to help in fulfilling the divine promise to Abraham. This is possible, of course, yet it cannot be shown to be true. When all that can be said in favor of the course adopted by Abraham and Sarai has been taken into account, it remains true that what was done was wrong and sinful. It was wrong because it was contrary to the true institution or marriage as ordained by God at the creation; and it was wrong because it was an attempt to prop up the divine promise by the use of human expediency.

"And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes" (16:3, 4). The statement that Abraham "hearkened" unto Sarai his wife, implies that he approved of her proposal. No doubt the patriarch was impressed with his wife's unselfishness; this may indeed have blinded him more or less to the moral wrongness of what she had proposed.

As the plan works out, it becomes evident that Hagar is to bear a child. Now the real evil of polygamy begins to be evident. Envy and jealousy play a part. Leupold well remarks that "each of the three characters" — Abraham, Sarai and Hagar appears to disadvantage." First Hagar appears to disadvantage. "Her mistress was despised in her eyes." This statement implies that Hagar regarded Sarai with contempt or a lofty disdain which Sarai would of course notice and resent. After all, Sarai was the proper wife of the chief of the clan, while Hagar was only a slave woman from Egypt.

"And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee" (16:5). Sarai's statement, "My wrong be upon thee" probably means "You are to blame for the wrong I am suffering." This charge of Sarai against her husband was absolutely false and groundless. The whole business of making Hagar Abraham's secondary wife was Sarai's own idea, but now that some bad results are beginning to appear, she tries to put the blame on Abraham.

Her offended pride has blinded her eyes to the real facts in the case, so that she follows the natural sinful impulse to blame someone else. Sarai was evidently very angry, as shown by the strong expression: "the Lord judge between me and thee." Here we see that a sinful adoption of polygamy has put a barrier between husband wife, who were in harmony previously.

It is remarkable that Abraham did not become angry in turn, when accused in this angry and unjust way by Sarai. With remarkable emotional control he suggests the obvious remedy for the bad situation which has developed: "Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee" (15:6). That is, Hagar is still Sarai's maid, and therefore under her authority. Sarai can therefore take what measures she sees fit to correct her maid's contemptuous attitude. What Abraham says here is not a proposal that cruelty or injustice be resorted to. It is merely a reminder that Hagar is still Sarai's maid.

"And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face" (15:6b). "Dealt hardly with her" does not necessarily imply physical cruelty. It may only mean that Hagar was made to live with the servants or to perform more menial tasks than previously, in order to correct the haughty spirit by which she despised her mistress. But Hagar, instead of admitting and correcting her fault, prefers to run away. So here we see the second actor in this drama in an unfavorable light.

#### Questions:

1. What was the significance of the "smoking furnace" and "burning lamp" which passed between the pieces of the sacrificial animals?
2. What is the main difference between covenants made by God with men, and covenants made between man and man?
3. In God's promise to Abraham, what boundaries of the land to be possessed by his descendants were specified?
4. What is the ordinary meaning of the term "the river of Egypt" in the Old Testament?
5. Why can "the river of Egypt" not have this common meaning in Gen. 15:18?
6. At what periods in the history of Israel was the promise of Gen. 15:16 literally fulfilled?

7. How can we explain the fact that Israel did not permanently hold all the territory promised in Gen. 15:18?

8. What may be the significance of the fact that exactly ten tribes or nations are listed in verses 18-21?

9. What is known about the Hittites?

10. Where did the Jebusites live?

11. Whose birth is recorded in chapter 16?

12. What was right and what was wrong about the plan proposed to Abraham by Sarai?

13. How old was Abraham at this time?

14. How long had he already been in the land of Canaan?

15. Why is it incorrect to think of Abraham as a very old man at this period of his life?

16. How would Sarai's proposal be regarded from the standpoint of the common social customs of that day?

17. How must Sarai's proposal be regarded from the standpoint of God's will?

18. What is implied by the statement that Abraham "hearkened" to his wife?

19. What may have blinded Abraham to the moral wrongness of the proposed plan?

20. What wrong attitude did Hagar begin to display when she realized that she would have a child?

21. What was Sarai's reaction to Hagar's attitude?

22. On whom did Sarai try to blame her trouble?

23. What statement of Sarai shows that she was very upset?

24. What was Abraham's reaction to his wife's accusation?

25. What remedy for the situation did Abraham suggest?

26. How did Hagar respond to Sarai's treatment of her?

(To be continued)

Only a word of anger,  
But it wounded one sensitive heart;  
Only a word of sharp reproach,  
But it made the tear-drops start;  
Only a hasty, thoughtless word,  
Sarcastic and unkind,  
But it darkened the day before so bright,  
And left a sting behind.

Only a word of kindness,  
But it lightened one heart of its grief;  
Only a word of sympathy,  
But it brought one soul relief;  
Only a word of gentle cheer,  
But it flooded with radiant light  
The pathway that seemed so dark before,  
And made the day more bright.

## *The Westminster Confession of Faith in Modern English*

Prepared by Dr. James A. Hughes

(Continued from last issue)

### Chapter XVI. Of Good Works

I. Good works are only those works which God has commanded in His holy Word, and not works which without warrant of God's Word are devised by men out of blind zeal or upon pretence of good intention.

II. These good works, performed in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and living faith; and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance of salvation, edify their brethren, adorn the vocation of the gospel, close the mouths of adversaries and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus to good works; that, bearing their fruit leading to holiness, they may obtain the object aimed at, eternal life.

III. Their ability to do good works is not at all from themselves but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. And that they may be enabled to do good works, in addition to the graces they have already received there is required the actual power of the Holy Spirit to work in them to will and to do for His good pleasure; yet are not therefore to become negligent, as if they were not obligated to perform any duty unless upon a special action of the Spirit, but ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.

IV. Those who, in obedience to God's commandments, attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life are so far from being able to do above and beyond what God requires that they fall short of much which in duty to God they are obligated to do.

V. We cannot, by our best works, merit pardon of sin or eternal life from God, because of the great disparity that is between our works and the glory to come and because of the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom by our works we cannot benefit and to whom by them we cannot pay the debt of our past sins, but when we have done all we can, we have done only our duty and are unprofitable servants; and because (since they are good works) they come from His Spirit; and because they are performed by us, they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

VI. Yet, notwithstanding, because believers are accepted through Christ, their good works are also accepted in Him — not as though believers were in this life wholly unblameable and un-reprovable in God's sight, but that He, looking upon them in His Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, though it is accompanied by many weaknesses and imperfections.

VII. Although works done by unregenerate men may, with reference to their content, be things which God commands and may be of good use both to them and others, yet because they do not come from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word, nor for a right purpose, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful and cannot please God or make a man fit to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God.

(To be continued)

## *The Church a Covenant Community*

By the Rev. E. Clark Copeland, D.D.

(Continued from last issue)

The redemptive element in the covenant comes to the fore in the ratification sacrifice (Ex. 24:3-11). Here we have the proclamation of Yahweh by Moses, the Mediator of the covenant, in the reading of the Book of the Covenant (chap. 20-23). This consists of a review of Israel's redemption and their covenant responsibilities. Israel solemnly pledges loyal obedience to Yahweh.

One animal is offered in sacrifice for each tribe, and altar, book and people are sprinkled with "the blood of the covenant" signifying the Lord's provision of mercy for Israel's covenant failures and Israel's confession of her need for mercy. Then the representatives of the congregation "saw God and ate and drank" (Ex. 24:11). In this confirmation ceremony we observe the efficacy of

the covenant to bring men into real fellowship with God in that the representatives of the congregation saw Him, "not in all His reality and greatness, but in accordance with the dispensation which He thought best, and which he accommodated to the capacity of man."<sup>76</sup> God thus sealed His grace to His people in the covenant blood of bulls and goats until Christ should come and remove the shadow by presentation of the reality (Heb. 9:12).<sup>77</sup>

It must be emphatically said that the Sinai Covenant was not a system of works-righteousness. Moses distinctly warned Israel against that very thing:

Do not say in your heart, . . . "It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land;" . . . Not because of your righteousness or uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land. . . . "Know therefore that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn people." (Deut. 9:4-6)

E. Heppenstall defines legalism as "the belief and practice that salvation by and acceptance with God are attained by conformity to law as distinguished from salvation by grace through faith." We agree with his conclusion that any interpretation that makes a system of works-righteousness of the Sinai covenant has perverted the meaning and purpose of that revelation.<sup>78</sup> Paul confirms this when he says Israel did not attain to the righteousness of the law "because they sought it not by faith, but as if it were based on works" (Rom. 9:30-33), and "seeking to establish their own righteousness they did not submit to God's righteousness" (Rom. 10:3). John Milton draws an analogy between the faith obedience of Israel as God's ransomed people and the faith obedience of the Christian in relation to Christ:

It has its roots in either case in an act of redemption by God; the one symbolic and preparatory, the other "an eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12); but both related to the same ultimate purpose of God.<sup>79</sup>

It is important to note that law is also called "Torah" — guidance, direction, an authoritative rule of conduct — whose primary frame of reference is not a code of law, but a covenant relationship. "To interpret it as if it signified a pure legal relationship between God and Israel is to misinterpret it."<sup>80</sup> Code law regulates the relations among men as citizens of a state, as in the Code of Hammurabi. Covenant law regulates the relations of the subjects to their sovereign; their mutual relations are an aspect of their allegiance and obligations to him.<sup>81</sup> Adultery is first a sin against God then against the individuals involved (Ps. 51:4).<sup>82</sup> The commandment pointed Israel to their holy covenant God, not to a moral code.

This "sums up the spiritual-educational purpose of the law with Israel."<sup>83</sup> It teaches that "all time, every place, all property, and every person should be sanctified to the Lord."<sup>84</sup>

The Lord of the covenant demands that His sons be like Him:

Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am the Lord your God. Keep my statutes, and do them; for I am the Lord who sanctify you . . . . Ye shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples that ye should be mine. (Lev. 20:7, 8, 26).

The performance to the covenant requirement was ever subject to the supply of covenant grace. The innocence of hands, purity of heart, and devotion of life to God which the covenant child knew were essential to standing in the holy place (Ps. 24:4; 25:1) were not a matter of individual or corporate achievement except by the blessing of Yahweh. Both separation and sanctification are the sovereign gift of God. "Purge me and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow," cries the sinner in confession and prayer for deliverance (Ps. 51:7).

Repentant Ephraim, the converted remnant, now turns to the Lord with sincere request: Turn thou me, and I shall be turned. So only a converted person can speak. Prayer is the fruit of faith, a proof of conversion (Acts 9:11).<sup>85</sup>

The exhortation to keep the "Ten Words" was based on the appeal to cultivate a heart-relation to the Covenant Lord: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, . . . soul, and . . . might" (Deut. 6:5). This was to be done by having the words written where they could be seen in the home, by talking of them in relation to every activity of the day, but always with the objective of having them in the heart.<sup>86</sup>

Israel's worship was designed by God to instruct them in the covenant relationship as well as provide them a means of individual and corporate approach to Him. The tabernacle was "(My) sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst" (Ex. 25:8). There God met with Israel, spoke with Moses, the Mediator of the covenant, and received the offerings of His people at the hands of the priests (Ex. 40:1; 26:22; Lev. 17:5, 6). There was Yahweh's throne on the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant containing the "two tables of the testimony" as witness both to Israel and to Yahweh of their covenant obligation. Here God accepted the blood of atonement and Israel experienced forgiveness. The witness of the law against Israel could not come up from the "tables of the testimony" in the ark of the covenant to the Lord on the throne of mercy above the ark except through the blood of atonement on the

mercy seat. Sacrifice, priest, and curtain, all spoke of the wall of separation sin raised between God and the worshipper; but they also stood for the removal of that separation by God Himself. There were also the laws concerning uncleanness which separated both from God and from the community. It is not the concept of the covenant that a ritual alone made a man acceptable. Life was one whole of spiritual and material elements; both ritual and religious-moral purity were essential to fellowship with God and the people of God. Outward purity is a manifestation of an inward condition. Innocent hands accompany a pure heart.

Ezekiel's parable of Israel's redemption strikingly sets forth this concept (chap. 16). God in redeeming love picked up the unwashed foundling, cleansed her from her impurity, brought her up and she became His wife. The subjective cause of the covenant was Israel's sin. The "wall of separation" between man and God and man and man is sin. Circumcision and the water of purification were means by which the unclean were qualified by God for entrance into His fellowship and into the congregation. It looked forward to the day when Christ would in His flesh remove this wall from between God and man, Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14-18).

In making covenant with Abraham, God brought into the covenant all that were associated with him in his household as well as his own children (Gen. 17:12-14). In this way Abraham and his servants were "covenant brothers," in common bond with God. They would now be faithful to him "as unto God," and he would be kind to them "as in the Lord." The covenant bond is, therefore, more than a mark of the nation, for it brings in those who are not natural seed, as well as natural born sons, and natural sons may be excluded, as were Ishmael and Esau. A "mixed multitude" went up with them out of Egypt (Ex. 12:38). Although they were hard to assimilate (Num. 11:4), one of such origin in Egypt, Caleb — the Kenazite, an Edomite tribe — was a leader of the tribe of Judah, and one of the two faithful spies who realized a possession in the Land of Promise.<sup>87</sup> Israel cannot be explained by national, racial, or social criteria, for her society is grounded, not in nature, but in the covenant, in grace.<sup>88</sup>

Israel's mission is prominent in the covenant at Sinai:

If you will obey my voice, and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5-6).

God's delight in Israel is set down beside His ownership of the whole earth, and is at least an implication of the ultimate goal of a universal

people. Israel stands between God and the nations as His mediating priest in the establishment of a universal kingdom. As they keep covenant they will display wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations who will be attracted to the Lord their God (Deut. 4:6-7). The prophets anticipate the day when this attractiveness will increase and the nations will run to Israel to go with her to worship Her God (Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-4).

That Israel was conscious of her calling to bring the nations into the same experiences of faith and love and obedience to their God is abundantly evident in the Psalms. "Sing unto the Lord, all the earth" (Ps. 96:1). "The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice" (Ps. 97:1). "Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia — This one was born there" (Ps. 87:4). "May God be gracious to us and bless us . . . that thy way may be known upon earth and thy saving power among all nations" (Ps. 67:1-2). To remove from these words their ordinary meaning in the spiritual experience of Israel by saying that the Old Testament anticipates only a material kingdom under the sword of David and his dynastic successors, such as his control of Edom, is to rob language, and the Word of God with it, of all reasonable meaning. Nor does the language permit us to consider that the faithful in Israel were narrow nationalists lacking any sense of spiritual mission. It remains true, however, that the Lord's objective under the Old Covenant was a more limited objective, and His method was chiefly that of attracting the nations by the wonders of His grace to Israel.

Israel's religion was characterized by the knowledge and truth of God as befits His image-bearer in covenant with Him. The maintenance of the covenant was by acquaintance with God through the covenant revelation. God says He chose Abraham, "that he may (purpose) command his whole posterity to keep the way of Jehovah, . . ." (Gen. 18:19).<sup>89</sup> Instruction began in the home where the "words" commanded would be the subject of daily conversation (Deut. 6:6-9, 29-25). The saving acts of Yahweh were celebrated at the annual feasts. Moses delivered the book of the law to the Levites and elders of Israel with the instruction that the whole was to be read at the Feast of Booths every seven years (Deut. 31:9-11). The priests were the regular teachers of the congregation (Mal. 2:7),<sup>90</sup> and the prophet was a special office through whom the Lord would make known His will (Deut. 18:15-21). By regular instruction the commandment was to be laid on the heart (Deut. 6:6) so that it would become the subject of long and delightful meditation (Ps. 119). The same objective covenant Word is certain to have been involved in bringing the nations to know and serve God (Ps. 100).

## The Covenant with David

Under the covenant of "the sure mercies of David," God designed to display His sovereignty over Israel and the world. The kingdom of God with throne and temple in Jerusalem, the place where God chose to place His Name forever, was intended to bring righteousness and justice, peace and security to the ends of the earth (Ps. 72). But the sons of David did not keep the covenant and the Lord chastized them as sons (2 Sam. 7:14).<sup>91</sup> He divided the kingdom, and finally sent them into captivity, but He did not take His steadfast love from them (2 Sam. 7:14-15). God would raise up David's house, restore Israel a willing people in the day of power, to whom the Gentiles would seek.<sup>92</sup> The prophets declared that this would be accomplished by an eschatological "David" or "branch" of David.<sup>93</sup>

The kingdom will not come apart from a change to be effected in the whole people. A New Covenant will be given whose work will be entirely of an internal nature. The law of God will be written on the heart; the knowledge of God will be made universal; sin and iniquity will be done away forever (Jer. 31:33-34). Ezekiel adds that God will do this work by placing His Spirit in man (36:25, 26). We note the same law and the same relation — your God, my people — given at Sinai. In considering the newness of this covenant, we are not to contradict anything we have said about the reality of the Old Covenant religion, but to look for the New in the fulfillment of all the Old anticipated, and to recognize the consummation of the Old in the New.

## Notes

76 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses, Arranged in the Form of a Harmony* (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1854), III, 323.

77 In the words of Jesus in giving the cup, *kaines* is omitted leaving to *haima mou tes diathekes* "my blood of the covenant" (Matt. 26:28). *Novum Testamentum Graece*, cum apparatu critica curavit Eberhard Nestle, novis curis elaboraverunt, Erwin Nestle et Kurt Aland (Editio vice-sima quarta; Stuttgart: Privileg. Wurt. Bibelanstalt, 1960).

78 E. Heppenstall, "Law and Covenant at Sinai," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, II (1964), p. 21.

79 p. 140. Cf. P. E. Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, The New International Commentary*, edited by Ned. B. Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), p. 94.

80 Milton, pp. 160-161.

81 Kline, pp. 19-20.

82 Joseph was aware of this even before the Sinai Covenant. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). Here is strong evidence of the essential unity of the Abrahamic and Sinai Covenants.

83 Milton, p. 140.

84 Wilhelm Moeller's summary of Leviticus quoted by Milton, pp. 145-146.

85 Theo Laetsch, *Bible Commentary: Jeremiah* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), p. 251.

86 Cf. the Psalmist's use of the means of grace that he might be faithful to God, "I have laid up thy word in my heart that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11).

87 Num. 13:6, 30-33; 14:24, 30, 38; Joshua 14:6-15.

88 John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), p. 136. The legal covenant "makes participants brothers," is "a totality which can no more be broken than the blood relationship;" it is an actualization in law of the thought of brotherhood." G. Quell, *Berith in the Old Testament*, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by G. Kittel, translated from the German and edited by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), II, 114. J. O. Cobham quotes W. R. Smith that a covenant has no place where natural brotherhood of which it is an imitation already exists. J. O. Cobham, "Covenant," *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, edited by Alan Richardson (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1957), p. 55. The uniqueness of Israel does not consist in physical descent from Abraham, but the covenant descent of faith. Russell Phillip Shedd, *Man in Community, A Study of St. Paul's Application of Old Testament and Early Jewish Conceptions of Human Solidarity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 20.

89 See Keil and Delitzsch, p. 229.

90 Rad, p. 261, discusses the use of the word and its significance in the tabernacle ritual in an enlightening manner.

91 The king stands for the people and draws together the Old Testament figures of the Christ. "He shall cry to me, 'Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation. I will make him the first born,'" (Ps. 89:26, 27).

92 Amos 9:11-12; Ps. 110; Ezek. 37:24-28.

93 Is. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Ezek. 34:24; 37:24, 25; Hosea 3:5. Cf. Weidner (p. 80) that the final restoration is an act of God effected by ethical means through conversion of the people according to Deut. 30:1-6.

(To be continued)

## Reviews of Religious Books

The favorable reviewing of a book here does not imply approval of its entire contents. Purchase books from your book dealer or from the publishers. Do not send book orders to Blue Banner Faith and Life.

**HOLY BIBLE: THE NEW BERKELEY VERSION IN MODERN ENGLISH.** Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1969, pp. 1235. \$8.95.

The New Testament of the Berkeley Version appeared in 1945, the entire Bible in 1959. The present edition is the Old Testament as issued in 1959, with the New Testament somewhat revised. In favor of the Berkeley Version is the important fact that it is everywhere faithful to the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God. The translators and editors are committed to the full inspiration, inerrancy and authority of Scripture and they have consistently adhered to these basic principles.

In the reviewer's opinion this is the best modern English version of the entire Bible available today. The English is clear and dignified, and many obscurities and difficulties have been relieved. Of course, there is and can be no such thing as a Bible version that will be fully transparent and attractive to the natural man, who finds the spiritual things of the Word of God "foolishness" (1 Cor. 2:14). Much of the difficulty involved in the King James Version, and other historic versions, is not caused by the obscurity of the language but by the prejudices and spiritual blindness and downright ignorance of the readers — not only spiritual illiteracy but simple ignorance and illiteracy in the use of their own language. In an age when many people do not read anything but picture magazines like "Look" and "Life", and cannot grasp any abstract statement, many will find any version of the Bible baffling. The reader who cannot see any difference between "meditate" and "mediate" should go back to grade school and learn something.

While regarding the Berkeley Version as the best modern English version on the market, we have some criticisms of certain points in it. A serious blunder is the use of "made righteous" for "justified" in Romans 8:30. The Greek word is correctly translated "pronounced righteous" in Rom. 5:1 and elsewhere.

The copious footnotes are of very unequal value and propriety. Many of them are distinctly helpful, such as those giving the equivalent of a coin or unit of weight, and the like, and those giving items of historical information which shed light on the meaning of the text. But there are three classes of footnotes which we find objection-

able, namely: (1) Footnotes that are essentially hortatory comments such as would belong in a sermon, not a Bible version, such as note f on page 376 of the Old Testament: "Self-centeredness and happiness do not go hand in hand"; and note b on the same page: "Are we ever so busy with this and that that His interests become secondary?" There are a great many notes of this general type, inoffensive to be sure, but out of place in a Bible edition. (2) Footnotes that merely state the obvious, such as note p on page 382 of the Old Testament: "God's mercies are not sparse; they are bountiful"; note r on page 383 of the Old Testament: "God is more ready to supply than we are to receive from Him." Notes of this type are also very numerous, and really add nothing to the usefulness or value of the book. (3) Notes which set forth doubtful or debatable interpretations, such as note r on page 213 of the New Testament: "This appears to be an extract from an early Christian hymn"; note q on page 374 of the Old Testament: "Elijah's great failure was not to secure a helper for this great task; Elisha, the less vigorous man, accomplished more by cooperation." This sort of statement belongs in a commentary, not in a Bible edition. In a Bible it is out of place, and because of brevity cannot state alternative interpretations and discuss their merits, hence these notes tend to be subjective and opinionated, as well as out of place in a Bible.

The comment on Genesis 6:2, note g on page 5 of the Old Testament, about the sons of God marrying the daughters of men, is excellent. Also we note with approval that in the chronological data inserted here and there, the "early chronology" of the period before Samuel is followed, as required by data in the Bible itself.

The book is well printed on excellent thin paper, attractively and substantially bound, and reasonably priced. We commend it heartily to our readers.

— J. G. Vos

**THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**, by E. M. Blaiklock. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 192. \$4.95.

This book is essentially an expansion of the author's previous work on the same subject (*Out of the Earth*, 1957, revised edition 1961, Pater-noster Press and Eerdmans Publishing Company;

reviewed in **Blue Banner Faith and Life**, January-March 1958, page 42; October-December 1963, page 198). At no point does the present book mention that a considerable portion of the material was previously published under a different title. As a matter of fact, extensive passages are repeated from the earlier edition without change.

Among the changes are larger format, larger and clearer type, many excellent photographs added, and a very attractive dust jacket with color photograph (not identified; perhaps of ruins excavated at Ephesus or Corinth). Some of the photographs are a bit dark and dull because of the offset process used in printing the book (pages 167, 170) but most of them are quite clear, and all of them increase the value of the book.

Blaiklock's writing is interesting and readable, not dull and dry like a good many books on this subject. The book is up-to-date in its presentation of the material, and will help the reader to gain a more accurate view of the setting and background of the New Testament. Among many other important subjects treated are the papyrus manuscripts, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the so-called **Gospel of Thomas**.

— J. G. Vos

**THE MYTH OF OVER-POPULATION**, by Rousas J. Rushdoony. The Craig Press, Box 13, Nutley, N. J. 07110. 1969, pp. 56, paperback. \$1.50.

The author seeks to show how this myth is the fabrication of an atheistic and humanistic socialist philosophy and is politically and economically motivated. He demonstrates that, far from being threatened by over-population, "the prospects for depopulation are fearfully real," since we are clearly at the end of a cultural era, which, according to the evidence of history, is frequently associated with depopulation — due to moral and cultural collapse. This collapse is itself due to a religious surrender to modern technology and science — "the new gods of creation!" The need of the hour, however, is not surrender but resistance, born of a robust Biblical faith with its reconstructive power.

This is a first class analysis, in brief compass, of a topical subject and is a brilliant demonstration both of the application of the relevancy of Biblical and Reformed thinking.

— Donald MacDonald

**BREAD UPON THE WATERS**, by Rousas J. Rushdoony. The Craig Press, Box 13, Nutley, N. J. 07110. 1969, pp. 102, paperback. \$1.95.

It is gratifying that these brief essays which appeared originally in **THE CALIFORNIA FARMER**, are now produced in book form. Each of the fifty-one essays exposes some facet of society, or

some aspect of our economy or our administration, which has the sanction of law; yet, measured by the canon of Scripture, all these are shown to be either illegal or immoral. Each essay has an entirety of its own, and is written with commendable clarity of style. We recommend the book to our readers.

— Norman Macleod

**REFORMATION TODAY**, by Klaas Runia. The Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern St., London, W1M 1PS, England. 1968, pp. 148, paperback. 5 shillings.

This attractively colored paper back contains eight concise chapters (each ending with "Notes") dealing with "Heretical Theology" — ancient and modern; "The Failure of the Church" today to preach the pure, undefiled doctrines of the Word, and to practice discipline (as illustrated in the cases of J. A. T. Robinson, England, and L. G. Geering, New Zealand); "The Unity of the Church"; "The World Council of Churches"; and "Our Task within the Church."

Coming to grips at once with Modern Theological Trends, and the rapidly increasing apostasy of the Church, Runia frankly exposes the flaws in the theology of Barth, Bultmann, Paul Tillich, and the notoriously heretical Bishop of Woolwich. While many conservative evangelicals — lay and clerical — may not approve of the author's favorable attitude to the W. C. C., they will appreciate his views on our task within the visible church to initiate and establish the new reformation, so necessary today for the survival of the Church.

Living in an age of the mass production of false teachers, by leading lime-lighted heretical theologians; the Church in the southern hemisphere, and elsewhere, is fortunate in that this accomplished teacher of systematic theology rightly divides the Word of Truth. Cautious readers of this masterly, fascinating, stimulating book will have a deeper consciousness of the depressing state of the Church today, and the urgent need of a new reformation, produced by another outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

With pleasure this good book is recommended, and may it be read, re-read, and studied carefully by those who love the Lord and have a spiritual interest in the Church of Christ.

— John Macleod

**THE NEW "MYTH"-OLOGY**, by Harold Whitney. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 185, Nutley, N. J. 07110. 1969, pp. 180, paperback. \$2.50.

This work is a thoroughly competent study of a surprisingly important subject, giving evidence of wide and painstaking research and mas-

terly knowledge of the relevant literature, and providing a penetrating analysis of the theological affinities and tendencies. There is a conspicuous fairness of judgment in the discussion of doctrines with which he himself is in profound disagreement. The opening chapters give us a clear conception of what is aimed at, namely an exposure of the root cause of the present chaos in religious thinking, which the author regards as barren of all spiritual conquest and a deadly blight on the Church of Christ. The main thought that runs through these pages in which various topics are deftly touched upon may be summed up in a sentence — there will be no signal revival of spiritual religion until the Church recovers the lost hold on her God-given title-deeds, the only basis of her faith. For as Dr. Warfield puts it, "To ask us to throw aside external authority, and throw ourselves on what we find within us alone — call it whatsoever name you choose, religious experience, Christian consciousness, inner light — is to ask us to discard Christianity and revert to natural religion."

— Angus Finlayson

IS GOD AMOEBOID?, by John W. Docherty. Published by Rev. J. W. Docherty, Zayat, Struan Gardens, Ringwood, Hants, England. 1969, pp. 80, paperback, 4 shillings. Hardbound, 7s. 6d

This book purports to be "a help towards the understanding of man's position, condition, and aspirations in the Universe." By using the analogy of the Amoeba, he seeks to explain God and Man in their mutual relationships but only renders confusion more confounded. No one would find this book helpful in understanding his position and condition in God's Universe. Furthermore, the book is full of erroneous teaching on the Origin of Man, the Fall, Man's nature, the Incarnation, the Atonement, Death, etc. It also teaches the annihilation of evil and evildoers. This book is not recommended.

— Donald MacDonald

DAILY DELIGHTS, by Pauline Spray. Zonervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1968. \$4.95.

This is a book of daily meditations, and the author has taken very apt illustrations from everyday life and applied them to our spiritual life. It could be a "delight" if it is used as a supplement to our own personal devotions.

However, I am disappointed that she has used the same format as other books of this type and included a "prayer." While most of these are written with a form of address to God and close with "amen," I feel that the vast majority of them are written to the reader and not to God. That is not prayer in my opinion.

— Rose Ellen Burns

WHAT IS THIS CALVINISM, by G. E. Lane, M.A. The Sovereign Grace Union, 6-8 Linkfield Corner, Redhill, Surrey. Second edition, pp. 18, 9 pence.

The Rev. G. E. Lane is pastor of the Evangelical Free Church, Leyton.

I found this booklet heart-warming as well as heart-searching. It is written in a simple, straightforward manner and would be as excellent for a new babe in Christ as for a more mature Christian.

The author has written it under six headings: first — The Name; Second — Basic Pre-suppositions; Third — A Definition of Calvinism; Fourth — The Main Pillars; Fifth — The Five Points; and last — Practical Conclusions. These divisions seem to flow logically from first to last and in my opinion make Calvinism as simple and reasonable as the Bible.

— Rose Ellen Burns

CALVIN AND TRADITION, by W. Stanford Reid. Sovereign Grace Union, 6-8 Linkfield Corner, Red Hill, Surrey, England. 1966, pp. 22, paperback. 2 shillings.

Dr. Reid is Professor and head of the Department of History at the University of Guelph, Ontario.

In this booklet Dr. Reid very capably shows the "Present Significance of Calvin's View of Tradition," quoting many authoritative sources to show the present position of both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches on tradition. Then he shows how Calvin's view applies to the present ecumenical movement.

The author also points out that while Tradition is important now, the sixteenth century reformers did not start with this as the main issue, but it became the logical conclusion of the reformation.

In a very real sense the question still is whether the Christian's final authority is the Scriptures alone or "Tradition." The author believes that Calvin's view — the Bible alone — is the true Scriptural doctrine.

— Rose Ellen Burns

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH, 1. THE WORD OF GOD, by G. E. Lane. The Sovereign Grace Union, 6-8 Linkfield Corner, Surrey, England. 1967, pp. 16, paperback, 9 pence.

The Rev. G. E. Lane is pastor of the Evangelical Free Church, Leyton.

As the author believes the Scriptures to be the "foundation of all other foundations," he has chosen "The Word of God" as the first title of this

series of booklets on basic Bible truths. These are expository studies based on one text.

The text chosen for this booklet is 2 Tim. 3:15-17, and from it the author forcefully presents ALL of the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

— Rose Ellen Burns

WHAT'S WRONG WITH PREACHING TODAY, by Albert N. Martin. Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern St., London W1M 1PS, England. 1969, pp. 24, paperback. 1 shilling 6 pence.

This address was originally given to the Ministers' Conference of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church at Westminster Theological Seminary in September, 1967 by Albert N. Martin, Pastor of Trinity Church, North Caldwell, New Jersey.

This contribution to the subject of preaching is useful and practical with a proper emphasis on personal and domestic piety. There is so much professionalism and dignity connected with some ministers and their wives and families, as to offset their good preaching qualities and their real worth.

Mr. Martin insists on a solid basis of Christian doctrine which centers on God in Christ, the Savior of sinners. Someone said that every word of Scriptures adheres so closely to Christ the Redeemer as every part of the swaddling clothes adhered to the infant body of Jesus.

As Mr. Martin points out, There should be no difficulty in asking sinners to repent when we know they have no ability to do so, since this problem did not bother the Apostle Paul.

One of the Highland ministers made the statement that no matter how full and free he preached salvation to sinners, he could not do it so full and free as Christ Himself.

We are grateful to Mr. Martin for such a timely and scholarly contribution to the important subject of preaching the gospel.

— Wallace Nicholson

TO CHANGE CHINA, by Jonathan Spence. Little, Brown and Company, Boston, Mass., 02100. 1969, pp. 335. \$7.95.

This interesting book about Western advisors in China between 1620-1960 is not a Christian book, but it is a fascinating and scholarly book by a Yale professor of history, Jonathan Spence, which describes and analyzes the efforts of Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries, as well as Communist missionaries to change the Chinese nation. Mr. Spence is English born, equipped with education at Cambridge University and elsewhere, an interesting writer as well as a student of the Far East.

The persons treated by Mr. Spence in the context of his study of Western acculturation in China are these: Jesuit missionaries of Rome Schall and Verbiest, Protestant medical missionary Peter Parker, soldiers Ward and Gordon, diplomats Lay and Hart, educators Martin and Fryer and Edward Hume, Communist advisor Mikhail Borodin, doctors Todd and Bethune.

The conclusion of the author is that all these Western idealists went to China with rosy expectations but ended up frustrated and disillusioned by Chinese resistance. An enjoyable book but not especially helpful to Christianity.

— Samuel E. Boyle

GUIDING TEEN-AGERS TO MATURITY, by J. H. Waterink. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1969, pp. 144. \$3.50.

This book deals with a problem with which our society is very much preoccupied — the problem of parent-child relationship, and is therefore a timely publication.

Dr. Waterink has obviously made a thorough study of his subject and treats it sanely and frankly in a manner which no one can fail to understand. Moreover, underlying his thesis is the conviction that each household and individual is under obligation to follow the unerring guidance of Scripture.

We heartily commend this book, not only to parents, but to all who have to do with instruction of young people in any sphere.

— Donald Giddies

ROMANS, by Geoffrey B. Wilson. The Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern Street, London W1M 1PS, England; and Puritan Publications, Inc., P.O. Box 652, Carlisle, Pa., 17013. 1969, pp. 255, paperback. 6 shillings or \$1.25.

This commentary on the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans, is by Geoffrey B. Wilson, minister of Birkley Baptist Church, Huddersfield.

Mr. Wilson modestly refers to his exposition as a Digest of Reformed Comment, but he has passed these comments through the alembic of his own penetrating mind. He has added his own comments to the building up of his commentary which deserves a place along with the commentaries of Hodge, Shedd, Murray, and others.

Mr. Wilson deals with the substance of the text and wastes no time in minutiae or trifling exegesis. The letter is useful for scholars and commentators, but what ordinary ministers require is a clear comment on the text. This, Mr. Wilson gives in practically every case; and even if we disagree with him, we are made to realize that he has done his homework well.

For example, several passages in Romans are referred to, which have been a difficult problem for students. Quite often, Mr. Wilson makes a statement or quotes a comment which opens up the text.

The difficult phrase "the old man" (Rom. 6:6, Col. 3:9, and Eph. 4:20-24) is quite a problem to many. Some think this phrase refers to the old nature. Dabney says, "To suppose that the old man has been crucified and still lives or has been raised from this death, is to contradict the import of crucifixion." This problem is referred to in Murray's *Principles of Conduct*, pp. 214-218, and in his commentary on *Romans*. The reviewer prefers to think that the "old man" refers to the believer as he was in his unconverted days, and "the new man" to what he is now. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." (II Cor. 5:17).

We are grateful to Mr. Wilson for his most valuable contribution to the understanding of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans. This book is a must for every preacher of the gospel.

— Wallace Nicholson

**CHRISTIANITY IN COMMUNIST CHINA**, by George N. Patterson. Word Books, Waco, Texas, 76700. 1969, pp. 174. \$4.95.

Journalist-missionary to Tibet and China George N. Patterson, English member of Plymouth Brethren Fellowship and colleague of Geoffry Bull, author of what I think was the best prison narrative to come out of Red China by any captive missionary (*When Iron Gates Yield*, Geoffry Bull, Moody Press, Chicago, Ill., 1954), has added a third book on the struggle of Christianity to survive under Mao Tse-tung's Communist regime.

*Come Wind, Come Weather* (Moody Press, Chicago, Ill., 1960, \$2.00), by China Inland Mission veteran Leslie T. Lyall gives the fervent evangelical view of affairs in the Chinese Church under Communism.

*The Church in Communist China, A Protestant Appraisal*, by Francis P. Jones, formerly in China with Nanking Theological Seminary and later the Far East expert with the National Council of Churches in America, gives in his book the ecumenical, liberal theological appraisal of the churches in Red China. (Friendship Press, N.Y., 1962, paperback, \$1.95).

Mr. Patterson writes from the Plymouth Brethren religious spirit and finds the most hopeful sign of Christian survival in China in the heroic spiritual loyalty to Christ by Peking independent pastor Wang Ming-Tao, "Little Flock" leader Watchmen Nee, and the indigenous Chinese non-conformist sects such as the "Jesus Family."

Mr. Patterson depends largely on documents translated by others, but he gives a fine summary of past events in China and brings the situation in China before us in a readable, up-to-date report. His final prediction of the future Christian strategy to meet such crushing collective hostility from any similar social power seeks to combine the simplicity of apostolic movements like the "Little Flock" with the most wildly imaginative use of modern communication devices such as space satellite television, regional computerized communication centers, and all other modern techniques of man to amass new knowledge and disseminate new information. As the 18th century Protestant missionary enterprise resulted from an intelligent Christian use of the Industrial Revolution, Patterson believes the Christians of the West must now begin to try to use the Electronics Communication Explosion to advance the Kingdom of God in Asia. He declares that already a Chinese Christian graduate student of communications and a veteran editor, Mr. Timothy Yu, is already organizing the foundation for such a Christian Communications Center in Hong Kong.

Leslie T. Lyall the Faith Mission evangelical author ended his book in familiar Christian terms of the Church's struggle with the gates of Hell, saying: "Faith sees beyond the present darkness to a new dawn for the church in China. We hear the cry, 'Watchman, what of the night?' Back comes the answer: 'The morning cometh, and also the night!' The present dusk is not the dusk of day's end, but the dusk that precedes the dawn."

Francis P. Jones, the NCC ecumenical scholar ends with cautious hope, saying: "The Western church, which through its missionary work has been so closely bound up with the development of this church in the past, is now largely helpless. It can do little more than pray that Christians in China remain true to the gospel that they have received. This we can and should do, at the same time praying that we in the West do nothing in our individual or corporate life that would throw a stumbling block in the way of our Chinese brethren. Rather may we so act as to hasten the renewal of that fellowship that Christ intended when he prayed that his followers might be one."

George N. Patterson, Plymouth Brethren missionary, engineer, medical man, journalist and television advisor to BBC, ends with these thoughts about Christianity in Communist China and the world of tomorrow:

"The Church of Jesus Christ in China today as an institution, or collection of institutions, is nonexistent, a helpless victim of the powerful and remorseless materialistic and political forces of the twentieth century. These forces are unlikely to be materially diminished, let alone spent, within the next two decades in any Asian country. But the Church of Jesus Christ in China today as

a living, vital organism continues to exist and even grow triumphantly, despite the persecutions, limitations, the frustrations imposed by a despotic totalitarian government.

"If, short of Bibles, bereft of institutions, deprived of fellowship, cut off from all outside help and consolation for twenty years, the Church of Jesus Christ in China can live and grow to be a threat to the beliefs and practices of the most materialistic totalitarianism the world has ever known, how immense are the possibilities of this Church, not only in China but in all countries, in all its members, in all its gifts and graces and power, if allowed to express itself as God intended in the second half of the twentieth century."

— Samuel E. Boyle

**MOMENTS FOR EVERYONE**, by Earle McLeod. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1969, pp. 92. \$0.95.

This devotional booklet based on the theme — our moments make our lives — is divided into sections related to times of great meaning to us. Examples are: Moments of Mystery, Moments to Cherish, Moments of Discouragement, etc. It may be used for personal devotions or program material. In addition, it provides excellent reading.

— Mrs. J. M. Robb

**MY DAILY QUIET TIME**, by Harold Lindsell. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1969, pp. 240. \$0.95.

This volume, by the editor of **Christianity Today**, is particularly for the busy person. The daily reading is based on one verse only. While the author states "that devotional time should not be an aimless sampling of Scripture," yet that is what the book does. The value lies in its appeal to those who are beginning daily quiet times.

— Mrs. J. M. Robb

**THE UNIQUE WORLD OF WOMEN . . . IN BIBLE TIMES AND NOW**, by Eugenia Price. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1969, pp. 244. \$3.95.

The author, who has a gift for speaking to women, relates problems of women of The Bible to those of present day women. Situations in which modern woman finds herself are often the very ones characters of Scripture faced. Miss Price is able to cause these well known and less well known women to speak in a dynamic way to our time. She portrays them as warm and living people.

This is an excellent book for a study group.

— Mrs. J. M. Robb

**OF ALL PLACES**, by Winola W. Wirt. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1969, pp. 177. \$3.95.

This is far more than a travel book by the wife of Dr. Sherwood Wirt, editor of **Deciston** magazine. She weaves into the descriptions of places, world-wide, which she has visited, meditations on spiritual things. She does this in a most readable and provocative way. Her descriptions of people and places are vivid and arresting. Through her husband's position, she is able to take us behind the scenes of a Graham Crusade. Because of her personal commitment to Christ, she sees God's hand in everything. Mrs. Wirt's vivaciousness and enthusiasm for the abundant life make the book worthwhile reading.

— Mrs. J. M. Robb

**FUNDAMENTALS OF THE FAITH**, edited by Carl F. H. Henry. Zondervan Pub. House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1969, 291. \$5.95.

The essays in this volume appeared as inserts in **Christianity Today** since 1965. The essays do deal with **Fundamentals** of the Christian Faith. The discussions on the Trinity, the Person of Christ, Sanctification, the New Birth, and the Second Coming of Christ are good. However, there are some omissions from this volume on **Fundamentals**. The problem of the origin of evil is not discussed. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not discussed. The meaning of the Sabbath Day for the Christian is not discussed (Mark 2:27, 28). The use of time, one's vocation, and Christian marriages are not discussed.

The point of this criticism is to remind us that the Gospel is the effective power of God. Our **Fundamentals** are not static, irrelevant formulas. A book on **Fundamentals** needs to include our good works (Graham, p. 207), the Christian home, the use of time and money, and charity; the blessing of a meaningful life made possible by our Savior; and our Christian concern for the whole scope of man's life to the glory of God. Unfortunately, there are no indices.

— Edward A. Robson

**COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF ISAIAH**, Vol. II, by Edward J. Young. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1969, pp. 604. \$9.95.

Many current studies of Isaiah's prophecy presume that it was written by two, three, or more writers. Professor Young's **Commentary** disputes the theory of multiple authorship on the basis of historical, archaeological, and linguistic evidence.

Professor Young dates Hezekiah's reign from 727/6-696 B.C. Thiele's standard work on the

**Hebrew Kings** dates Hezekiah from 716/5-687/6 B.C. Professor Young discusses this important problem in the text, and in Appendix I.

Professor Young was a man in whom the Holy Spirit lived. His objective in the **Isalah Commentary** is to make known what the Holy Spirit said through the Prophet Isaiah. Professor Young examined nearly every commentary, and every current periodical discussion of Isaiah. It is very sad that some graduate schools for O. T. Study will not make use of this valuable work because Professor Young was a conservative Christian. Professor Young's **Commentary on Isalah** will be a blessing to Christians for many generations to come.

— Edward A. Robson

**HONEY FOR A CHILD'S HEART.** Gladys Hunt. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1969. pp. 108. \$3.50.

This beautifully written book is definitely recommended for those who have children, work with them and love them. It would be a fine gift for the arrival of the first child. Aside from emphasizing the value of books and of the reading of them in the home, Mrs. Hunt has included an excellent bibliography, classified by age and interest level and divided into categories such as classics, general good reading, poetry and books of definitely Christian content (e.g., C. S. Lewis, Tolkien).

Media, including printed matter, has a profound influence on everyone. It is, therefore, the duty of Christian parents to provide and read to their children good books so that this influence is for the glory of God. Parents must make time for this responsibility.

— Mrs. J. M. Robb

**THE OLD TESTAMENT CHURCH,** by Wallace Nicholson. Published by the author, c/o Free Church Manse, Plockton, Ross-Shire, Scotland. 1968, price not stated.

In a little over 100 pages the author surveys what I would call certain high points of the Old Testament. There is much here that elicits hearty approval. And yet one cannot but ask whether the author achieved his objective. The reviewer does not see "the Old Testament Church" as the focus. While agreeing with what is said, then, we hope that Mr. Nicholson will revise the booklet somewhat in a later edition.

— G. I. Williamson

**POST-CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA,** by G. C. Oosthuizen. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1968, pp. 273. \$7.95.

This book has real value. The author knows his field. And what a bewildering picture it is!

To read of the many religious movements today in Africa that reflect the influence of the Christian gospel, and yet are sub-Christian, is to come to realize how little we know about this continent. One wonders how many will rival, on that continent, some of the "home brew" religions that we have here, such as Mormonism and others.

From the standpoint of description and penetrating criticism of these movements we have only appreciation. When it comes to the author's suggested treatment for the disease we must demur. Too much is expected from ecumenical reduction of theological differences. And much too much is suggested in the way of adaptation of the Scriptural way of worship to African customs. No doubt there are many things in our worship that we consider right that are merely traditional. But the author does not do justice to the authority of Scripture as the only rule of faith and practice. We would, however, recommend this book to discerning Christians.

— G. I. Williamson

**CALLED TO THE MINISTRY,** by Edmund P. Clowney. Inter-Varsity Press, 130 N. Wells St., Chicago, Ill. 60606. 1964, pp. 90, paper cover. 95 cents.

This little book fills a vital need. It dispels some of the mist — but not the mystery — of a real call to the gospel ministry. It abounds with pithy statements full of compact wisdom. "Advancement in the kingdom is not by climbing but by kneeling" (p. 43). "Wisdom is the fruit of applying God's revelation in Christ to the issues of daily life" (p. 63). "Until a man is disciplined by Christ he cannot discipline others in Christ" (p. 66). It is just the thing to give young men in your congregation who ought to consider the question with which this little book begins: "Has Christ called you to the gospel ministry?" Enthusiastically recommended!

— G. I. Williamson

**BEHOLD HE COMETH,** by Herman Hoeksema. Reformed Free Publishing Association, P. O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49501. 1969, pp. viii, 726. \$9.95.

This is an exposition of the Book of Revelation. It consists of sermons edited and revised by the author's son, and will be of much value to any Reformed pastor preaching from this book of the Bible. We did not attempt to read this volume in its entirety, but did read extended portions. We were pleasantly surprised. The Hoeksema that seemed too rationalistic to us in his work on the Heidelberg Catechism and his more recent volume of Reformed Dogmatics, here made a very different impression. We found the exegesis to be carefully thought out, and convincingly presented. The work is consistent with sound

hermeneutic principles, and consistent with itself. But even more impressive, to us, was the warmth — or, if you will, the devotional fervor — that we discovered. Read, for example, the superb exposition of Christ's testimony to the Church of Ephesus, which had left her first love! We are thankful that nothing in the notable career of Mr.

Hoeksema — whether controversial or not — deflected him from his constant pastoral labors. And we are grateful for this work from his pen. In our judgment it will prove of enduring value. Heartily recommended.

— G. I. Williamson

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## *Reprints Available*

**In writing for free copies of reprints, readers living in U.S.A. should send a 6 cent stamp for postage. Canadian and overseas readers need not send stamp.**

**Studies in the Covenant of Grace.** Series of 35 Bible lessons from the 1967 issues of the magazine. Obtainable from Reformed Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 738 Rebecca St., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221. \$1.00 plus postage.

**Philippians: Epistle of Humility, Unity and Loyalty.** 13 Bible lessons from the January-March 1965 issue. 60 cents plus postage, from R. P. Board of Christian Education, 738 Rebecca St., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221.

**A Christian Introduction to Religions of the World.** 78 page paperback book, from the 1964 issues of the magazine. \$1.50 from Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506.

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tianity. Single copy free. In quantities, 10 cents per copy or \$1.00 per dozen, postpaid.

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**Scriptural Revelation and the Evolutionary World View.** Booklet from April-June 1967 issue. Single copy free. In quantities, 10 cents each or \$1.00 per dozen, postpaid.

**Christian Missions and the Civil Magistrate in the Far East.** 24 page reprint from *The Westminster Theological Journal*. Free. Postage 6 cents. Order from Blue Banner Faith and Life.

**Syllabus on Biblical Doctrine** used at Geneva College. 70 pages. Contains reprints of many articles from back issues of Blue Banner Faith and Life. \$1.50 plus 25 cents postage. Order from Blue Banner Faith and Life.

**Back issues of Blue Banner Faith and Life.** Issues of recent years and some of earlier years are available at 50 cents per issue, postpaid. Price is the same for new or used copies. New copies are sent if available, otherwise the cleanest used copies on hand.

Except as noted above, all orders for reprints should be sent to Blue Banner Faith and Life, 3408 Seventh Avenue, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania 15010, U.S.A.

## *Contributions Received*

The Manager of this magazine wishes to acknowledge, with hearty thanks, the following contributions to the cost of publishing the magazine which have been received since our last issue went to press:

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Less than half of the money needed is received from subscriptions and sales of back issues and reprints. For the rest we are mostly dependent on contributions. You can help the worldwide ministry of this magazine by contributing as the Lord enables you. All contributions are deductible from your taxable income.

**J. G. Vos, Editor and Manager**  
3408 Seventh Avenue  
Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania 15010, U.S.A.

### *A Voice from Heaven*

O do not weep! I am not dead by dying.  
A blessed endless life has dawned for me.  
Be comforted, my dear one! Cease thy crying.  
Thou wouldst rejoice couldst thou my glory see.  
Here dwelleth peace. Here shines eternal light.  
No more the darkness falls, no more the night.

O do not weep!

O do not weep! Why should I longer tarry  
In darksome land, where death and sin affright?  
A nobler prize in this blest home I carry;  
My palm is green. I wear the robes of light.  
Why should thy tears bedew my graveyard sod?  
Mine eyes behold with joy the face of God.

O do not weep!

O do not weep! See how the years are fleeting.  
Soon will thine angel bring thee, also, o'er.  
Among the blessed will I give thee greeting,  
Forever mine, where death can part no more.  
Then raise thy tearful eyes from graveyard sod;  
O, dearest, trustful, lift thine eyes to God,

And do not weep!

(Author unknown)

### *A Glimpse of Glory*

I have caught a glimpse of glory  
Never seen by mortal eyes,  
Just beyond the blue horizon  
Of evening's transient skies;  
But the ear of hope has heard it  
And the eye of faith can see  
Sound and sign of heaven's nearness  
Just beyond mortality.

I have caught a glimpse of glory,  
Of that bright eternal day,  
When the mists of Time have lifted  
And we lay aside this clay;  
Then shall be the consummation  
Of our longing and desire,  
For we'll sing the Song of Ages  
In the resurrection choir!

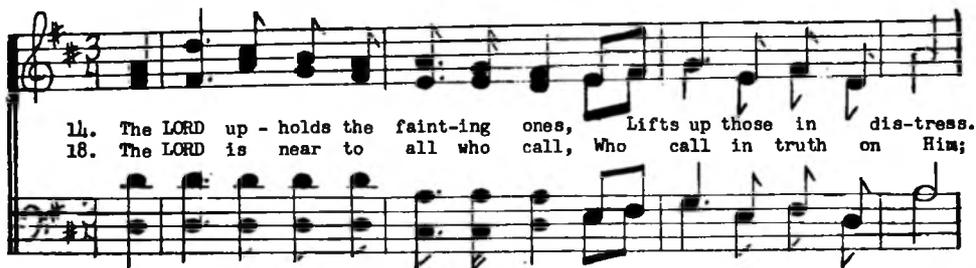
I have caught a glimpse of glory  
Just beyond the brink of Time,  
And I travel toward the sunrise  
Of a better land and clime.  
Soon I'll trade this earth for heaven  
And inside some golden door  
I shall greet the ones I've cherished  
Safe with Jesus evermore.

(Author unknown)

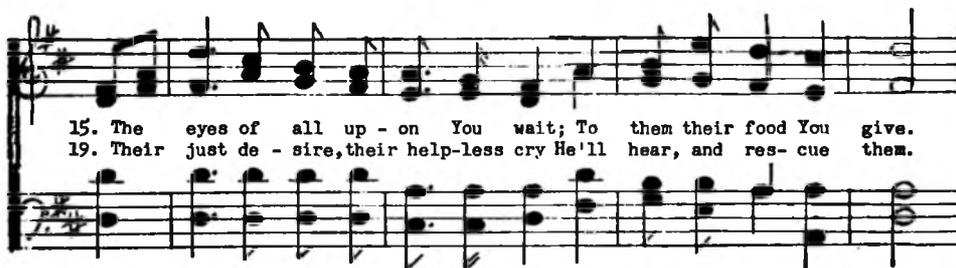
## PSALM 145 : 14-21

C.M.D.  
Alpha

## 15



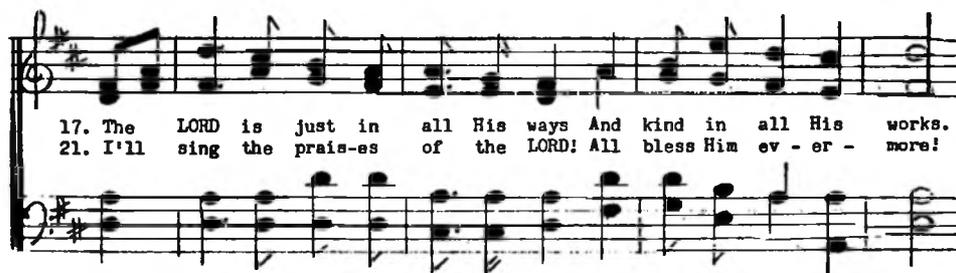
14. The LORD up - holds the faint-ing ones, Lifts up those in dis-tress.  
16. The LORD is near to all who call, Who call in truth on Him;



15. The eyes of all up - on You wait; To them their food You give.  
19. Their just de - sire, their help-less cry He'll hear, and res-cue them.



16. With op - en hand You sat - is - fy The wants of all that live.  
20. The LORD is keep - ing those He loves; The wick - ed He des - troys.



17. The LORD is just in all His ways And kind in all His works.  
21. I'll sing the prais-es of the LORD! All bless Him ev - er - more!

(Reprinted from *Praise: New Adventures in Psalm Singing*. Copyright 1969 by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. Copies of the booklet are available at 25 cents plus postage from Christian Education Office, 738 Rebecca Ave., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15221 U.S.A.)



# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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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 Eternal Home

By J. G. Vos

Our more or less pagan, man-centered age tends to think of this present earthly life as the main thing, and of any idea of life beyond death as a rather vague possibility. The ancient Greeks, as shown, for example, by Homer's *Odyssey*, thought of the life beyond death as a kind of shadow existence, in which people were called "shades." It was regarded as a very dim, weak and unsatisfactory substitute for the bright and solid life of this present world. In our own day many people are frankly skeptical about any existence beyond death. Others admit it in the abstract but are not specially interested in it. They are more concerned about their comforts, activities and ambitions in the here and now. Meantime the Communist world, following Karl Marx, ridicules all religion as "opium of the people," and in particular scoffs at Christian beliefs about immortality as mere wishful thinking — as a hope for "pie in the sky."

Christian thought, however, following the teaching of Scripture, emphasizes the reality and importance of the eternal order of things. The temporal — this present earthly life — is not the most important. As a matter of fact, it is only a preparation for the life eternal, which Scripture calls "the life that is life indeed." This is our true destiny, for which God planned and created us. When we reach it, we will find that it is not less but more real and satisfying than this present life. It is this present life that is thin and "shadow-like." The life of heaven will be the real life in which we will find complete and absolute satisfaction. Now read Romans 8:18-25.

Heaven will be in some sense a place, though not necessarily locatable in terms of astronomy. Jesus' words in John 14:2 prove that heaven will be in some sense local and spatial, though doubtless in a higher plane of existence than we can now imagine. So also the teaching of the Bible on the resurrection of the body proves the local and spatial character of heaven. Bodies require an environment — they cannot simply exist; they

have to exist somewhere. But where will it be? The Word of God does not undertake to satisfy our curiosity, though it does meet our spiritual need. Heaven will be that place in the created universe (not necessarily the present physical universe) where the risen, glorified Christ lives in His human nature. And after all, it will be the direct presence of Christ that makes heaven heaven.

The Bible is hard put to describe heaven to us. If it were to describe heaven literally, we would not be able, with our present limitations, to grasp the meaning. So the Bible has to describe heaven in a more indirect manner. It does this in two ways. It describes heaven, first negatively, and second, figuratively.

Negatively, the Bible gives us quite a list of things that will **not** be in heaven — no tears, no crying, no pain, no death, no sorrow (Revelation 21:4). That is to say, in heaven God's people will live in freedom from all kinds of evil. Name any kind of evil and you can say with absolute confidence that it will not exist in heaven.

On the positive side, the Bible describes heaven in figures of speech. These are not to be understood literally, yet they all teach truth about our eternal home. The gates will be made of pearl, the streets paved with fine gold which will be transparent like glass. The walls and foundations will be made of the most precious jewels. Read Revelation 21:18-21. The meaning of all this figurative description is that heaven will be more lovely, more beautiful, more satisfying, more wonderful than the best and costliest that we know in this present life.

It will be a wonderful life, and it will be forever. But not everyone can go there. Those who continue in sin unrepentant and unbelieving will go to hell, not to heaven. Heaven is a place of purity and holiness where those who enjoy wallowing in the filth of sin can never enter, and would never fit. Read Revelation 21:27; 22:14, 15.

— The Goal Post

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So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown —  
And Thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down  
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,  
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!  
As Thy love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved  
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being beloved!

— Robert Browning

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## *Studies in the Book of Genesis*

(Continued from last issue)

### LESSON 40

#### 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.

Our last lesson ended with Hagar choosing to run away from the household of Abraham rather than submit to the reproofs or corrections of her mistress Sarai. "And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur" (16:7). Shur was located in the desert, south of Palestine and east of Egypt. The exact location is unknown, but it is thought to have been connected with the fortresses on the Egyptian frontier. See Gen. 25:18. It appears, therefore, that Hagar was going in the direction of Egypt, her original home. The record does not state that she had reached Shur, but that she was at a place "in the way to Shur."

The angel of the Lord found her there. The expression "the angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament usually means, not a created angel but a veiled manifestation of God Himself to someone. Some have thought that "the angel of the Lord" means a manifestation of the Second Person of the divine Trinity, God the Son. In a very strange and mysterious manner "the angel of the Lord" is identified with God and yet also distinguished from God. Note the language used in Exodus 13 and 14: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light . . ." (Ex. 13:21). "And the Angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them" (Ex. 14:19). Here the "angel" is clearly identified with the Lord Himself. But in Exodus 23:20-23, the "angel" is distinguished from God: God sends the "angel"; the "angel" is sent by God: "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him" (Ex. 23: 20, 21). Here the "angel" is not only distinguished from God as one sent by God, but it is added that God's name is in the angel. We believe the facts warrant us in saying that "the angel of the Lord"

was based on the truth of the divine Trinity, yet was not intended as a premature revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Before the doctrine of the Trinity could safely be revealed to men, the lesson that there is only one God had to be thoroughly learned; this is a good reason why the doctrine of the Trinity is not fully revealed until we come to the New Testament. During the Old Testament period the appearances of the "angel of the Lord" served to teach and remind the people of God's nearness to them and His loving concern for them. At the same time the truth of the oneness of God was not endangered. Those who are interested in a further study of this fascinating subject are referred to **Biblical Theology**, by Geerhardus Vos, pages 85-89 (published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502).

Coming back to the story of Hagar, the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness. In our land with its abundant water supply we can scarcely realize the vital importance of water in a more or less arid region such as the south of Palestine. The fact that the angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar would seem to indicate that she was a woman who had a true faith in the Lord. Possibly Hagar in her trouble had been praying. Luther suggests that after Hagar's departure, Abraham and Sarai may have been troubled about the affair and may have been praying to the Lord for Hagar. At any rate, Hagar is enroute from the Promised Land to Egypt. The Angel of the Lord appears to her at exactly the right time to check this wrong intention before it could be fully carried out. Hagar would by this time be far enough away from Abraham's establishment, and enough time would have passed, to enable her to look at matters more calmly and with better judgment.

"And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai" (16:8). The record does not tell us how Hagar knew who was speaking to her, nor in what form or appearance the Angel of the Lord manifested Himself to her. But the manner in which the Angel addressed her was calculated to remind Hagar that she was out of the path of duty, for

she is addressed as "Hagar, Sarai's maid." Clearly the questions that follow this were not asked to obtain information, but rather to cause Hagar to think soberly about her course of action. And presently Hagar admits that she is fleeing from Sarai, and that Sarai is indeed her mistress. "By the use of that title for Sarai Hagar admits that the original relation is not canceled" (Leupold).

Some in discussing this passage have argued that Hagar had a perfect right to run away from Sarai if she chose to do so. But the Lord evidently did not think so, for Hagar is presently commanded to return to her mistress: "And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands." The subject under discussion is not the abstract right or wrong of the institution of slavery, but the duty of Hagar in this particular concrete situation. Her duty is to return to Sarai. We should realize that more was involved in this than the mere question of personal liberty. To return to Abraham's household meant to return to the worship of Jehovah, the God of grace and salvation; to go back to Egypt meant, presumably, to go back to Egyptian paganism and idolatry. Even though it might involve some hardship or unpleasantness, it was much better for Hagar to return to Abraham's establishment than to go to Egypt. It is better to be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

"And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude" (16:10). Three distinct statements came from God to Hagar, each of them being marked by the phrase "And the angel of the Lord said unto her" (verses 9, 10 and 11). The first statement is that it is her duty to return to her mistress, Sarai. The second statement is that she is to have a numerous posterity. The third concerns her son, Ishmael. Looking now at the second of these divine messages, we note that in the Hebrew it is "multiplying I will multiply." This is a common Hebrew way of making a very emphatic statement, just as in Gen. 2:17 the warning "thou shalt surely die" is in the Hebrew, "dying thou shalt die." The numerous descendants promised to Hagar became known as the Ishmaelites, who eventually, no doubt, became part of the Arabic speaking branch of the Semitic race. We should note that while a numerous posterity is promised, no accompanying spiritual blessings or privileges are mentioned.

"And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction" (16:11). Hagar already knew that she was to have a child, but now it is revealed to her that this will be a son. The name of this son is appointed by God. It is Ishmael, which means "God hears." This appointment of the name implies that Hagar had cried to God for

help. The expression, "hath heard thy affliction" means, naturally, "hath heard the cry occasioned by thy affliction."

"And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" (16:12). This statement would not be so pleasant to Hagar as what had gone before. However, we may suppose that it was not made for the purpose of grieving or humiliating Hagar but rather that she might know how to guide and train this son, in order to restrain his wild and contentious nature. "He will be a wild man" is translated by the American Revised Version (1901) as "He shall be as a wild ass among men." Leupold translates it, "He will be a wild ass of a man." For a description of the nature of the wild asses of the Arabian desert, see Job 39:5-8. "Ishmael's descendants, the Arabs, roving over the wide expanses of the desert lands adjacent to Bible lands, are still characterized by this trait" (Leupold). The aggressive, contentious spirit of Ishmael is further described by the prediction that "his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him." Thus it is predicted that Ishmael, and by implication his descendants also, will be distinctly uncooperative. "And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." This is more clearly translated by the ARV as "And he shall dwell over against all his brethren," that is, in isolation from or hostility against them.

"And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" (16:13). This is translated by the ARV thus: "And she called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, Thou art a God that seeth: for she said, Have I even here looked after him that seeth me?" The Hebrew for "a God that seeth" is *El Roi* ("a God of seeing"). For a time Hagar had thought that God had cast her off. But now she realizes that God is helping and caring for her after all. So in her surprise and gladness she declares that God is a God that sees. Hagar was greatly surprised, as is shown by her question, "Have I even here looked after him that seeth me?" She realized, of course, that such theophanies (appearances of God) are granted to mortal men only on the rarest occasions; hence, she realized that she had been very highly honored and privileged. Note that Hagar speaks of "looking after" God, not looking "at" or "upon" God. No one could gaze directly upon a manifestation of God and live. In this connection see Ex. 33:20, and also Ex. 3:6.

"Wherefore the well was called, Beer-lahai-roi: behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered" (16:14). Earlier in the chapter this source of water was called a "fountain", that is, a spring. Here it is called a well. It may have been a spring that had been walled in to form a deep

reservoir of water. Because of the revelation of God to Hagar at this place, it came to be known as Beer-lahai-roi. This Hebrew phrase means "the well of the living one who sees me." The statement is added, for readers of Genesis, that this "well" is located between Kadesh and Bered. Kadesh here means the place usually called Kadesh Barnea, about 40 miles south of Beersheba, in the southern desert. The location of Bered is unknown at the present day. Some scholars believe that Hagar's spring or well exists today at a caravan inn some 12 miles west of Kadesh.

"And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram" (16:15, 16). The fact that Hagar obeyed the Lord's instructions and returned to the household of Abraham and Sarai is not stated, but is implied in the narrative. In obedience to the Lord's command to Hagar, Abraham names the son Ishmael. This of course indicates that Hagar, on returning, told the story of her experience by the well near the road to Egypt.

#### Questions:

1. When Hagar ran away from the household of Abraham, in what direction did she go?
2. Where did the Angel of the Lord find her?
3. How can it be proved that "the Angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament is not a created angel but a manifestation of God Himself?
4. What is the relation of "the Angel of the Lord" to the Trinity?
5. What was the purpose of appearances of "the Angel of the Lord" during the Old Testament period?
6. Why was it necessary that the full truth of the Trinity be not revealed in the Old Testament, but only in the New Testament?
7. Why would Hagar be near a fountain of water?
8. What difference in Hagar's feelings and state of mind may have existed at this time, in contrast with her attitude when she left Abraham's place?
9. How did the Angel of the Lord address Hagar?
10. What is implied in His addressing Hagar as "Sarai's maid"?
11. Why was it better for Hagar to return to Sarai than to go on to Egypt?
12. What words used by Hagar constitute an admission that she was out of the path of duty?
13. How many distinct statements came from God to Hagar?
14. By what formula is each of these statements introduced in the record?
15. What promise is given to Hagar concerning her descendants?
16. What fact is revealed to Hagar concerning the child she is to have?
17. What is the meaning of the name Ishmael?
18. What prediction was made by the Lord concerning the character and temperament of Ishmael?
19. Why would this unpleasant information be revealed to Hagar?
20. How are the wild asses of the Arabian desert described in the book of Job?
21. What name did Hagar use to describe God?
22. What question asked by Hagar indicates that she was surprised?
23. Why did Hagar have reason to be surprised at her experience?
24. Why did Hagar "look after" God instead of looking "at" God?
25. What name came to be given to this spring or well?
26. What is the meaning of the Hebrew words Beer-lahai-roi?

### LESSON 41

#### 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 17 brings us to a new and further revelation of God's covenant to Abraham, and a confirmation of that covenant relationship which had been established by God. At the end of chapter 16 Abraham was 86 years old. When chapter 17 opens, thirteen years have passed, and the patri-

arch is 99 years old. Again the Lord appears to him introducing the revelation with the statement: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (17:1). The Hebrew name of God used here is **El Shaddai**. This name was most appropriate for use in a revelation to Abraham who had waited long and was still waiting for the fulfilment of the divine promises. God is Almighty; therefore the promises shall be fulfilled. Abraham is further commanded to walk before God, and be perfect. How different this is from

the kind of religion which existed among the peoples by which Abraham was surrounded! Only the true religion of Jehovah sets absolute moral perfection before people as the true ideal toward which they must strive. All man-made religions place before mankind an ideal low enough for sinful man to attain. The true religion of Jehovah, on the other hand, evidences its truth and divine origin by placing before man an absolute moral ideal. To walk before God" means to live a life of communion with God. So here we see true religion enjoined, and its proper fruit of moral uprightness commanded along with it. There will never be real moral unrightness and integrity except as the fruit of true religion. All modern man's efforts at "character building" on a secular or humanistic basis are doomed to failure. It is union with God that produces truly good character.

"And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly" (17:2). Already in Gen. 15:18 we saw that God's covenant had been made with Abraham. Therefore 17:2 cannot refer to an establishment of the covenant in the sense of constituting the relationship for the first time. Rather, it must mean confirming, or putting into execution, the covenant relationship which already existed between God and Abraham. It is God's way of informing Abraham that the program will not longer be delayed, but will be put into active operation from this time. This implies, of course, that the time has come for the son to be born who shall be Abraham's true heir.

"And Abram fell on his face. . .". Note the utter reverence which marked the patriarch's reaction to the manifestation of the divine presence. How different was Abraham's attitude from the rather irreverent spirit of modern religion! Men today often forget God's holiness.

". . . and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations" (17:3, 4). In verse 1 the divine name is "the Lord" (Jehovah); then in the second part of verse 1 it is "God Almighty" (El Shaddai); now through the balance of the chapter the divine name used is simply "God" (Elohim). Elohim is the name which stresses God as Creator; Jehovah stresses the idea that God is the God of grace and salvation; El Shaddai stresses the divine power of God. The use of Elohim ("God") through the rest of the chapter may perhaps be occasioned by the fact that "the Creator is about to do a creative work in enabling Sarai to bring forth" (Leupold).

"Thou shalt be a father of many nations" (17:4). This revelation is connected with the change of the patriarch's name from Abram to Abraham. (In these lessons we have been using the name "Abraham", except in quotations, because

this is the name by which he is historically known, just as we might say, "When President Eisenhower was a young man, he graduated from West Point," although as a matter of fact he was not President Eisenhower at the time when he graduated from West Point). The name was changed in token of the fact that the patriarch would be the father of a multitude of nations. There is some question as to just what the difference in meaning is between "Abram" and "Abraham." "In Hebrew, Abram denotes exalted father; the change to Abraham appears to consist merely in strengthening the root of the second syllable, in order to place increased emphasis on the idea of exaltation" (Davis Bible Dictionary). Not all Hebrew scholars are in agreement with this explanation, however. We shall not attempt to solve this difficult problem, but shall be satisfied with the knowledge that the new name in some way betokened Abraham's position as ancestor of a multitude of nations.

And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee" (17:6). This requires no special comment. It has been abundantly fulfilled through history. Not only were the kings of Israel and Judah descended from Abraham, but there have been numerous kings of the Arab peoples descended from him.

"And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee" (17:7). Here we have one of the great divine promises of Scripture. This verse may be regarded as the Magna Carta of the Old Testament Israel and of the Christian Church. Several features should be noted.

First, note the divine initiative in establishing the covenant. "I will establish my covenant between me and thee. . .". God takes the initiative. Establishing the covenant is an act of God, not an act of man nor an act of God and man jointly. This divine initiative is greatly obscured by the common idea that the covenant is essentially an agreement or contract or compact. This idea seems to lead naturally to the notion that God and man are in some sense on an equality in establishing the covenant relationship. But no such idea can be admitted. God is the Maker and Establisher of this covenant; man is only the recipient of it. Abraham is not even consulted as to his likes or dislikes, his preferences or objections. The terms and provisions of the covenant are all stipulated by God. The covenant, therefore, proceeds from God's sovereignty. This is especially important in our own day when there is a constant emphasis on man's part in religion, with a corresponding depreciation of God's part.

Second, the covenant is not merely made with Abraham, but with his posterity, generation after

generation. It is an everlasting covenant, made with Abraham's seed after him in their generations. This implies that God claims the children of believers as His, and that God's ordinary way of maintaining His covenant people (or church) on earth is by maintaining the covenant relationship with the descendants of believers, generation after generation. This truth is greatly neglected at the present day and needs to be stressed, over against the excessive individualism of much present-day evangelism. The children of believers have a covenant standing from their birth, and are not to be regarded as if they were exactly the same as the children of the world. Incidentally, this truth of the continuance of the covenant relationship down through the generations is the true basis for infant baptism. It would be a great gain if arguments for and against infant baptism could be diverted from the attempt to prove or disprove that infants were baptized in the apostolic church, to a consideration of what is involved in the covenant promise of Genesis 17:7. What is needed today is an organic study of the Bible, in place of the atomistic or piecemeal study that is so common. Many people who oppose infant baptism do not admit that God's covenant with Abraham is the charter of the Christian Church; they regard it as having significance for the Jews only. It is therefore at this point that we should concentrate our efforts to convince opponents of infant baptism. Until they are ready to admit that the Christian Church is the true and proper heir to the covenant established with Abraham, all arguments based on this or that text in the Book of Acts or the Epistles will be useless in most cases.

Third, the essence of the covenant relationship is stated here: "to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." That is, it is designed to bring the recipients of the covenant into a truly religious relationship with God, a relationship of religious communion in the highest and most real sense. This includes, of course, all the means that may be necessary to bring this result about, such as the revelation of God in the Bible, Christ's work of atonement, His resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and so forth. We note here the priority of religion over all other considerations in the life of man. People today speak of religion as a means to an end — we need religion to curb crime, we need religion to prevent war, etc. But to speak of religion as a means to an end is really to be irreligious. Everything else exists for the sake of religion; religion exists for the sake of God, and for man's glorifying and enjoying of God, alone. And the essence of religion is union and communion with God. Benefits in human society are by-products of religion, not the main reason for being religious. It is not too much to say that a great deal of modern religion is really not religious at all, simply because it is concerned about man and society rather than about God.

#### Questions:

1. How many years elapsed between chapter 16 and chapter 17?
2. How old is Abraham at the beginning of chapter 17?
3. What divine name introduces the revelation of chapter 17?
4. In view of this name of God, what two commands are given to Abraham?
5. How does the moral standard of the true religion of Jehovah differ from that of all man-made religions?
6. What is the relation between true religion and upright living?
7. What should we think of efforts at "character building" upon a secular or humanistic basis?
8. What is the source of truly good character?
9. Why can the statement of 17:2 not mean that God's covenant is now for the first time established with Abraham?
10. What is the meaning of the statement of 17:2 that God will make His covenant with Abraham?
11. What was Abraham's reaction to this appearance of God to him?
12. Why is true reverence often lacking in modern religion?
13. Why was the patriarch's name changed from Abram to Abraham?
14. What is the meaning of the name Abram?
15. According to Davis' Bible Dictionary, what is the difference between Abram and Abraham?
16. What kings have been descended from Abraham?
17. How may Genesis 17:7 be regarded, as to its importance?
18. What is meant by "the divine initiative in establishing the covenant"?
19. Why is it improper to regard God's covenant with man as being essentially a compact, contract or agreement?
20. With whom, besides Abraham himself, was this covenant made?
21. What is the relation of Gen. 17:7 to infant baptism?
22. What is the relation of Gen. 17:7 to the Christian Church?
23. What is the essence of the covenant relationship?
24. What is meant by the statement that much of modern religion is really irreligious?

### 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.

Besides the promise of a numerous posterity, God reaffirmed to Abraham at this time the promise of inheritance of the land of Canaan. "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (17:8). Two questions have been raised concerning the fulfilment of this promise. First, what is meant by "everlasting"? And second, what is meant by "thy seed after thee?" The word for "everlasting" is the Hebrew word *olam*. This word is used in the Old Testament with various meanings; it by no means always means "eternal" in the strict sense. For example, in Deut. 15:17 its meaning is limited to the earthly lifetime of a single individual: "Then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever." Here the meaning clearly is "permanently" but not "eternally." It is also used to mean a long time, as in Psalm 143:3, "as those that have been long dead" where the word "long" is a translation of the Hebrew word *olam*. In Gen. 17:8 Leupold translates it thus: "in the hidden future" or "into the hidden future," adding that there is no warrant for the idea that Canaan is guaranteed as the inalienable possession of Israel to eternity. The word does, however, convey the meaning of possession for a long time.

As to the question of who is included in the "seed" of Abraham to whom this promise is made, we hold that it includes only the believing, covenant-keeping descendants of Abraham. There is no reason to suppose that it guarantees the permanent possession of Canaan to an apostate and unbelieving Israel lacking Abraham's faith. There is therefore no basis for the idea that this promise is applicable to the present-day Zionist movement, which is largely secular and in any case lacks the faith in Christ which Abraham had. To claim that this promise of Gen. 17:8 gives a warrant for taking Palestine from Arabs whose ancestors have lived there for centuries and giving it to Jews who are recent arrivals, seems both unreasonable and unjust. The truth is that in keeping with the promise of God, Israel possessed the land as long as Israel remained faithful to God. When Israel became apostate from God, they were cast out of their land and taken into captivity by foreign powers. This happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C. when Samaria was captured by the Assyrians, and to the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. when Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians. Certainly the

Bible teaches that those who have the faith of Abraham are the children or seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:9, 29). The notion that people who are without saving faith and who are not reconciled to God by the blood of the cross, can yet claim blessings and privileges as heirs of divine promises, is one of the grievous errors promoted by some popular religious teachers of our day.

"And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised" (17:9, 10). This section prescribes circumcision as the external sign of the covenant relationship. The person who remained uncircumcised was a covenant-breaker: "that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (17:14b). This sign or token of the covenant was, of course, intended for the Old Testament dispensation only. We believe that under the New Testament it has been replaced by Baptism.

"And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be" (17:15). Sarai's name is at this point changed to Sarah, which means "princess." This was apparently also the meaning of Sarai. The change in spelling and pronunciation of the name however would mark a new dignity in view of the fact that Sarah was soon to bear the son who would be the long-awaited heir.

"And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her" (17:16). This promise must include the nation of Israel with its kings of the northern and southern kingdoms, as well as the race descended from Esau. The Ishmaelites and the various tribes sprung from Abraham's marriage with Keturah (Gen. 25:1-3) cannot be regarded as included, for these were not the offspring of Sarah. Perhaps we should regard the spiritual descendants of Abraham as included also — the Christian believers of the New Dispensation.

"Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?" (17:17). It is evident here that Abraham's attitude was not sinful as some have maintained. His falling upon his face was an act of reverence or worship of God. His laughter was not the laughter of scorn or unbelief or derision, but of joy and astonishment. His attitude is one of joyful wonder at the marvellous promise of God, rather than an attitude of unbelief.

"And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (17:18). Many people in reading this chapter have regarded this plea of Abraham as a substitute or alternative proposal for what God had promised in verse 16. There is no reason, however, for so regarding it. Abraham's plea for Ishmael in no way implies a desire on his part that Ishmael might have the place God had planned for Sarah's son. Rather, we are to understand that Abraham truly loved Ishmael and naturally wanted divine blessings for him also. This is clear from the content of God's answer to Abraham's plea, as found in verses 19-21. God has "heard" Abraham's prayer concerning Ishmael; that is, God has accepted this prayer and will answer it. Therefore the prayer did not involve a plea that Ishmael might be the promised heir. For in the same answer to Abraham, God states both (1) that He will grant Abraham's request for Ishmael, and (2) that Isaac is to be the promised heir.

"And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shall call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: 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. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham" (17:19-22). Here the promise that Sarah shall bear a son is plainly stated, together with an affirmation that the covenant shall be established with that son. It is also stated that the son shall be named Isaac. Isaac means "he laughs" or "laughing one."

Next God promises certain things concerning Ishmael. He will be fruitful and will have a numerous posterity, including twelve princes. The Ishmaelite rulers or kings are of course referred to here. Ishmael's descendants shall become a great nation. We should note that while God promised much concerning Ishmael, no covenant or redemptive promises are involved. The promises to Ishmael concerned worldly or temporal blessings alone.

With Isaac, on the other hand God's covenant will be established. That is, Isaac is to carry on the covenant line that shall ultimately be the channel of redemption. This involves, of course, that in the fulness of time the Christ shall be born of the descendants of Isaac.

Lastly, we are told that God "went up from Abraham." Whether Abraham saw God rising up, we cannot say. The words at least imply that God, being transcendent above this earthly realm, and having condescended to meet with Abraham on the earthly level, must thereafter withdraw

once more to that transcendent realm which is commonly called heaven.

#### Questions:

1. Besides promising Abraham a numerous posterity, what promise did God reaffirm to Abraham at this time?
2. What are some of the ways by which the Hebrew word **olam** may be translated? How can it be shown that it does not necessarily mean "eternally"?
3. How does Leupold translate the word **olam** in Gen. 17:8?
4. Who are included in the "seed" of Abraham mentioned in 17:8?
5. What should be thought of the idea that Gen. 17:8 constitutes a divine endorsement of the present-day Zionist movement?
6. How long did Israel actually retain possession of the land?
7. What does the Epistle to the Galatians teach as to who are the children or "seed" of Abraham?
8. What was the external sign or confirmation of the covenant appointed by God for the Old Testament period?
9. What ordinance has replaced this sign under the New Testament?
10. What change was made in the name of Abraham's wife at this juncture of the history?
11. What is the meaning of the name Sarah?
12. What special promises are made concerning Sarah?
13. How should we regard Abraham's act of falling on his face, his laughter, and the questions he asked in 17:17?
14. What request does Abraham make of God in 17:18?
15. How can it be shown that Abraham was not requesting that Ishmael be the heir instead of the son to be born of Sarah?
16. What name did God specify for the son to be born of Sarah?
17. What is the meaning of the name Isaac?
18. What promises did God make concerning Ishmael at this time?
19. What element is absent from the promises concerning Ishmael?
20. What special blessing or distinction is promised to Isaac?
21. What is implied in the statement that God "went up from Abraham"?

## LESSON 43

**III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, continued****2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:10, cont.**

The next statement of the record concerns Abraham's obedience to the divine command concerning the ordinance of circumcision. It is recorded that Abraham executed the command of God immediately — "the selfsame day." This compliance of Abraham with the divine command is related in 17:23-27, where we are also informed that at the time Abraham was 99 years old and Ishmael was 13.

The fact that Ishmael was circumcised raises a problem, inasmuch as he was not the promised seed through whom the covenant blessings were to descend. With regard to this question, we should note that the command of God included not only the seed of Abraham through whom the covenant salvation would be accomplished, but also all the males of his entire household, including those purchased with money, who were not of Abraham's seed (17:12, 13). Therefore obedience to God's command required the circumcision of Ishmael. Calvin does not even mention this problem. Leupold says concerning it, that while Ishmael was excluded from being the one from whom the Saviour should be descended, this does not imply that he was excluded from the blessings to be derived from the promised Saviour.

The question of why Ishmael was circumcised was discussed by the Rev. Frank D. Frazer in the October-December 1954 issue of this magazine (page 174). Those wishing a fuller discussion of the question than is possible in the present lesson, are referred to Mr. Frazier's treatment of it. Among other things, Mr. Frazier says:

"The fact that circumcision, as the sign and seal of the covenant, was put upon ALL the members of Abraham's household, regardless of nationality, shows plainly that the benefits of the covenant are not restricted to the lineal descendants of Abraham and Sarah, but are extended to all those for whose instruction in the things of God they, as parents and masters, were responsible. That parents and masters are thus responsible is implied in the fact that circumcision was to be performed on the infant of eight days, when he could be only a passive recipient of the sacrament. But the sign would remain in and before him as long as the life of his flesh lasted, as a constant reminder of the Covenant of Jehovah of which he was informed, and an inducement to lay hold of the benefits thereof for himself. The promise could not be annulled but by his own willful rebellion or neglect."

The question, of course, is not whether Ish-

mael was an ancestor of the Messiah, nor is it whether Ishmael was eternally saved. The real problem is only that as to the ground of Ishmael receiving circumcision. Concerning this, it is at least clear that he received the rite in compliance with the divine command recorded in 17:12, 13.

Abraham is now almost a hundred years old, and the divinely promised son and heir has not yet been born. But the time is drawing near, and accordingly it is revealed to Abraham in the next chapter (chap. 18).

"And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day" (18:1). This Mamre seems to be the friendly Amorite mentioned previously (14:13). The word "plains" should be translated "terebinth" (a kind of tree). A grove of such trees would be highly desirable as a camp site on account of the shade which they would afford. Abraham was resting, according to the common custom, during the hottest part of the day.

We are informed that "the Lord" (Jehovah) appeared unto Abraham. This statement of 18:1 must be borne in mind as it has a bearing on the identity of the three visitors mentioned in the next verse. The meaning is not merely that God sent three human messengers to Abraham. What is described is, rather, a real theophany (appearance of God), and the three "men" come from the supernatural realm. From verses 13 and 22 it is clear that one of three mysterious visitors was God Himself. That the other two were angels is proved by 19:1 and Hebrews 13:2.

The supernatural visitors are at first called men, however, because they at first appeared to Abraham to be such. Had he at the first known them to be supernatural beings, he could not have invited them to partake of food as he did. At a later point in the story, presumably at verse 10, Abraham must have recognized the true nature of his guests.

Still believing his visitors to be men, Abraham presses upon them his hospitality in true Oriental manner. The visitors stood still, a short distance from Abraham's tent door. Custom required that strangers not approach closer until definitely invited to do so. Abraham therefore ran to meet them, and prostrated himself toward the ground before them. This act in itself does not involve religious worship, except when performed before God. In the case we are considering, it was an expression of courteous welcome. Next, Abraham requests the visitors not to proceed further on their journey without stopping, that he may bestow hospitality upon them. Very humbly he calls himself "thy servant." Water is provided to wash their feet — the first necessity for making

guests comfortable. They are invited to rest themselves under the tree, that is, under the tree by which Abraham's tent was pitched. This rest in the shade would be welcome after travelling in the sun during the heat of the day.

Abraham next invited his visitors to partake of a meal, which he in true Oriental self-depreciation refers to as "a morsel of bread"—as we might say, "a bite to eat." "For therefore are ye come to your servant." This is, Abraham regards their arrival as a providential opportunity for him to perform the duties of hospitality. The visitors reply, "so do, as thou hast said," thus accepting Abraham's courteous invitation.

At this point in his commentary on Genesis, Calvin has some very interesting observations concerning the duty of hospitality. Among other things he deprecates the large number of hotels which existed in his day, saying, "the great number of inns are evidence of our depravity, and prove it to have arisen from our own fault, that the principal duty of humanity has become obsolete among us," and also that "the right of hospitality has been held most sacred among all people, and disgrace was never more detestable than to be called inhospitable."

Next, we see what preparations Abraham made for the meal to which he had invited the three visitors. Note that Abraham acted quickly — "hastened" (18:6); "quickly" (18:6); "hasted" (18:7). First Sarah is asked to take three measures of fine flour, and make bread. This quantity has been calculated to be 4½ pecks, or a little more than one bushel. We may wonder why such a large quantity should be prepared for three guests. Abraham is honoring his guests by preparing food for them in rich abundance. Of course much would be left over and this would not be wasted, since it would undoubtedly be given to some of Abraham's many servants. We should realize that in Bible times bread was not made in advance and stored until used as is the case today; it was always baked immediately before being eaten. Also the bread prepared by Sarah on this occasion could not have been leavened bread such as we are accustomed to, for there was not time for the preparation of such. Rather, it was probably unleavened bread in the form of large, thin wafers or sheets, which could be used to wrap around a piece of meat and hold it for eating. The bread is called "cakes" in verse 6.

Next, Abraham selects a calf, which is immediately killed and dressed by a servant. We should realize that the eating of meat was uncommon, so that what Abraham set before his guests was truly a feast. With the bread and meat, Abraham provides "butter," which really means sour milk or perhaps buttermilk, and "milk," that is, ordinary sweet milk, which may have been of camels, cows or goats.

Abraham does not himself partake of the meal with his guests, but stands near them under the tree while they eat and drink. This may seem strange to us today, but probably surprised no reader of Genesis in ancient times.

Bearing in mind that Abraham's visitors are not really men but beings from the supernatural realm, it is truly wonderful that they are said to have eaten the food placed before them by Abraham. The human form in which they appeared was of course not theirs by nature, but was a form assumed for the occasion of appearing to Abraham. Actually they can have had no need of food, nor would Abraham have offered them any if he had at once discerned their true nature. But they really ate, no doubt in order to manifest appreciation and acceptance of Abraham's hospitality, and also to conceal their supernatural character until the proper moment had come for disclosing it.

The fact that Abraham's guests partook of the food which he placed before them calls to our minds the remarkable parallel in the New Testament, where the risen, glorified Christ, who certainly had no need of earthly nourishment, ate a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb in the presence of His astonished disciples. (Luke 24:42).

The meal being finished, the moment has come to reveal to Abraham that the long-promised heir will soon be born. This subject is introduced by a question: "Where is Sarah thy wife?" (18:9), to which Abraham replies simply, "Behold, in the tent." The mere inquiry of the strangers concerning the whereabouts of Abraham's wife was sufficient to show that they possessed extraordinary authority. We should realize that under ordinary circumstances such an inquiry, except on the part of a very close friend or relative, would be regarded as highly improper.

From this point one of the three visitors becomes outstandingly prominent and is the speaker, this obviously being the Lord. The revelation now given concerns Sarah as well as Abraham, and Sarah, behind the curtains of the tent, would be able to hear it. The Lord said, "I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life: and, 10, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him" (18:10).

There is some difficulty here as to the meaning of the expression "according to the time of life." Leupold explains it as meaning "when this time of the year returns," that is, "after a year." Various other suggested translations are quite artificial and unnatural, and some are quite impossible.

"And Sarah heard it . . .". The Hebrew here means literally, "And Sarah was listening to it. . .". The open tent door where Sarah stood was

behind the speaker, so that she was not visible to him. This proves that the statement presently made by the Lord, to the effect that Sarah had laughed, proceeded from His divine omniscience, not from ordinary observation.

It is next stated that both Abraham and Sarah were old, so that in the ordinary course of nature the birth of a child could not be expected (18:11). In view of the natural impossibility of the birth of a child, Sarah "laughed within herself" (18:12), that is, she suppressed a laugh, she laughed, not aloud, but silently. Sarah's laugh, and the question which passed through her mind (18:12b) are an expression of unbelief. She took this attitude because she did not believe it possible that she should bear a child. Sarah must have repented later of this sinful unbelief, because we read in Hebrews 11:11, "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed. . .". A proper conclusion would seem to be that her first reaction was one of incredulity, which later after the Lord's reproof was changed to an attitude of faith.

At this point Sarah is like multitudes of people of the present day who can think only in terms of what is possible according to natural law. The supernatural is, of course, outside the realm of natural law, just because it is supernatural. But we live in an age when men have been conditioned to think of the natural order as all that exists. Even God has been "naturalized" in modern thought, and is regarded as bound and limited by "the nature of the universe." This modern naturalism differs but little, actually, from downright atheism. Atheism says that there is no God; modern naturalistic thought says that there is no REAL God, no God like the God of the Bible. If there is anything modern man needs, it is to stop thinking about nature long enough to think about the Person behind nature, who started the natural order in the first place and keeps it functioning, and can step in and act directly in history if it is His will to do so.

Instantly the Lord challenges and then rebukes Sarah's unbelief. "And the Lord said unto Abraham. Wherefore did Sarah laugh. . ." (18:13). "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" And then the promise of a son is explicitly repeated. By this time Sarah has begun to be afraid, and makes a foolish, desperate attempt to defend and justify herself, which of course she can do in one way only, by telling a lie. So Sarah tries to lie to God, saying "I laughed not." But the Lord contradicts this claim, saying, "Nay; but thou didst laugh" (18:15). We see in Sarah's conduct here how one sin leads to another. First it is incredulous unbelief, which is followed immediately by a brazen attempt to justify self by resorting to untruth. How much better it would have been for Sarah to confess her sin and ask forgiveness! The passion for self-justification is

deeply imbedded in our sinful nature. Only the almighty grace of God can deliver us from it. Augustine of Hippo in his Confessions tells how this lust for self-justification had been one of his besetting sins, but how finally by the grace of God he had gotten over it.

#### Questions:

1. How soon did Abraham obey God's command concerning the rite of circumcision?
2. Why was Ishmael circumcised?
3. How old was Abraham at this time? How old was Ishmael?
4. Who was Mamre?
5. What is the true meaning of the word translated "plains" in 18:1?
6. Why would a grove of trees be desirable as a camp site?
7. What time of day was it when mysterious visitors approached Abraham's tent?
8. What was Abraham doing at the time?
9. What verses show that one of the visitors was God?
10. How can it be shown that two of them were angels?
11. How can it be shown that Abraham at first supposed all three of the visitors to be men?
12. How did Abraham welcome his guests?
13. How does Abraham refer to the meal to which he invites his guests?
14. What did Calvin say about the duty of showing hospitality to strangers?
15. Why would Abraham hurry in providing a meal for his guests?
16. Why should such a large quantity of food be prepared?
17. What kind of bread was probably prepared by Sarah?
18. What is the correct meaning of the "butter" mentioned in 18:8?
19. Why is it remarkable that Abraham's guests partook of food?
20. What New Testament parallel exists for Abraham's guests eating??
21. What fact about Abraham's visitors is suggested by their inquiry as to the whereabouts of his wife?
22. What promise is given to Abraham in 18:10?

23. What is the probable meaning of the expression "according to the time of life" in 18:10?

24. What was Sarah's first reaction on hearing the promise?

25. How can it be shown that Sarah must have later repented of her wrong attitude?

26. How does Sarah's attitude at this time illustrate the attitude of many modern people?

27. How does Sarah attempt to justify herself?

28. Instead of attempting to justify herself, what should Sarah have done at this particular time?

#### LESSON 44

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

#### 2. History of Abraham after leaving Ur. 12:1 to 25:10, cont.

We have come to the end of the revelation given at Abraham's tent door, in connection with the meal partaken of by his supernatural guests. "And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way" (19:16). Mamre was at or near Hebron. The exact location of Sodom is unknown, but the most probable location is near the southern end of the Dead Sea, the site being today covered by the water. From Hebron to the present southern limit of the Dead Sea is a straight-line distance of a little more than 30 miles, with a drop of 4332 feet in altitude from Hebron (3040 feet above sea level) to the surface of the Dead Sea (1292 feet below sea level). The men "looked toward Sodom": very likely the city walls and towers of Sodom may have been visible in the distance. This is confirmed by 19:27, 28 where Abraham is pictured as standing where he had stood the day before, and viewing the smoke rising from Sodom and Gomorrah.

With true Oriental courtesy, Abraham escorts his guests for a certain distance. This is a common custom in Oriental countries even today. A host will see his departing guest to the railway station, and sometimes may even board the train and ride with the departing guest to the next station, then bid him farewell and return home. In the New Testament we see the Ephesian elders accompanying Paul to his ship (Acts 20:38), and again the Christians of Tyre, accompanied by their wives and children, escorting Paul outside the city to the seashore where he was to embark on his ship (Acts 21:5, 6).

Next follows the revelation about the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (18:17-19).

The Lord is represented here as speaking to Himself, but certainly the words spoken were intended for Abraham to hear and heed. These verses give two reasons why the Lord would reveal His plan concerning Sodom to Abraham: (1) God had already granted to Abraham the remarkable honor and privilege stated in verse 18; (2) what is about to be revealed would be useful to Abraham in instructing his posterity after him (Calvin). As the recipient of covenant grace and promises, Abraham is the Lord's special and close friend; and as the father of the chosen people, he would transmit the truth to them faithfully. The meaning of course is not that the Lord was undecided as to whether to reveal the truth to Abraham. Rather, the Lord is stating reasons for not concealing it from the patriarch.

The true account of what happened to Sodom and why it happened would be of permanent importance to the Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Church. This truth must therefore be revealed to Abraham, who would pass it on faithfully to his posterity, whence it would come ultimately to its place in the Bible as an inspired record for all time. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah must make an indelible impression on the minds of God's people, and this impression must be truly interpreted.

"And the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will now go down, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know" (18:20). This language is, of course, anthropomorphic; it speaks of God in human terms, in order to teach a certain truth about God. God, of course, is everywhere and He knows everything. God does not need to go to a place to see what is being done there. But the Lord's manner of speaking to Abraham is calculated to impress the patriarch with the Lord's deep concern about sin and righteousness among men, and with the fact that God will not inflict judgment without full knowledge of all the facts of the case.

"And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the Lord" (18:22). From this verse we learn definitely that one of the supernatural visitors was God Himself. The two angels have now departed to go to Sodom; Abraham remains alone

with the Lord. This is followed by the very remarkable conversation between Abraham and the Lord about the destruction of Sodom.

"And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (18:23). That the population of Sodom was wicked was not open to question. The events related in the next chapter bring it out with shocking clearness. But Abraham is evidently thinking of his nephew Lot, whom he knows to be righteous, and he ventures to hope that the city may be spared from destruction because of the existence of some righteous persons in it. In view of Lot's recorded conduct, both before and after the time we are studying, we might be disposed to question whether he really was a righteous man. But the New Testament leaves no room for doubt about this matter. Peter speaks of him as "just Lot" (that is, "righteous Lot") and "that righteous man", adding that his righteous soul was vexed from day to day, with the lawless deeds of the wicked among whom he lived (2 Peter 2:7, 8).

We are considering Abraham's prayer concerning the impending destruction of Sodom. Two explanations must at once be ruled out as impossible. In the first place, in speaking to the Lord as he did, Abraham did not mean to imply that God might perhaps act unjustly. His statement in verse 25, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" is a rhetorical question implying the answer "Yes." He is convinced that God's action cannot be otherwise than righteous.

In the second place, Abraham is not suggesting that he himself may be more kind and merciful than God. Many people of the present day have an irreverent notion that they are more loving and merciful than God; they say that if they were God they would not send anyone to hell. All such presumptions and irreverent thoughts were far from Abraham's mind. What he is doing, rather, is to plead God's own mercy on behalf of Sodom. "There will, however, be no absurdity in saying, that Abraham, having good hope of the repentance of the wicked, asked God to spare them; because it often happens that God, out of regard to a few, deals gently with a whole people." (Calvin). Calvin adds that God, in promising to spare Sodom if ten righteous persons were found there, did not in any way bind Himself to spare other wicked cities or nations because of the presence in them of a minority of righteous persons; for what was granted in the case of Sodom was refused in the case of Jerusalem (Matt. 11:24), where there were many more than ten true children of God.

Behind Abraham's prayer lies an absolute conviction both of the righteousness and of the mercy of God. With this conviction settled in his mind, he is amazingly bold in addressing God, first sug-

getting that possibly fifty righteous persons may be found in Sodom, and then by several steps lowering the number until at length he elicits from the Lord the promise that if ten righteous persons are found in Sodom, the city will be spared.

Surely we can learn a lesson about prayer from this prayer of Abraham. In it we see not irreverence nor yet presumption, but the boldness of a God-given faith. Some might think that Abraham went too far in his request to God. But the fact that God granted the request (18:32) shows that God was not displeased with Abraham's attitude. This holy boldness of faith and this freedom of access to God in prayer has as its background a life of reverent faith in God. Those with Abraham's faith and fear of God may also have Abraham's freedom and boldness in access to God's throne of grace.

Abraham's reference to God as "the Judge of all the earth" is noteworthy. Against modern liberal critics who assert that at this early stage of Israel's history Jehovah was thought of only as a tribal divinity — the special God of that particular tribe or clan — we see here a clear faith in God as sovereign over all the earth. This of course does not fit in with the popular modern evolutionary view of the development of Israel's religion, which holds that only centuries after this time did Israel's great prophets rise to the conception of "ethical monotheism" — one God who rules in righteousness over all. But the record is clear and must stand: Abraham believed that Jehovah (1) is the Judge of all the earth; (2) that Jehovah is immutably righteous in His acts.

We note that Abraham's repeated addresses to God are accompanied by the most profound self-abasement in the divine presence. Abraham says "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes" (18:27); "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. . . ." (18:30); "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord" (18:31); "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once. . . ." (18:32). Bold as was Abraham's faith in seeking something from God, it was far removed from the almost flippant familiarity with God which is so offensive in some modern prayers. Abraham's faith did not lead him to regard himself as equal with God. At every point he is keenly conscious of the vast distance that exists between mortal man and the living, eternal God. He is fully aware, both of his limitations as a creature, and of his unworthiness as a sinner.

The question may be raised why Abraham stopped with the number ten. Apparently he supposed that there might be as many as ten righteous persons in Sodom. Lot and his family would make up perhaps half of this number, and it might be supposed that there would be five or six others in so large a city who at least were righteous in

the sense of being separated from the horrible vices of Sodom and living an outwardly moral life, according to the light they had. We must bear in mind that it was not on account of the common sin of mankind, of which all men are guilty, that Sodom was destroyed, but on account of the fearful immoralities and vices which are touched upon in the next chapter. Calvin says that Abraham "sees men created after the image of God" and "persuades himself that, in that immense crowd, there were, at least, a few who were upright, or not altogether unjust, and abandoned to wickedness."

Had Abraham continued and requested that Sodom be spared for the presence of a lower number of righteous persons than ten, he would have been praying for his own relatives only. But it is apparent that Abraham's prayer was not of this character. Calvin holds that Abraham was moved by a "sense of humanity" which was pleasing to God. It should be noted that Abraham prays, not for the rescue of the righteous from Sodom, but for the sparing of the city from destruction because of the presence of righteous persons in it.

The divine promise is given that if ten righteous persons are found in Sodom, the city will not be destroyed. This language is of course anthropomorphic. God speaks of Himself in human terms for Abraham's sake. For God of course knew from the beginning exactly how many righteous persons there were in Sodom, and He did not need to wait to learn by investigation what the number might be. God, but not Abraham, knew how many there were.

"And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place" (18:33). Nothing is said as to where the Lord went when He "went his way," for it is entirely clear that, the theophany being over, the Lord withdrew from visible presence in the world of time and space, into the supernatural realm which we call "heaven." Abraham returns to his tent. The abrupt ending of the chapter accentuates the suspense. This is one of the crises of history. A terrible calamity is hanging over Sodom and the rest of the cities of the plain. This brings us to the beginning of chapter 19.

#### Questions:

1. Where was Sodom probably located?
2. About how far was it from Mamre (or Hebron) to the probable location of Sodom?

### LESSON 45

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

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

3. What difference in altitude existed between Mamre and Sodom?

4. What New Testament incidents are similar to Abraham's act of escorting his guests a certain distance as they leave him?

5. What two reasons are given to explain why the Lord revealed to Abraham the impending doom of Sodom?

6. What truth about God is taught by the statements of 18:20?

7. What righteous man, living in Sodom, was Abraham evidently thinking about?

8. Why does it seem somewhat difficult for us to think of Lot as a righteous man?

9. What New Testament passage pronounces Lot to have been a righteous person?

10. What does this New Testament passage tell us about Lot's attitude toward the wickedness of the people of Sodom?

11. What statement of Abraham indicates that he did not consider it possible that God might act unjustly?

12. Why is it improper to think of Abraham as more kind or merciful than God?

13. What city in which there were many more than ten righteous persons was destroyed by a judgment of God?

14. How can we explain Abraham's boldness and freedom in prayer?

15. What does Abraham's reference to God as "the Judge of all the earth" show concerning his idea of God?

16. How does Abraham's idea of God differ from that which modern liberal criticism attributes to Israel at this early period?

17. How does Abraham speak of himself in the presence of God?

18. Why is too great familiarity improper in prayer?

19. What may have been the reason why Abraham did not pray that Sodom be spared for less than ten righteous persons in it?

20. What is the meaning of the word "anthropomorphic"? What is meant by saying that God's answers to Abraham were anthropomorphic?

Chapter 19 deals with the destruction of Sodom and the escape of Lot from that city. First of all, the two angels who departed from the presence of Abraham at 18:22 appear at Sodom at evening of the same day. The King James Version

is incorrect in translating "two angels." It should be "the two angels" (with definite article), that is, the two angels mentioned as "men" in 18:22.

"At even" is also definite in the Hebrew—THE evening; that is, the evening of the day that has been described in the previous chapter.

Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. In those days the gate of a city served something of the same purpose as is served by a courthouse today. In the open space within the gate meetings were held and legal business was transacted. For an illustration of this fact, see Ruth 4:1-12. In the gate of the city news would be heard, politics discussed, business transacted, and lawsuits decided. The question arises as to what Lot was doing in the gate of Sodom. He did not, of course, know in advance about the arrival of the two angels, so he cannot have gone to the city gate on purpose to meet and welcome them. Nor can he have gone there because of the general possibility that strangers might arrive and need entertainment.

The record does not tell us why Lot was in the gate of Sodom at this particular time. It would seem, however, that his presence in the gate indicates a too-great interest in the affairs of the city. When Lot separated from Abraham (13:12) he "pitched his tent toward Sodom" quite regardless of the fact that "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (13:13). The next time we meet Lot, in chapter 19, he is no longer living in a tent, but has taken up dwelling in a house within the city of Sodom. Thus Lot has become increasingly identified with the city of Sodom, even though we know from 2 Peter 2:7, 8 that he was shocked by the outrageous wickedness of the people of the city.

Whatever may have been Lot's reasons for being there, when the two strangers appeared he immediately "rose up to meet them" and greeted them courteously. Moreover, he invites them to take advantage of the hospitality of his home ("tarry all night, and wash your feet"). At this point we see Lot manifesting the same sincere courtesy as Abraham manifested in the preceding chapter.

The strangers, following characteristically Oriental custom, at first decline Lot's kind invitation, and only when urgently pressed did they accept it. At this point, of course, Lot does not know that his visitors are supernatural beings, but thinks of them as human guests. The strangers state that it is their intention to "abide in the street all night"—that is, to spend the night, wrapped in their robes, lying on the ground of the plaza just inside the city gate. Such a course was doubtless common enough, and would be made tolerable by the mild climate of the region.

But Lot presses the strangers, with the result

that they finally accept his hospitality and accompany him to his home (19:3) where he entertains them with a meal. It is now late in the evening, and time to retire for the night. But at this point the wickedness of the men of Sodom enters the picture.

Verses 4 and 5 describe the surrounding of Lot's house by the men of Sodom. The King James Version describes this mob as "the men of Sodom. . . both old and young, all the people from every quarter." Leupold translates this "the men of the city, men of Sodom that they were. . . young men and old, all the folk without exception." The phrase "men of Sodom" seems to be used intentionally, in addition to "the men of the city" to call attention to the unnatural vice which has received its name from the city of Sodom. That this vice of Sodomy or homosexuality quite dominated the city is shown by the fact that even old men gathered in the mob about Lot's house, and that people from all parts of the city were there.

The mob demands of Lot that the strangers who are his guests be turned over to them to become the victims of their shameful lusts. That even strangers and guests should be so treated shows the utter depravity of Sodom. Nothing more could be needed to show that Sodom was ripe for divine judgment and destruction. We may wonder whether at this point Lot may have realized at last what a terrible mistake he had made in pitching his tent toward Sodom and finally living in the city.

Faced with this terrible crisis, Lot makes a desperate effort to defend his guests. First he goes out of the house to face the mob, shutting the house door behind him. Then he pleads with the mob not to insult his guests, seeing that they have accepted his hospitality and he is therefore under obligation to insure their safety. It is clear here that Lot is not a coward. He faces the mob alone and tries to reason with them. Leupold remarks that Lot's calling the men of Sodom "brethren" can hardly have been entirely sincere. Whether sincere or not, at any rate it was wasted on the men of Sodom; so far as having any influence on them is concerned, he might as well have called them wild beasts.

At the close of the last lesson we saw Lot standing, with his back to the closed door of his house, facing a raging mob and trying to reason with them. At this point Lot makes a proposal which impresses us as truly shocking. He proposed, in short, to turn over his two unmarried daughters to the lusts of the mob, in order to protect the strangers who have become his guests. This terrible proposal gives us an idea of how the obligation of a host to protect his guests was regarded in those days.

The best that can be said for Lot at this point is that his motive was a worthy one—he felt under

obligation to protect his guests at whatever cost to himself and his family. Luther attempts to clear the character of Lot, which we do not believe can be done. Calvin, on the other hand, states clearly that Lot's proposal was unlawful and cannot be justified. What Lot was proposing was to fight evil with evil—to do evil that good may come. As this is a very common tendency in human nature, and a temptation which comes to all of us under much less tragic circumstances than those faced by Lot, we shall quote Calvin's comments at some length here:

"As the constancy of Lot, in risking his own life for the defence of his guests, deserves no common praise; so now Moses related that a defect was mixed with this great virtue, which sprinkled it with some imperfection. For, being destitute of advice, he devises (as is usual in intricate affairs) an unlawful remedy. He does not hesitate to prostitute his own daughters, that he may restrain the indomitable fury of the people. But he should rather have endured a thousand deaths, than have resorted to such a measure. Yet such are commonly the works of holy men: since nothing proceeds from them so excellent, as not to be in some respect defective. Lot, indeed, is urged by extreme necessity; and it is no wonder that he offers his daughters to be polluted, when he sees that he has to deal with wild beasts; yet he inconsiderately seeks to remedy one evil by means of another. I can easily excuse some for extenuating his fault; yet he is not free from blame, because he would ward off evil with evil. But we are warned, by this example, that when the Lord has furnished us with the spirit of invincible fortitude, we must also pray that He may govern us by the spirit of prudence; and that He will never suffer us to be deprived of a sound judgment, and a well-regulated reason. For then only shall we rightly proceed in our course of duty, when, in complicated affairs, we perceive, with a composed mind, what is necessary, what is lawful, and what is expedient to be done; then shall we be prepared promptly to meet any danger whatever. For, that our minds should be carried hither and thither by hastily catching at wicked counsels, is not less perilous than that they should be agitated by fear. But when reduced to the last straits, let us learn to pray, that the Lord would open to us some way of escape. Others would excuse Lot by a different pretext, namely, that he knew his daughters would not be desired. But I have no doubt that, being willing to avail himself of the first subterfuge which occurred to him, he turned aside from the right way."

Lot's proposal to surrender his daughters to the wicked mob was not only wrong — it was also ineffectual. The cry of the mob. "Stand back!" in 19:9, is translated by Leupold "You just come here!" This is followed by extremely disrespectful and abusive language concerning Lot

himself. "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee than with them. . . ." (19:9). The reference to Lot being "a judge" does not mean that Lot had held the office of a judge in Sodom, but that he had ventured to reprove the people of Sodom for their wicked ways. Until now, apparently, little attention had been paid to Lot's remonstrances, but now the mob is not inclined to put up with him any longer. "And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door" (19:9b).

At this point Lot is helpless in the presence of the mob. Only the intervention of God can help him now. Accordingly, the angels in the house at this point take direct action. First, they open the door and pull Lot back into the house, shutting the door again. Meanwhile the mob continues to surge around the house outside. Next, by a miracle the men of Sodom are smitten with blindness, so that "they wearied themselves to find the door" (19:11). This is evidently no ordinary blindness. Keil calls it "mental blindness" adding that it came as a punishment for moral blindness. These men could see, but they could not see the door of Lot's house. Calvin comments: "Whereas, Moses says, that the men were smitten with blindness, we are not so to understand it, as if they had been deprived of eye-sight; but that their vision was rendered so dull, that they could distinguish nothing. This miracle was more illustrious, than if their eyes had been thrust out, or entirely blinded; because with their eyes open, they feel about, just like blind men, and seeing, yet do not see. At the same time, Moses wishes to describe their iron obstinacy: they do not find Lot's door; it follows, then, that they had laboured in seeking it; but, in this manner, they furiously wage war with God. This, however, has happened, not once only, and not with the men of Sodom alone; but it is daily fulfilled in the rebobate, whom Satan fascinates with such madness, that when stricken by the mighty hand of God, they proceed with stupid obstinacy to advance against Him. And we need not seek far, for an instance of such conduct; we see with what tremendous punishments God visits wandering lusts; and yet the world ceases not, with desperate audacity, to rush into the certain destruction which is set before their eyes."

#### Questions:

1. How should the phrase "two angels" in 19:1 be translated?
2. What purposes were served by a city gate in Bible times?
3. What may have been Lot's reason for being in the gate of Sodom at this time?
4. How did Lot welcome the strangers who appeared at Sodom?

5. What was their first response to Lot's invitation?

6. What hospitality did Lot manifest to them?

7. What classes of people composed the mob which surrounded Lot's house later in the evening?

8. How did Lot attempt to protect his guests in this crisis?

9. How did Lot propose to appease the mob which milled about his house?

10. What can be said in extenuation of Lot's conduct at this point?

11. Why can Lot's conduct here not be justified?

12. What, according to Calvin, should Lot rather have endured?

13. In addition to courage, what virtues does a Christian need to meet the crises of life?

14. How may the expression "Stand back" in 19:9 be translated?

15. What is the force of the reference to Lot wanting to be a judge?

16. How did the angels save Lot from the mob?

17. What was the nature of the blindness with which the men of Sodom were smitten?

18. How is the blindness with which the men of Sodom were smitten parallel to the "mental blindness" of wicked people of the present day?

### LESSON 46

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

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

The men of Sodom milling about the closed door of Lot's house have been miraculously smitten with blindness and are wearying themselves in a fruitless effort to locate the door. Now the scene of the narrative shifts to the inside of Lot's house. Lot is asked concerning his relatives in the city, and is commanded to remove them from Sodom (19:12). Lot is to be permitted to give advance warning to any persons in Sodom related to him by ties of blood or marriage. In particular, sons-in-law, sons and daughters are specified as eligible for escape from the doomed city. Presumably relatives more distant than sons-in-law would not be included. "Whatsoever thou hast in the city" may possibly be understood as including servants, and also of course includes Lot's wife.

Next it is announced plainly that the city is to be destroyed. "This place" (19:13) may include not merely Sodom itself, but the region, including the five cities of the plain. "We will destroy this place" stresses the divine causation and initiative. It is not a mere calamity or natural misfortune that is to overtake Sodom, but specifically an execution of divine judgment.

In obedience to this warning of the angels, Lot goes out to attempt to warn his sons-in-law. Apparently the mob had by this time dispersed from the locality of his house. These sons-in-law are not merely the husbands-to-be of Lot's daughters, but are already married to some of his daughters. The expression "which married his daughters" (19:14) is to be taken literally and is best translated "which had married his daughters." These daughters, therefore, are not the

same as the ones mentioned later (19:15) and described as "thy two daughters which are here." How many daughters Lot had, we are not told. It is however evident that at least two of his daughters had already married men of Sodom, while two daughters remained at home unmarried.

At this point the character of Lot appears in sharp contrast to that of Abraham. We recall the careful solicitude with which Abraham provided that his son Isaac should not marry a woman of the Canaanites, but one from his own kindred in Mesopotamia (24:1-9). But Lot took no such pains concerning his daughters. They have been permitted to marry men of Sodom. And as it turned out, this being unequally yoked with unbelievers also occasioned their perishing in the destruction of the city.

Lot approaches his sons-in-law with an urgent plea to leave Sodom immediately (19:14), but the plea is a total failure, for he seems to his sons-in-law as one that mocked. They treat the warning as a joke. We see in Lot's sons-in-law a sample of the hardening and spiritual callousness produced by sin. Presumably Lot's daughters, married to these men, were of the same mind with their husbands, for they did not flee from the doomed city. Lot returns to his house during the night, having failed in his mission to his sons-in-law.

As the morning dawns, the angels hasten his departure: "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters which are bere lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city" (19:15). One would think that after such a warning Lot would leave Sodom immediately. Yet he hesitated ("lingered"), whereupon the angels laid hold upon his hand, and the hand of his wife, and the hands of his two daughters, "the Lord being merciful unto him," and escorted him outside of the city. What a weak character Lot appears here! And how

many like Lot have dallied and hesitated when they were called upon by Scripture and conscience to make a clean break of separation from evil!

"The Lord being merciful to him." Here we see salvation by grace exemplified. It was by the grace of God that Lot and his wife and two daughters escaped Sodom. If salvation were by works, no doubt Lot would have perished. He was saved, not because he was worthy, but because God is gracious. Lot escaped destruction in Sodom, not because he was a good man, but because God accounted him, by grace, a righteous man. We may regard Lot as a sample of a weak and compromising believer, who is saved, yet "so as by fire".

Lot and his family having been escorted out of the city of Sodom, he is now commanded: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed" (19:17). Lot has already delayed too long; now haste is necessary. The need for haste is further emphasized by the command "Look not behind thee." Moreover they must not stop anywhere short of the mountains. No place in the plain will be safe for them to tarry in.

But Lot is still reluctant to go completely away from the region of Sodom. He craves permission to go to Zoar, the smallest of the five cities of the plain, located just south of the present southern limit of the Dead Sea. The name Zoar means "littleness" or "smallness." Lot expresses fear that he cannot reach the mountains safely; some evil may overtake him, and cause his death. He pleads also the smallness of Zoar as a reason why he should be permitted to go there (19:18-20). This entire speech of Lot gives us a very poor impression of his character. Instead of being deeply grateful for the deliverance that has been graciously granted to him, and immediately rendering implicit obedience to the instructions of the angels, he ventures to argue with them and to render something less than a full and whole-hearted obedience. Lot should have gotten as far as possible from Sodom as fast as possible, instead of trying to think up reasons for not going very far away. It is as if a man of the present day were to insist upon remaining within a convenient distance of a place that is sure to be atom-bombed within a few hours. We marvel at the divine mercy bestowed upon Lot. But the record does not indicate that Lot himself marveled at it very much.

Still, Lot's rather disgusting plea is granted. He is promised that Zoar shall be spared from the impending destruction. He must hurry, though, and escape to Zoar with all possible speed, for nothing can be done until he has reached there safely. This may serve to call to our

minds the truth that the Judgment Day cannot come until all of God's elect are in Christ. We would not be warranted in calling Lot's escape to Zoar a type of the believer's fleeing to Christ for safety, but we may affirm that it illustrates the principle that divine judgments, including the Last Judgment, are held in abeyance for the benefit of the elect.

It is after sunrise when Lot enters Zoar (19:23). Once he is safely in the city, the divine wrath is no longer restrained. Judgment descends upon the cities of the plain. Only Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned here, but two other cities were destroyed at the same time, namely Admah and Zeboim (Deut. 29:23; Hos. 11:8). The fifth of the cities of the plain, namely Zoar, was of course spared on account of the presence of Lot in it.

"Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and all that which grew upon the ground" (19:24, 21). Brimstone means sulphur. Thus the record states that the Lord rained sulphur and fire upon the cities. It has been suggested that a volcanic eruption took place; another suggestion is that there was an earthquake. Perhaps the "fire" was lightning. One possible explanation, suggested by Leupold, is that there occurred an explosion of highly inflammable materials, including sulphur, deposited in the ground, which resulted in flaming sulphur being hurled high into the air and then falling on the cities. The mention of bitumen pits in the area (14:10) is interesting in this connection. Leupold adds that it seems probable that once the fires got well started, the very site of the cities (having combustible materials such as bitumen underground) may have been literally burnt away to a considerable depth, and then been covered by the waters of the Dead Sea. It is a fact that while the water of the northern end of the Dead Sea reaches a depth of 1300 feet, the southern end is only ten or a dozen feet deep and in some places only three to four feet deep. Leupold's view of what probably happened seems very plausible. No archaeologist has ever found a trace of Sodom or Gomorrah; it would seem probable, therefore, that the site of these cities is now beneath the waters of the southern end of the Dead Sea. The fact that Zoar, which escaped destruction, existed in Old Testament times just south of the present southern tip of the Dead Sea, fits in well with this supposition.

The form of the statement "The Lord rained . . . brimstone and fire from the Lord. . ." is remarkable, and has caused much discussion as to its precise meaning. One of the ancient Church Councils held this to be an allusion to the Trinity, interpreting the statement as "God the Son rained. . . brimstone and fire from God the Father

. . . ". Luther commented that this verse shows two persons in the Godhead.

Destruction was total over the entire area, as is shown by the closing words of verse 21, "and that which grew upon the ground."

#### Questions:

1. To what class of persons in Sodom was Lot permitted to give advance warning of the impending doom of the city?
2. What phrase in the record shows that the destruction of Sodom was not merely a natural calamity?
3. What is meant by "sons-in-law" in 19:12, 14?
4. How many daughters, at least, did Lot have?
5. How does the character of Lot contrast with that of Abraham, with respect to marriage of his children to unbelievers?
6. What was the reaction of Lot's sons-in-law to his plea?
7. What characteristic of sin is illustrated by the sons-in-law?
8. Why was it necessary for the angels to lay hold upon Lot and his wife and daughters?
9. To what place did the angels escort Lot and his family?
10. How is salvation by grace illustrated by Lot's history?
11. What command was given to Lot after he had been escorted out of Sodom?

12. What was Lot's response to this command?
13. What reasons did Lot give for not wanting to flee to the mountains?
14. To what place did Lot wish to flee instead of to the mountains?
15. What is the meaning of the name Zoar?
16. Where was Zoar probably located?
17. What does Lot's plea for permission to go to Zoar indicate concerning his character?
18. What principle concerning divine judgment is illustrated by the angels waiting to destroy Sodom until Lot reached Zoar?
19. What time of day was it when Lot entered Zoar?
20. What happened immediately after he entered Zoar?
21. Besides Sodom and Gomorrah, what two other cities were destroyed at the same time?
22. What is meant by brimstone?
23. What may have been the source of the flaming sulphur which fell on the cities?
24. What is the probable reason why no archaeologist has ever discovered the remains of Sodom and Gomorrah?
25. What covers the probable site of the cities today?
26. What remarkable expression is found in 19:24? What may be its explanation?
27. What statement shows that destruction was total over the whole area?

### LESSON 47

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

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

We must now consider what happened to Lot's wife. She did not enter Zoar with her husband and daughters. At some point on the way between Sodom and Zoar she turned around and looked back on the blazing city of Sodom (19:26). The record states that she was behind Lot at the time. Therefore Lot would not realize what had happened to his wife until later, for he was obeying the command not to look behind him. Had he looked behind him, he would not only have seen what had happened to his wife, but the same thing would no doubt have happened to him.

"She became a pillar of salt." It is not necessary to suppose that the body of Lot's wife was

instantly and miraculously converted into salt. The text does not imply that she became a pillar of salt instantaneously. It is possible that at the moment when she looked back, she was overcome by deadly fumes from the conflagration. It is also possible that she was suddenly overcome by the intense heat radiating out from the area of destruction. Once prostrated, whether from poisonous gases or from heat, her body would remain where she fell and would no doubt soon be covered by layer after layer of salt from the vapors of the Dead Sea. The notion that Lot's wife remained standing upright as a statue made of solid salt is hardly warranted by the statements of the record, though such a representation is sometimes seen in pictures intended to illustrate the Biblical story.

Lot's wife has become a proverb on the sin of looking back toward the pleasures of the world.

The New Testament commands us to "remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32).

The scene now shifts from Zoar to Mamre. "And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord: and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace" (19:27, 28). How Abraham felt during the night just preceding this, we are not told. His faith is evident, however, in his proceeding early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. He is fully convinced that the cities will be destroyed. It must be remembered that the location of the cities was perhaps 30 miles from where Abraham was, and that he was more than 4,000 feet above the site of the cities. Thus he would be able to obtain a sweeping view of the region that had suffered destruction.

"The smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." Leupold suggests that petroleum deposits near the surface may have caught fire and added to the conflagration. If so, it would help to account for the dense smoke that is mentioned. The word for furnace here means "smelting furnace."

Next we have a summary of what had happened, in relation to the prayer of Abraham. "And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt" (19:29). So Abraham's prayer was answered, though not in the way in which he had anticipated. Sodom was not spared, but Lot was saved out of Sodom before the destruction took place. This reminds us of the effectualness of the prayers of the righteous. Who shall say what might have happened to Lot, but for the prayers of Abraham? The New Testament assures us that Lot was a righteous man. But except for Abraham's prayers, might he not have perished in the destruction of Sodom, even though his soul would be saved?

The next topic taken up by the record is the disgraceful and shameful conduct of Lot and his two surviving daughters. After a stay in Zoar, presumably of brief duration, Lot decided to go to the mountains after all, "for he feared to dwell in Zoar" (19:30). "And he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters." So Lot has become a "cave man", though not in the sense in which this term is commonly understood. This is the man who, when he separated from Abraham, selfishly chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, which was so advantageous and promised so much profit and prosperity. Now he and his two daughters are refugees living in a cave out in the wilderness.

What follows is a story of shameful conduct in which both Lot and his two daughters are to

blame — Lot for drunkenness and the daughters for shameless incest. We see here very little evidence of faith in God or separation from the sins of the world. At best, the ethics of Lot's daughters rises no higher than doing evil that good may come. Lot, dead drunk from the wine with which his daughters have plied him, does not realize what is going on (19:33, 35). The result is that both daughters were "with child by their father" (19:36). From the two children that were born, the Moabites and Ammonites were descended. These two peoples, therefore, were related to the Israelites through Lot, the nephew of Abraham.

Having finished our study of Sodom and Gomorrah, and of Lot and his family, we come to chapter 20, which relates the relations between Abraham and Abimelech king of Gerar.

"And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar" (20:1). Gerar was a city located about six miles south of Gaza and slightly inland from the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. "The south country" is the Negeb, the comparatively arid part of Palestine that borders on the Sinai Peninsula. The record seems to indicate that Abraham first went quite far to the south, for Kadesh and Shur were located 50 miles or more south of Gerar; then he turned northward again and went as far as Gerar, where he settled.

The king of Gerar is called Abimelech, which means literally "father of the king," or perhaps "my father is king." This was Philistine territory and Abimelech was evidently a king of some of the Philistines. There were Philistines in Palestine at this early period, even though the main body of them arrived in the land later. There is some uncertainty as to whether "Abimelech" is to be regarded as a personal name or as a title. It may be a title of kings of Gerar, just as "Pharaoh" was the title of kings of Egypt and "Caesar" of emperors of Rome. On the other hand, it may have been a personal name. Later on Isaac had dealings with a king called Abimelech at Gerar (26:1-23). The fact that a later king was also called Abimelech does not prove that "Abimelech" was necessarily a title, any more than the fact that several kings of England were called "George" proves that this was a title rather than a name.

Abraham is afraid that he may suffer harm on account of Sarah his wife, so he informs people that she is his sister, with the result that Abimelech king of Gerar sends and takes Sarah. Thus is remarkably repeated the incident of Gen. 12:10 ff. where Abraham in Egypt passed Sarah off as his sister. There is a similar incident in the life of Isaac, which is recorded in 26:1 ff. The liberal higher critics are so astonished that there should be three such similar incidents in two generations of patriarchal history, that they assert that these

three accounts are just three variations of the tradition which arose from one single event. The critics, however, fail to realize the complexity and unpredictability of real history. There are not only important resemblances between the narrative of chapter 20 and that of chapter 12, but also important differences between the two. Moreover, there was a period of something like 20 years between the two incidents. There is no real reason whatever for doubting that the two incidents are distinct and that both are truly historical. Abraham of course should have learned his lesson from the incident of chapter 12 and should never have fallen into the same form of wrongdoing again, but what people ought to do and what they actually do are often two entirely different things. It is certainly quite true to human nature, and entirely credible, that Abraham in chapter 20 repeated his foolish wrongdoing of chapter 12.

The statement that Abimelech "sent and took Sarah" does not necessarily mean that he actually married her. It may only mean that she was taken into his harem, along with numerous other women. That this is indeed the meaning here is indicated by verses 4-6.

But the woman whom God has chosen to be the mother of the seed from whom the Saviour of the world is to be descended, cannot be permitted to remain in the harem of Abimelech. Therefore God intervenes and reveals the truth to Abimelech by a dream. It is possible, of course, that Abimelech may have had some suspicions as to the real status of Sarah, and perhaps his conscience may have bothered him. Yet we are not to regard this dream as simply a product of his subconscious mind. Rather, it was a genuine, objective divine revelation to Abimelech.

In the dream the word of God comes to Abimelech, saying, "Behold thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife" (20:3). Abimelech is one of several non-Israelite kings in the Old Testament to whom God revealed Himself by means of dreams. Mention may be made of the Pharaoh of Joseph's day, and of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon in Daniel's day. Just what was the religious faith of Abimelech is not entirely clear. He seems to have some knowledge of the true God and a clear sense of the distinction between right and wrong, yet there is nothing to indicate that he was a monotheist, or in the same class as Melchizedek king of Jerusalem, who was "priest of the Most High God." Luther regarded Abimelech as a true believer. We believe, rather, that the matter is doubtful.

In the dream, Abimelech is told by God that he deserves to die, because he has taken into his

establishment a married woman. We may wonder why Abimelech took Sarah. As Sarah was already 90 years old (17:17) her beauty could hardly have been a great attraction any more. Perhaps a more probable explanation is that Abimelech, by marrying Sarah, wished to gain Abraham as an ally, thus increasing his political power.

#### Questions:

1. Why did not Lot see that his wife had dropped dead on the way to Zoar?
2. How should the statement "She became a pillar of salt" be understood?
3. What command of Christ mention's Lot's wife?
4. Where did Abraham go on the morning when Lot entered Zoar?
5. What did Abraham see from that point?
6. What may have added to the smoke that rose from the plains?
7. What was the importance of the prayer of Abraham in connection with Lot's life being spared?
8. Why did Lot not continue to dwell in Zoar?
9. Where did he live after leaving Zoar?
10. What two ancient peoples were descended from the incestuous union between Lot and his daughters?
11. What is meant by "the south country"?
12. Where was Gerar located?
13. What is the meaning of "Abimelech"?
14. By what fear is Abraham influenced at this point in his life?
15. What statement does he make about Sarah?
16. To what previous incident in Abraham's life is this parallel?
17. What similar incident occurred in the life of Isaac?
18. What is the attitude of the liberal critics toward these three incidents?
19. Why is the attitude of the critics not justified?
20. What is implied by the statement that Abimelech sent and took Sarah?
21. Why could God not permit Sarah to remain in Abimelech's establishment?
22. How did God reveal himself to Abimelech?

24. What can be said about the religion of Abimelech?

25. What did God tell Abimelech concerning what he had done?

26. What may have been Abimelech's reason for taking Sarah?

23. To what other non-Israelite kings did God send dreams?

### LESSON 48

#### 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.

"But Abimelech had not come near her" (20:4). Sarah has only been taken into Abimelech's establishment; he has not actually married her. Accordingly, in the dream he answers the Lord: "Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this" (20:4, 5). Abimelech here shows faith in the justice of God: "Wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?" Further, he protests that he has been deceived, and that by both Abraham and Sarah. Therefore, he asserts, he has acted in good conscience in this matter. The question of the lawfulness of polygamy is not raised here, either by God or Abimelech. While we know that polygamy is wrong, because contrary to the original institution of marriage by God, yet that issue is not raised in the conversation between God and Abimelech. The only issue raised is that Abimelech has done wrong in taking Sarah who was already married to Abraham.

God in His reply to Abimelech recognizes the truth of his claim to have acted in the integrity of his heart. Even though what Abimelech had done was objectively wrong, still he had not realized what he was doing, which obviously made a difference in the moral quality of his action. In view of this God had providentially prevented Abimelech from going too far: "for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her" (20:6).

Abimelech is commanded by God to restore Sarah to Abraham. It is added that Abraham is "a prophet" and that he shall pray for Abimelech, as a result of which the sentence of death revealed in verse 3 shall be revoked. But if Sarah is not restored to Abraham, the sentence will be carried out: Abimelech and all that are his shall die (20:7). As we see at the end of the chapter (20:17, 18), a disability which prevented the birth of children had been visited upon the household of Abimelech. Although this is not mentioned until the end of the chapter, still it evidently happened earlier and was known to Abimelech at the time of the dream mentioned in verses 3-7.

In the morning following the experience of

the dream there is a great stir in the household of Abimelech. Rising early in the morning, the king calls a meeting of his servants or officials, and tells them of the dream. The result of this was immediate fear: "and the men were sore afraid" (20:8).

Abimelech immediately summons Abraham, and roundly accuses him of wrongdoing (20:9, 10). It must have been very humiliating to Abraham to be thus righteously rebuked by a man whose spiritual opportunities and privileges had been far less than his own. It is always a shame to Christians when they are involved in wrongdoing which even the world, by reason of God's common grace, condemns as wrong. Apparently Abraham did not reply to Abimelech's charge in verse 9, so the king presses him further by asking, "What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?" (20:10) — we might paraphrase this as "Whatever made you do it?"

Abraham is really without excuse, but as so often happens in the case of sinful human beings, he seems to feel that a poor excuse is better than none, so he tries to extenuate his conduct by two statements: (1) he had been afraid because he thought that the fear of God was not in the place, therefore his life would not be safe; (2) there was a shadow of truth in the claim that Sarah was his sister, for she was indeed his half-sister. As to the first claim, Abraham had been mistaken, for Abimelech evidently had a higher religious faith and moral code than Abraham had realized. As to the second claim, though technically it was true that Sarah was his half-sister, still this was really a lie, because Abraham intended by it to deceive Abimelech into thinking that Sarah was not his wife.

Abraham adds that he and Sarah had a standing arrangement that this brother-and-sister evasion was to be resorted to whenever there might be occasion to fear that Abraham's life might be in danger because someone might want to take Sarah. We can only comment on this that it was wrong, and also cowardly on Abraham's part. It is one of the moral inconsistencies of a truly good man. It is useless to try to justify Abraham's conduct in this matter. We can only say that he yielded to temptation and did wrong.

Abimelech, wishing to make sure that everything is straightened out properly, not only restores Sarah to Abraham, but gives him in addition presents of oxen, sheep, menservants and

women-servants. Besides this, Abraham is invited to dwell wherever he pleases in Abimelech's territory. It is evident that Abraham did stay there some time as we read in 26:18 of his digging wells there. It is possible, of course, that these wells were dug before, not after the incident related in chapter 20.

Abimelech also has something to say to Sarah as he dismisses her: "Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver." There is no mention of silver among the gifts listed in verse 14, so it may be that this "thousand pieces of silver" was the value of the gifts there enumerated. It is possible, though, that this silver was in addition to the rest.

Note that Abimelech says to Sarah, "Behold, I have given thy brother . . .", not "Behold, I have given thy husband . . .". There seems to be in this use of the word "brother" a touch of gentle irony, in view of the evasion used by Abraham and Sarah by which they claimed to be brother and sister instead of husband and wife. It appears that Abimelech was gently "rubbing it in" a bit.

The rest of verse 16 is rather obscure in the King James Version. We believe it is more accurately and clearly translated in the American Revised Version (1901), as follows: "behold, it is for thee a covering of the eyes to all that are with thee; and in respect of all thou art righted." That is, Abimelech's gift to Abraham was to be "a covering of the eyes" to Sarah. Leupold well says that the most probable meaning of this is that the "covering of the eyes" was intended, as a handsome gift, to counteract any embarrassment caused Sarah within her own household because of what had happened. The valuable present would show Abimelech's high esteem for Abraham and Sarah. The King James Version's translation of the last clause of verse 16, "thus she was reprov- ed," seems to be incorrect. Leupold translates this clause: "in all respects thou art justified." The meaning seems to be that complete restitution has been made, all wrongs have been remedied, and Sarah has no cause for grievance remaining.

After this Abraham prayed for Abimelech, and in answer to the patriarch's prayer, God healed Abimelech and his household of the affliction which had been laid upon them (20:17, 18).

Turning now to Genesis chapter 21 we have the record of the birth of Isaac. The promise made to Abraham and Sarah is at last fulfilled: the child is born at the appointed time, and is named Isaac. This name means "he laughs" or "the laughing one." In view of the fact that Sarah was over ninety years old, the birth of Isaac must be regarded as involving a supernatural element. This is brought out by the text which says that the Lord "visited" Sarah and "did unto Sarah as he had spoken" (21:1). While such language might indeed be used of a non-miraculous providence of

God, in this particular case it designates an event involving a supernatural factor, for the birth of Isaac cannot be accounted for in terms of the ordinary working of God's providence within the order of nature.

In accordance with the divine command recorded in 17:12, Isaac is circumcised at the age of eight days. Although we know from 17:17 that Abraham was 100 years old, the fact is repeated at 21:5 for the sake, no doubt, of emphasis.

"And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me" (21:6). The last time we read about Sarah laughing, it was a laugh of unbelief (18:12). But now the laughter of unbelief is changed into the laughter of Joy. To appreciate this fully we must realize something of the Semitic point of view which regarded children as the greatest of blessings and the lack of them as the most bitter of calamities. By the miraculous act of God Sarah has been relieved of the reproach which she has borne all her life — it is no wonder that she felt like laughing for joy.

"And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have borne him a son in his old age" (21:7). Sarah's joy, of course, was not merely the natural joy of a mother over the birth of a long awaited child, but the special joy occasioned by the birth of the promised covenant heir or "seed" through whom in process of time all the families of the earth should be blessed.

We can imagine the joy and gladness which would be felt among the entire clan of which Abraham was the chief. All would rejoice with Abraham and Sarah; all would now be more convinced than ever that Abraham was indeed called of God for a unique purpose in the history of the world.

"And the child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned" (21:8). No doubt it was a common custom to have a feast on the occasion of the weaning of a firstborn son. In accordance with Oriental practice, Isaac may have been as old as three years at the time when he was weaned.

This scene of happiness and rejoicing is soon marred by a discordant note. Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar the Egyptian maid, is overheard by Sarah mocking. Obviously the object of this mocking must have been Isaac. We know from 16:16 that Abraham was 86 years old at the time of the birth of Ishmael, and from 21:5 that he was 100 years old at the birth of Isaac. Therefore Ishmael was perhaps 16 or 17 years old at the time when Isaac was weaned. That Ishmael's "mocking" was not merely innocent fun but rather a sinful scoffing at the sacred destiny

of Isaac is shown by the New Testament (Gal. 4:29) which says: "As he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit . . .". Leupold rightly says that Gal. 4:29 stamps Ishmael's attitude as "descriptive of the constant attitude of the carnal-minded over against the spiritually minded."

Sarah therefore complained to Abraham, demanding of him that he expel Hagar and Ishmael from the clan: "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac" (21:10). This demand on Sarah's part is not to be interpreted as proceeding from mere wounded pride or cattish spitefulness. Rather, Sarah's demand was based on sober reflection and good judgment. Better than Abraham, she realized the real tendency of Ishmael, and realized that separation was inevitable. However we note perhaps an element of race prejudice in Sarah's reference to Ishmael, not as a son of Abraham, but as "the son of this bondwoman," namely, Hagar the Egyptian.

Naturally this demand of Sarah was very hard for Abraham to agree to. "And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son" (21:11). He would perhaps have hesitated to yield to it, except for the fact that divine revelation made the will of God unmistakably clear. "And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; or in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed" (21:12, 13). Thus guided by divine revelation, Abraham makes the decision to do what his natural feelings of paternal affection disinclined him to do — to send Hagar and Ishmael away permanently.

The promise of God to make a nation of Ishmael would reassure Abraham; he need have no doubt that Ishmael would survive.

It has been objected to the conduct of Abraham and Sarah in this matter that their action was unjust, contrary to natural affection, anti-social and undemocratic. And indeed it would have to be so adjudged if measured by the modern popular theory that all men have equal rights in the sight of God and that one man's religion is as true as another's. But it will not do to estimate Abraham's conduct by the standards of modern democratic equalitarianism. Room must be allowed for the sovereignty of God, which chooses one and rejects another. And in God's plan of history, which was the reason for his calling of Abraham in the first place, grace must always have priority over nature. Abraham was not concerned about maintaining a democratic equality of all mankind, but rather about conformity to the divine will by

which the gracious redemption of the world would ultimately be accomplished.

#### Questions:

1. How does Abimelech, in his dream, answer the Lord's charge that he has taken a married woman?
2. Would it have been right for Abimelech to take Sarah if she has not been Abraham's wife?
3. Why had God providentially prevented Abimelech from touching Sarah?
4. What is Abimelech commanded to do?
5. What happened the next morning in Abimelech's palace?
6. Why must Abimelech's rebuke have been humiliating to Abraham?
7. What explanations or excuses did Abraham offer to the king?
8. What should be our judgment on the conduct of Abraham and Sarah?
9. What presents did Abimelech give to Abraham?
10. How does Abimelech describe Abraham in speaking to Sarah? What does this manner of speaking show?
11. What was the gift given to Abraham intended to do for Sarah?
12. How was the affliction which God had laid upon the household of Abimelech finally removed?
13. What is the meaning of the name Isaac?
14. Why must the birth of Isaac be regarded as involving a miraculous element?
15. What is the difference between Sarah's laughter in chapter 21 and her laughter in chapter 18?
16. What reason for joy did Sarah have, beyond the natural joy of a mother who is no longer childless?
17. How did Abraham celebrate the occasion of weaning Isaac?
18. How old was Abraham when Isaac was born?
19. How old was Ishmael at the birth of Isaac? How old may he have been at the time when Isaac was weaned?
20. What discordant note soon marred the happiness of Abraham's household?
21. What New Testament passage shows that Ishmael's mocking of Isaac was not mere innocent fun or joking?

22. What attitude did Sarah take toward Hagar and Ishmael?

23. What demand did she make on Abraham concerning them?

24. How did Abraham feel about Sarah's demand?

25. What divine revelation made the will of God clear to Abraham concerning this problem?

26. What promise of God would reassure Abraham concerning the future of Ishmael?

27. What objections have been raised against the conduct of Abraham and Sarah in this matter? How can they be answered?

## LESSON 49

### 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.

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba" (21:14). This must have been extremely hard for Abraham to do, yet he did it in obedience to the clear revelation of the will of God. Some have raised the question why Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away with such meager provisions. To this it may be replied that the silence of Scripture does not prove anything. Very possibly, even probably, Abraham also gave Hagar a generous provision of money, though this is not mentioned by the record.

It can plausibly be argued that Abraham would have given Hagar money also, and that the food and water given her would have been sufficient to supply her and Ishmael's needs until they could reach an inn, if they had not lost their way. Hagar's feelings on this occasion are not recorded, but can easily be imagined. No doubt she left Abraham's household in an emotional turmoil, which resulted in her becoming confused and losing her way across the desert. Being lost, progress was not made, and so the water was soon drunk up.

"And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs" (21:15). The bottle, of course, was not what we would call a bottle, but one made of the skin of an animal, which would hold a considerable amount of water. The question may be raised why Ishmael, who was a lad of sixteen or seventeen years, should weaken and collapse before his mother. Yet this is quite true to life, for while young people often seem to have more energy than their parents, they not infrequently fall behind them in endurance of hardships. So Ishmael has collapsed from heat and thirst, while Hagar is still able to walk about. She lays the lad under a bush, which would provide a little scanty shade from the burning sun.

"And she went, and sat down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she

said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept" (21:16). But God is the Helper of the helpless, and He has not forgotten Hagar and Ishmael. "And God heard the voice of the lad." This may mean that Ishmael had been consciously praying, but perhaps the more probable meaning is that the cries and moans of Ishmael were themselves a cry of distress heard by God. Hagar is not left long in her desperate plight. The angel of God calls to Hagar out of heaven: "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is" (21:17). Everything is under control, everything is working out according to God's plan, everything will turn out all right. "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink" (21:18, 19). "God opened her eyes" may refer to a miracle, or it may mean that God providentially guided her so that she found a source of water. Leupold remarks that such wells in the wilderness would usually be covered to prevent too much evaporation, but would be marked by some sign so that people could locate them. Hagar fills the skin-bottle and gives the languishing Ishmael the water which means the difference between death and life.

"And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt" (21:20, 21). The statement that "God was with the lad" implies that God through His providence was fulfilling the promises made to Abraham and to Hagar concerning the future of Ishmael. The statement does not imply anything concerning covenant blessings or spiritual privileges. The wilderness of Paran was located in the north-eastern part of the Sinai Peninsula, southwest of Kadesh-barnea.

The fact that Hagar took a wife from Egypt for Ishmael indicates the spiritual difference between Hagar and Ishmael on the one hand and Abraham, Sarah and Isaac on the other. It is not surprising, of course, that Hagar took an Egyptian wife for Ishmael, seeing she was an Egyptian her-

self. Yet this Egyptian wife would not be a believer in the true God, and therefore would increase the separation between Ishmael and the covenant posterity of Abraham.

Some seventy-five years later we see Ishmael again (25:8, 9) as he joins Isaac in the task of burying Abraham in the cave of Machpelah. In 25:17 we are informed that Ishmael lived to the age of 137 years.

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 reproved 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 content 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. What may be said in answer to the question why Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away with so little provision for their needs?
2. What was the probable reason why Hagar lost her way in the wilderness?

3. Why would Hagar cast Ishmael under one of the shrubs?

4. Why was it natural that Ishmael would weaken before Hagar?

5. What reassuring message came to Hagar from heaven?

6. What was she commanded to do?

7. What promise concerning Ishmael is repeated to Hagar on this occasion?

8. How was Hagar enabled to find a supply of water?

9. Where was the wilderness of Paran located?

10. What was Ishmael's occupation as he grew to manhood?

11. Where was Gerar located?

12. What is the literal meaning of Abimelech?

13. What problem exists concerning the interpretation of "Abimelech"?

14. With what request did Abimelech approach Abraham?

15. What reply did Abraham make?

16. What matter required settlement before Abimelech's request could properly be carried out?

17. How did Abimelech explain the matter of which Abraham complained?

18. What gift did Abraham give to Abimelech?

19. Was the covenant between Abraham and Abimelech a civil or a religious bond?

20. Why did Abraham give Abimelech seven ewe lambs?

21. 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 50

### 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 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 or-

der 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 be-

cause 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).

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

### LESSON 51

#### 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 com-

ments (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. Essential-

ly 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).

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. 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?
15. How old was Sarah when she died?
16. Where was Sarah when she died?
17. What indication is there that Abraham was not present when Sarah died?
18. What was the custom as to the time of burial?
19. From whom does Abraham seek to purchase a burying place?
20. How did Abraham describe himself to the local inhabitants?
21. What truth does the Epistle to the Hebrews point out in connection with Abraham's description of himself?
22. What offer did the Hittites first make to Abraham?
23. How should Ephron's offer to give the field to Abraham be understood?
24. What fact indicates that Ephron really expected payment?
25. How much would 400 shekels of silver be in money today?
26. How much may it have represented in real purchasing power today?
27. Why did Abraham immediately pay the price asked without bargaining for a lower price?
28. How was the sale of the property certified?
29. Why were the trees mentioned as included in the sale?

### LESSON 52

#### 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 princess, 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, the 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 travelers, 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.

After being in Moslem hands for many centuries, the area in which the cave of Machpelah is located came under the control of the Republic

of Israel by the victory of the latter in the war of 1967. As a result of the passing of the cave from Moslem to Israeli control, the very stringent restrictions on visitors have been relaxed, and qualified scholars have been able to view the interior of the cave. There was also some relaxation of restrictions by the Kingdom of Jordan, prior to the Israeli conquest. See the very interesting material and pictures in *The National Geographic Magazine*, December 1966, pages 788-9 (published while the cave was still held by Jordan).

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.

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

(To be continued)

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## *The Church a Covenant Community*

By the Rev. E. Clark Copeland, D.D.

(Continued from last issue)

### **The Old Covenant Community**

The covenant established a community of covenant-brothers under a common allegiance to the Lord God of heaven and earth. They had a common goal of serving Him that His name might be glorified in all the earth by the obedience of men to His will. Their relationship with one another was through Him, for they were "sons of the covenant." All individual directions are part of a basically indivisible revelation of the will of God.<sup>94</sup> Together they form a whole people of God, possessing one mind and one heart, for they have chosen life which flows from Him (Deut. 30:15, 19, 20), they have chosen Him (Josh. 24:22). They are empowered in all that they do, even in their pledge of loyalty, by His grace; and

they are acceptable to Him and to one another because of His cleansing and forgiveness. They are separated from the world to Him and to one another by their sanctifying Lord God. Could there be any stronger ties strengthening responsible individual action, and uniting in common life?

"All the members of a covenantal community are subordinate to the whole,"<sup>95</sup> both in the reception of covenant benefits and in the performance of covenant responsibilities. "No individual was a recipient of the benefits of the covenant except as a member of the nation."<sup>96</sup> To transgress a covenant stipulation, to be disloyal to Yahweh by idolatry, or by exalting personal interests over that of Yahweh or Israel brought on

severe penalties, even to being cut off from the covenant and the covenant-making God. The case of Achan (Joshua 7) is an early example of the strength of community solidarity under the covenant. The record is that

the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things; for Achan the son of Carmi, . . . of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things and the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel (v. 1).

As a result the army suffered defeat and there was loss of life. The punishment of death was meted out upon the whole family, as one with him, and the destruction of all his goods.

There are instances of the whole people covenanting with the king in loyalty to him as the Lord's anointed.<sup>97</sup> These are significant as phases of the covenant people's life and further examples of community solidarity, but do not specifically serve our purposes. It should be noted in passing that faithfulness to the Davidic dynasty is faithfulness to the Covenant God and His purposes. The involvement of the king in the accomplishment of the mission of Israel is well illustrated in the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. Incorporating the nation in himself as king and God's "firstborn" (Ps. 89:27) he prays for the accomplishment of God's purpose in the world, "that all people of the earth may know thy name and fear thee. . ." (I Kings 8:43; 2 Chron. 6:33).

Following the original covenant inauguration ceremony at Sinai, the nation was led by Moses in renewing the covenant in the plains of Moab (Deut. 30:11-20).<sup>98</sup> The covenant was again renewed at Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim soon after they entered the land by a sacrificial ceremony and the reading of the sanctions. The law of Moses was written upon stones as a permanent witness that this was the Lord's kingdom (Joshua 8:30-35). Before his death Joshua called all Israel and exhorted them to be faithful to God in view of the redemption and His providential goodness to them in fulfilling the promise to give them the Land. They made a covenant renewing their loyalty to Yahweh, drawing up statutes and ordinances which were written in the book of the law of God (Joshua 24:26). What these statutes were we have no record, but from the instruction to Joshua to take care that he did all according to the law of Moses (Joshua 1:8) it becomes evident that from the death of Moses, Israel's life is to be directed by the covenant revelation Moses had mediated without addition or subtraction (Deut. 4:2). Public covenanting ceremonies will continue as the people of God commit themselves to doing the Lord's will in particular situations.

Josiah led Judah in making a covenant "before

the Lord" "to keep his commandments and his statutes, . . . to perform the words of the covenant that were written in the book" (2 Chron. 34:31, 32). In Nehemiah's day the princes, Levites, priests and all the people made a "firm covenant" and wrote it; they entered "into a curse and an oath to walk in God's law which was given by Moses the servant of God" (Neh. 9:38; 10:28-39). They covenanted to keep all that God had commanded, and specified laws which had been neglected that they would now observe.

God did not confront His people in these cases in the personal way he appeared to Abraham or audibly spoke to Israel at Sinai. He confronted them through His written testimony, the covenant revelation. The response of Israel in both these instances was of precisely the same nature as their response at Sinai, "all that the Lord hath spoken will we do and be obedient." John Murray describes them:

We cannot fail to note that what is in the forefront in these cases is not a contract or compact. Strictly speaking, it is not an agreement. Though persons entering into covenant agree to do certain things, the precise thought is not that of agreement by the people among themselves, nor a mutual agreement by the people and the Lord. We must distinguish between devising terms of the agreement or striking an agreement, on the one hand, and the agreement of consent or commitment, on the other. What we find in these instances is solemn, promissory commitment to faith or truth on the part of the people concerned. They bind themselves in bond to be faithful to the Lord in accordance with His revealed will. The covenant is solemn pledging of devotion to God, unreserved and unconditional commitment to His service.<sup>99</sup>

This is the response to the continuing demand of the Divine Word: that the people of God should let it speak to the situation of the day and do what it commands.

#### Notes

<sup>94</sup> Rad, p. 200.

<sup>95</sup> Shedd, p. 26.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> I Chron. 11:3; 2 Chron. 22:3-7, 16, etc.

<sup>98</sup> Meredith Kline, following G. E. Mendenhall, has greatly elucidated many points in the revelation by comparison with the Suzerain treaties of the fourteenth-thirteenth centuries B. C. in the Middle East. In this way he has very forcefully brought out the message of the book of Deuteronomy in his brief commentary entitled,

**The Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy** (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963). See outline pp. 48-49. He presents strong evidence on the basis of this similarity that the book stems from Moses, p. 44, last paragraph (contra Rad, pp. 22-23). Cf. Kline's comment, pp. 29-30. Cf. similar remarks: John Bright, p. 134. G. E. Mendenhall, "Covenant," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al.

(New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), I, 718. He suggests that the blessing of Moses and Joshua's succession, ch. 33-34, is a last will and testament and its inauguration (pp.39-41), which brings a parallel with Heb. 9:15-22.

99 John Murray, *The Covenant of Grace* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1954), p. 11. Roehrs, p. 587, n. 3.

(To be continued)

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## *The Westminster Confession of Faith in Modern English*

Prepared by Dr. James A. Hughes

(Continued from last issue)

### Chapter XVII Of the Perseverance of the Saints

I. Those whom God has accepted in His beloved Son, effectually called to salvation and set apart to Himself by His Spirit, can neither totally nor with finality fall from the state of grace but shall certainly persevere in it to the end and be eternally saved.

II. This perseverance of the saints does not depend upon their own free will but upon the unchangeableness of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; upon the abiding of the Spirit and of the seed of God within them;

and upon the nature of the covenant of grace — from all of which arise also the certainty and surety of the perseverance of the saints.

III. Nevertheless they may (through the temptations of Satan and the world, the prevalence of corruption remaining in them and the neglect of the means by which they are preserved) fall into grievous sins and for a time continue in them, by which they incur God's displeasure and grieve His Holy Spirit; by which they are deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts; have their hearts hardened and their consciences wounded; hurt and offend others and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

(To be continued)

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## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

The whole New Testament contains not even one explicit citation of any of the Old Testament Apocrypha which are considered as canonical by the Roman Catholic Church. This omission can scarcely be viewed as accidental.

— Roger Nicole in "Revelation and the Bible."

We best serve the cause of Christ and our fellow-Christians if we stand firmly for His gospel even at the apparent cost of creating disunity.

— Dr. Peter de Jong.

A curse lies on those that, when the truth suffers, have not a word to defend it.

— Richard Sibbes.

For ever let us thank God for the Reformation!

It lighted a candle which we ought never to allow to be extinguished or to burn dim.

— Bishop J. C. Ryle.

When wickedness is rampant and the earth is full of wickedness, men must either soon enter the ark or be drowned.

— Dr. W. C. Plumer on Psalm 119:126.

"Faith is dead to doubts.  
Dumb to discouragements,  
Blind to impossibilities;  
Faith makes the Uplook good,  
The Outlook bright,  
The future glorious.  
He stands best who kneels most."

— Anon.

"The Church has always believed her Scriptures to the book of God, of which God was in such sense the author that every one of its affirmations of whatever kind is to be esteemed as the utterance of God, of infallible truth and authority."

— B. B. Warfield.

In opposition to all error, to all false philosophy, to all false principles of morals, to all the sophistries of vice, to all the suggestions of the devil, the sole, simple and sufficient answer is the Word of God — this puts to flight all the powers of darkness.

— Dr. Charles Hodge.

## *Religious Terms Defined*

**CONSCIENCE.** That aspect of the human personality which registers disapproval when the person violates his moral code, and approval when he acts in harmony with his moral code. Conscience itself is not the standard of right and wrong; it only registers the person's relation to whatever moral code he believes in. Conscience needs to be enlightened by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. It is wrong to speak of Christian people as living "according to the dictates of their own conscience." Conscience is not to be a dictator. Christians are to live according to the dictates of God revealed in Holy Scripture.

**CONSISTENCY.** Agreement or harmony between a person's vows, or profession of faith, and his words and deeds.

**CONSUBSTANTIATION.** The Lutheran doctrine of the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, which teaches that in the sacrament there is present "the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink. . ." (Luther's Small Catechism). (Opposed to the Roman Catholic dogma of Transubstantiation, which holds that the bread and wine are miraculously changed into the real body and blood of Christ; and to the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper which holds that the body and blood of Christ are really present to the believer, "not after a corporal or carnal, but in a spiritual manner" (Larger Catechism).

**CONVERSION.** The sinner's turning from sin to God, which is the effect of the Holy Spirit's act of regeneration. Conversion always includes Repentance; the term **Conversion** is also sometimes used in a broad sense to include both the Spirit's act of regeneration and the sinner's response to that act in turning to God.

**CONVICTION OF SIN.** The troubled state of mind produced in a sinner by the Word and Spirit of God, wherein the sinner is profoundly conscious of being under the wrath of God, morally unclean, and unable to save himself.

**CORRUPTION OF NATURE.** The depraved, ungodly character or "heart" which became the natural condition of all descendants of Adam (ex-

cept Jesus Christ) as the result of the guilt of Adam's first sin being imputed to them.

**COVENANT.** A Covenant of God with man is an arrangement made by God and imposed on man, for the purpose of bringing man into religious communion with God, involving certain promises on God's part and certain obligations on man's part.

**COVENANT OF GRACE.** The covenant made in eternity between God the Father and God the Son as the representative of all the elect, by which the eternal salvation of the elect is fully provided for and infallibly guaranteed, and which was in time revealed to the people of God and put into execution according to the divine plan.

**COVENANT OF WORKS.** (Also called Covenant of Life). 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 human race, whereas his disobedience would result in the fall of mankind into a state of sin, misery and subjection to the wrath and curse of God, both here and hereafter.

**COVETOUSNESS.** Violation of the tenth commandment; a sinful, inordinate desire for something which is our neighbor's, not our own.

**CREATION.** The origination by the direct, almighty power of God, of that which is truly new as to matter, as to form, or as to both matter and form. "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" (Shorter Catechism, 9). Creation is sharply distinguished from Providence, in which God works without originating anything truly new. The common view known as Theistic Evolution stands condemned because it confuses Creation with Providence (holding that God created by means of a providential process), as well as on other grounds.

**CREED.** A formal statement of religious belief. Creeds may be long or short; they may be orthodox or erroneous. The word "creed" is used today chiefly in a contemptuous or disparaging sense, as if creeds were necessarily bad and

to be shunned. But there can be no real Christianity without creed, either written or unwritten. There are great advantages — such as clarity and definiteness or precision — in having a written creed. When we hear people speak contemptuously of creeds, we should realize that they are treating precise statement of Christian truth as something contemptible.

**CUSTOMS.** Religious practices sanctioned by long usage; they may be either good, bad or indifferent. Customs based on long usage are often confused with practices based on principles having

divine authority. It is a sign of decadence when customs are treated as unalterable, while principles are regarded as mere human customs.

**DEACONS.** Those officers of the Church who have been set apart for the administration of the business, financial and property interests of the Church, and for the ministry of mercy in the temporal care and relief of needy Christians.

**DEATH.** The "wages" or divinely appointed penalty of sin. Physical death is separation of soul and body; eternal death is ultimate separation from God.

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## *Reviews of Religious Books*

The favorable reviewing of a book here does not imply approval of its entire contents. Purchase books from your book dealer or from the publishers. Do not send orders for books to Blue Banner Faith and Life.

**THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT "SLIDAVERB" CONJUGATION CHART**, by David E. Peterson. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, price not stated.

A slide-rule for Greek verbs? Why not? Instead of looking through several pages of appendix in your Greek grammar book, just glance at "Slidaverb", and presto! you have it — **elutheesan**, third person plural aorist indicative passive, "they were released." Students of New Testament Greek will find this handy tool useful for learning the principal parts of most of the basic types of verbs used in the New Testament text; and, of course, it serves as a quick reference chart, an aid to translation. Size: twelve by four and one-half inches.

It's amusing to find a grammatical blunder (English) in the instructions: ". . . with the slide in it's normal position." This error occurs three times in the brief instructions. Otherwise, the slide-guide passes this teacher's inspection; when it's reprinted, its error should be corrected.

— Joseph A. Hill

**THE MODERN LANGUAGE NEW TESTAMENT: THE NEW BERKELEY VERSION.** Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970. pp. 291. \$3.95.

This is a revision of a translation by Gerrit Verkuyl, first published in 1945. A lengthy review of the original appeared in the April-June 1954 Blue Banner. That review was positive, but critical of certain footnotes, and of inconsistent capitalization in reference to Christ, and of the mistranslation of the word meaning "to justify." In this revision, most of the misleading footnotes

have been removed, and references to Christ seem to be consistently capitalized. As Dr. Vos pointed out in his review of the Berkeley Bible (Blue Banner, July-Sept. 1970), the mistranslation of "to justify" is still a problem. Some passages have been corrected in the revision (Rom. 5:1 "pronounced righteous;" 5:9 "declared righteous"), but others still say "made righteous" (Rom. 8:30; I Cor. 6:11; Gal. 2:16; 3:11; James 2:21) which is not true. The 1945 translation was good, and the revision is an improvement.

— David R. Armstrong

**THE NEW BIRTH**, by Arthur W. Pink. Reinier Publications, Swengel, Pa. 17880. 1969, pp. 31, paper cover, pocket size. 25 cents.

Mr. Arthur W. Pink is well known as an expositor of Scripture. He possessed one great virtue as a writer: he is clear and orderly, and one can see this from his treatment of the New Birth. For example, Mr. Pink says that the New Birth is (1) not a matter of heredity; (2) not a product of the sinner's will; (3) not the fruit of a preacher's persuasive power; (4) but of God.

One of the evidences of the new birth is a life of practical righteousness. The unregenerate are termed children of disobedience; they have no respect for God's Law. The believer is not regulated by the fashions, methods, maxims and pursuits of the world, but by Christ who has left us an example that we should follow His steps.

Preachers as well as private Christians, and those who are concerned about their state before God should read this booklet.

— Wallace Nicholson

**BEYOND THE SHADOWS**, by Eileen Mitson. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1968, pp. 128. paper cover. \$1.50.

This is the story of a young girl who died of leukaemia, a disease of the blood. Everything surgeons and nurses could accomplish was done for little Frankie Mitson, and she rallied time and again, but finally death intervened. The experience of the Mitsons in the loss of a child has been shared by many, but not every mother could write such a telling story about her offspring, whom she saw dying before her eyes. The parents submitted to God's sovereignty in their affliction and obtained grace to endure and rejoice.

This is not a book for teaching religion, but it could be helpful, not only to those who suffer, but also to those who care for such tragic cases. As a piece of literature the book is well written. Dale Evans Rogers says in the Foreword, "Here the love of Jesus Christ shines in crushing sorrow bringing peace and understanding to those committed to Him and trusting His perfect will."

— Wallace Nicholson

**SAINT'S KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST'S LOVE, THE**, by John Bunyan. Reiner Publications, Swengel, Pa. 17880. 1967, reprint of 1827, pp. 99, paper cover. \$1.50.

Another Bunyan paperback! Another Bunyan treasure! This is a treatise in sermonic form on Eph. 3:18, and though the treatment in places may be somewhat ponderous, it is yet very heart-warming and soul-nourishing — indeed, rich fare for famishing souls. Bunyan shows his acute awareness of the needs of the believer's heart and equally of the fulness of Christ's sufficiency. His pastoral acumen is apparent from the way he ranges over the many and varied experiences of the believer and from the skilful manner in which, like a true physician of souls, he applies the balm or prescribes the cordial well suited to heal and revive the languishing saint. Here intense spiritual experiences are treated in a way which is in stark contrast to much of today's superficial preaching and experience. A good antidote to sterile religion!

— Donald MacDonald

**LIGHT FOR THEM THAT SIT IN DARKNESS**, by John Bunyan. 1969, reprint. Paperback, pp. 146. \$1.95.

**THE DOCTRINE OF LAW AND GRACE UNFOLDED**, by John Bunyan. 1968, reprint. Paperback, pp. 222. \$2.95.

Both published by Reiner Publications, Swengel, Pa. 17880.

The well-known British writer, Lord Macau-

lay, described John Bunyan — the son of a poor tinker — as "the most popular religious writer in the English language." This Puritan preacher was the author of the literary masterpiece "The Pilgrim's Progress" — almost as widely read as the Bible, and partly written during twelve years in Bedford jail for refusing to give up preaching the Gospel.

The two paperbacks listed above are discourses reprinted from Bunyan's great theological works. The first is a straightforward Scriptural presentation of the redemption purchased by Christ. Dealing with His Incarnation, Bunyan rightly says that "Christ was not under the law because he was found in flesh, but he took flesh and designedly put himself under the law to redeem them that were under the law." Having plainly set forth the God-man as made sin for us, and atoning by his blood for our sins, he shows how he obtained eternal redemption for all who will ultimately be saved. To clinch his doctrines he produces nine convincing "demonstrations," and concludes his treatise by ably applying the Truth.

Doubtless this is precious Biblical and experimental theology. Assuredly the writer knows by personal experience the sublime way of salvation in Christ Jesus, and says: "I have ventured my own soul thereon with gladness, and if all souls in the world were mine, as mine own soul is, I would, through God's grace, venture every one of them there." On these pages the sunbeams of divine redeeming love sparkle brilliantly. Readers, walk in this light and shine. Cordially recommended.

The second book is a clear, delightful, sound interpretation of the fundamental doctrines of Law and Grace. In his fascinating elucidation of the Covenants of Works and Grace Bunyan shows who are, and what it is to be, under the law delivered by Christ to Moses on Mount Sinai. Searchingly he exhibits how far a self-deluded sinner may go seeking justification by the law and yet be lost. Having clearly unfolded the Offices of Christ as Mediator of the Covenant of Grace, and the freshness of the grace of this glorious Covenant, he presents the only way of deliverance from the curse of the law, and the Divine translation of poor sinners to the realm of grace, to enjoy the glorious liberty of genuine believers under the Moral Law as a rule of life. After applying his subject in self-examination and consolation, he concludes by answering objections to these doctrines.

Here is "milk" for babes and "strong meat" for the spiritually robust. Let all who desire godly edification study this book to the glory of the God of all grace.

— John Macleod

I TIMOTHY — JAMES, by Leon Morris. Wil-

liam B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502, 1970, pp. 91. \$1.25 (paper).

This is one of the series of Scripture Union Bible Study Books. The comments on these six New Testament books are designed to be read one section per day. The content is good, but very brief. The difficult passage in Hebrews 6 is handled very well. In I Timothy 3 the identity of bishop and presbyter is acknowledged. The following sentence is less satisfactory: "These officials exercised leadership in the early Church, and from their functions there emerged in due course the offices of presbyter and bishop as we know them in the later Church." Recommended for survey study.

— David R. Armstrong

RELEASE FROM TENSION, by David A. Blaiklock. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1969, pp. 92. \$2.95.

This is an easy book to read, as the author touches lightly on more than a dozen topics (suffering, grief, guilt, anger, depression, etc.). There are many adult topics dealt with, but his primary audience is "young people." He is against smoking and alcohol, doubtful about faith healing, and careful regarding tranquilizers. The section on guilt is well-written. He concludes by exhorting us to "die to self." Perhaps this is the answer but his explanation of it is vague and leaves you wanting something more tangible.

— David R. Armstrong

SELECTED SHORTER WRITINGS OF BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD — I, by John E. Meeter (ed.). Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 185, Nutley, New Jersey, 07110. 1970 pp. 494. \$7.50.

This new publication supplements the five volume set of Warfield's works published by the same company several years ago. One additional volume is being prepared. This book contains 59 articles, ranging from theological studies to biographies. All of the essays are less than 20 pages in length. The passage of more than half a century has not lessened the value of most of these articles; the doctrines that are discussed in them are equally relevant today. Their brevity is attractive, and will either meet your need or stimulate you to further study.

— David R. Armstrong

SHARE YOUR FAITH, by Russell T. Hitt (ed.). Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1970, pp. 62. \$95 (paper).

This refreshing little book contains six reprints of articles from Eternity magazine. It

should be an encouragement to the layman who feels guilty because he keeps hearing that he ought to "witness" but doesn't seem to be able to do it. The first two chapters show that "witnessing" is not techniques or "brainwashing" or "scalping." Two other chapters give some positive suggestions about using your home as a means of sharing Christ. Recommended for distribution.

— David R. Armstrong

SCRIPTURE UNION BIBLE STUDY BOOKS: ISAIAH 40 — JEREMIAH, by Rev. Arthur E. Cundall. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1969, pp. 92. \$1.25.

This book — part of a series which "forms the intensive study level of the graded daily Bible reading plan of Scripture Union" — certainly lives up to the series' design in that it provides "basic study material for the Christian who wishes to have a mature and organized" daily reading guide. The questions at the end of every seventh reading should prove a stimulant to further and wider Bible study as well as an aid to memorizing the material studied. It should be helpful not only for individual but also for group Bible study. However, an Arminian orientation is evident — though not consistently — especially when treating the extent of the atonement and man's ability.

— Donald MacDonald

GOD, THE ATOM, AND THE UNIVERSE, by James Reid. Zondervan Pub. House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1968, pp. 235, \$4.95.

The author of this book believes: (1) that there is no essential conflict between science and the Bible, (2) that both science and the Bible agree on the order of creation, (3) that theistic evolution is the best possible explanation of the development of all things — except man, (4) that the Bible suggests several areas wherein profitable research could be done by science, (5) that science may be of help in determining the true meaning of certain passages of the Bible.

In applying this last principle there were some passages dealing with specific miracles where the reviewer thought that Mr. Reid's insight was helpful. However, the book is filled with possible "scientific" explanation of various eschatological events which seem unwarranted and possibly dangerous. The author quotes passages of Scripture that may relate to U.F.O.'s, the existence of people on other planets, bomb shelters, the second coming of Christ, and the end of the world by thermonuclear explosion. I would not recommend this book.

— Donald Weilersbacher

**CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE**, by J. Gresham Machen. Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern Street, London W1M IPS, 1969, pp. 10, 1 shilling.

Although this message was first given in 1912 to the Students of Princeton Theological Seminary, it is an appropriate challenge to all students and pastors today. Herein Machen argues that the Church needs an educated ministry; that is, one which is thoroughly indoctrinated not only with the Word of God, but also conversant with the current developments in the arts and sciences. Only then can pastors adequately apply the unchanging principles of the Scriptures to the changing thought patterns and practices of our contemporary society.

— Donald Weilersbacher

**THE BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY**, by Rousas J. Rushdoony. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 185, Nutley, New Jersey 07110, 1969, pp. 148, paperback, \$2.95.

This is a thoroughly Reformed critique of the meaninglessness of history apart from Jesus Christ. Since most modern historians consider God as being irrelevant to history, they have no values; and without values, they find no meaning whatsoever in history. But rather than admit the bankruptcy of their position, they often try to superimpose a meaning based upon some current psychological, philosophical, political, or economic presupposition. Rushdoony rather challenges us to the Triune God and His eternal decrees as the source of meaning in history. This would be a good book for any college age person to read. Any pastor would find it most challenging.

— Donald Weilersbacher

**EASTER FAITH AND HISTORY**, by Daniel P. Fuller. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49502, 1965, pp. 279, \$4.95.

Three fourths of this book is devoted to an analysis of the faith versus history debate. The author follows this theme through the Romanticism, Rationalism, and Liberalism of the 19th century; as well as the Neo-Orthodoxy, post-Bultmanian, and Barthian thinking of the 20th century. Special attention is given to the new approach led by the young German theologian Professor Wolfhart Pannenberg of Mainz.

Dr. Fuller is not at all persuaded that any of these theological movements has really solved the problem. Consequently, he devotes the remaining portion of the book to an examination of the approach of Luke to the relationship between faith and history as spelled out in the Gospel and Acts. This reviewer agrees with

Dr. Fuller's conclusions and believes that the book would be helpful to those still wrestling with this problem.

— Donald Weilersbacher

**THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**, by Rev. L. Selles. The Interleague Publication Board of Canadian Reformed Societies, Vonkenberg Study Aids, P. O. Box 783, London, Ontario, Canada, 1969, pp. 95, paperback, \$2.60.

This is an excellent study guide to the Book of Hebrews with numerous questions for group discussion. Historical notes and Scriptural cross references are abundant. The study is thoroughly integrated with such subordinate standards as the Canons of Dort, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Belgic Confession of Faith. There are a few typographical errors in the references to Scripture, but this does not mar the beauty of this thoroughly Reformed study guide.

— Donald Weilersbacher

**THE EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH: A PERSPECTIVE**, by Arnold H. De Graaff. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502, 1966, pp. 175, paperback, prices not stated.

De Graaff begins his book with an analysis of the current religious education curriculum and presuppositions in America, Germany, and Netherlands. He concludes that in America we have adopted biological and psychological terms to express the goals of Christian education, but without examining their philosophical and theological presuppositions; to see if they are in harmony with the Word of God. Moreover, there is a tendency to describe the covenant life of God's people in the broadest possible terms, but on the other hand to identify the covenant community entirely with the organized church. Moreover, in Germany there is an over-emphasis on the pistical (faith) aspect of Christian education. Furthermore, even in the Netherlands many writers and educators continue to express a dualism between nature and grace that makes Christian education an impossibility.

The solution to this problem, in each of these countries, is to analyze the presupposition of each group and compare them with God's Word. Especially is there a need for spelling out the nature and limitations of the organized church in its educational ministry. This is the central issue of the book and De Graaff deals with it admirably. In as much as we have not clearly specified the sphere of sovereignty of the organized church, De Graaff concludes that ". . . many of the statements made by councils, assemblies, and synods, are often quite irrelevant, since they are neither competent poli-

tical, social, or economic pronouncements nor genuine testimonies of faith. Such declarations are rightly ignored by both Christians and non-Christians." (p. 64)

The book concludes with a statement of the anthropological presuppositions of a truly Christian theory of education, a discussion of

the relationship between knowledge and faith, the scope of the curriculum, and some methodological considerations. Many readers will find the book difficult to read. They will also become discouraged by the many pages that are completely out of order. Nevertheless, the book does have a message that needs to be understood and applied.

— Donald Weilersbacher

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## Contributions Received

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**J. G. Vos, Editor and Manager**  
3408 Seventh Avenue  
Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania 15010, U.S.A.

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## *Blue Banner Question Box*

### Question:

What is the teaching of the Bible on the subject of Gambling? I am specially concerned about the "free gifts" given by supermarkets to holders of tickets with "lucky numbers", and the practice of signing up for a "free gift."

### Answer:

Gambling in its many forms is a prevalent, and apparently an increasing, evil of our time. The desire to get something for nothing is itself a manifestation of covetous greed which is unworthy of a Christian, who should always be ready to give a comparable value in return for what he seeks. The mania of getting something free through lotteries, raffles, chance tickets, etc., is becoming a national disease in America. Someone has called it "jackpotitis." When one person because of possession of a "lucky number" wins something of value, many persons have contributed to paying for this "gift" without getting any adequate value in return. The fact that the losers have agreed to the system does not make it right. Someone has said that gambling stands in the same relation to stealing that duelling does to murder. When something is wrong in itself, agreement between parties does not make it right.

Looking at the matter from another angle, all gambling is irreverent because it is based on trifling with the divine providence. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. 16:33.) There is really no such thing as chance. What men call "chance" is simply that element in God's providence which is not humanly controllable or predictable. If dice are thrown on a table, which faces are up

does not depend on "chance"; it was foreordained by God before the world was created. Not "chance" but God determines the winner of every raffle or lottery. In all cases, which number is to be "lucky" was decided by God in the counsels of eternity. Gambling is therefore a violation of the third commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Ex. 20:7). God's providence is part of God's "name" — that by which God reveals Himself. When we make it the basis of a lottery or raffle we are taking His name in vain.

People today excuse gambling, first, on the ground that everybody does it, therefore it cannot be wrong. Of course, it is not true that "everybody" does it. There are those who conscientiously oppose it and witness against it, though they may be in the minority. "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Ex. 23:2) is a clear teaching of God's Word. The fact that gambling is common does not prove that it is right — it only proves that human hearts are sinful.

Another excuse given for gambling is that some influential churches promote it. The writer has seen a printed church bulletin urging people to buy chance tickets on a cruise to Bermuda in order to help their church, and thus do a good deed. But we may not do evil that good may come. If something is wrong it is wrong. Would we steal money in order to give it to the Church? Christ saves His people from sin, not that they may continue in sin.

— J. G. Vos

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Irregular  
Elyah

## PSALM 142

6

1 O how I plead with the LORD in my cry - ing! To the  
You know how men hid a trap to en - snare me. 4 Look and  
6 Heed my en - trea - ty! How deep my de - jec - tion! Res - cue

LORD I cry for mer - cy! 2 I'll pour out my trou - ble. My  
see how on my right hand There's none car - ing for me. 4  
me from my op - pres - sors; They're much too strong for me. 7 My

grief be - fore Him I'll spread out com - plete - ly. 3 When my  
all es - cape for me! None seeks my wel - fare! 5 How I  
soul from pris - on bring out, then I'll praise You. How the

spir - it faints with - in me, You know the way I walk.  
cry, LORD, "You're my ref - uge, All hops in life for me!"  
right-eous throug a - round me! You rich - ly deal with me!

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