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## BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

J. G. VOS, Editor and Manager

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# *What's Right With The Covenanter Church?*

By J. G. Vos

Rodney Gilbert was an American newspaper man who had lived for many years in China. He wrote a book entitled "What's Wrong with China." This book was promptly banned by the Chinese government. Later a Chinese author wrote a book in reply, entitled "What's Right with China." Gilbert had no trouble finding many things wrong with China to write about. Perhaps the awareness that many of his accusations were true led to the banning of the book. Yet there was another side, as the Chinese author was able to demonstrate.

It would be easy to list several things that are seriously wrong with the Covenanter Church. Some who have joined the church in a flood-tide of zeal and spiritual earnestness have been disillusioned later by the actual conditions in the church as they came into closer contact with them. The Covenanter Church is beset by serious problems, even by threats to its continued existence. In the face of a steadily declining numerical membership, many members are sluggish and complacent. As the Roman emperor Nero is said to have fiddled while Rome burned, so some Covenanters seem to fiddle while their Church fades away.

Many members are grossly ignorant of basic Christian truth. Some are anti-intellectual and despise exact knowledge of Christian truth, scornfully calling it "theological hair-splitting." There is much opposition to the exercise of Scriptural discipline in the denomination. On the one hand there is a lack of effective contact and communication with those bodies of Christians that could help us most, and on the other hand many members seem to admire and even envy the large denominations with their millions of members, even those that are largely apostate from real Bible Christianity. There is evident a marked unwillingness to be different from the dominant church pattern of our time; some members are even ashamed of the very things that are the Covenanter Church's real strength and glory — its witness for the kingship of Christ, its insistence on Scriptural purity of worship.

The problems and evils mentioned above are only too real. But what is our attitude to the Covenanter Church, beset as it is with problems and evils? Where do you stand in this situation? Are you a part of the problems, or are you one who is doing something to solve

the problems? Is your attitude negative or is it positive? Will you fiddle while the church dies, or will you, by the grace of God, contribute to keeping it alive? Have you sunk into a sluggish complacent indifference, with a "what's the use?" attitude? Will you leave the Covenanter Church because of some reason of personal pride, preference, or convenience? Or will you by the grace of God be a real witness for Christ, His truth, and His kingdom, in this day and age of lukewarmness and compromise? Where do you stand?

You will find a perfect church only in heaven; it does not exist on this earth. But there are some things that are right with the Covenanter Church. During recent years there has arisen in the church an increasing awareness of the truth and relevance of the Reformed Faith, which after all is nothing more nor less than the system of consistent Bible Christianity. The Covenanter Church, unlike some of the large denominations, is not controlled by a bureaucracy or "church machine" of professionals who dictate to the membership and even lord it over the ministry. Our denomination is small but it is honestly governed with a Scriptural form of government.

The Covenanter Church stands clean and clear of the ecumenical movement, the massive, corrupt modern-day movement which is increasingly tending toward union without real unity — union at the expense of Scriptural truth. The Covenanter Church is loyal to its basis, the Bible as the inerrant infallible Word of God. In a day when many denominations regard the Bible as a collection of myths, legends, folklore, and conflicting viewpoints, our Church is not ashamed to hold to the Bible as the infallible Word of God and only standard of faith and life. In the Covenanter Church — unlike the major denominations of present-day America — it is possible to bring all features of the Church's faith and life under the judgment of the Word of God. Because this is true, what is right with the Covenanter Church can be conserved, and what is wrong with the Covenanter Church can be corrected.

Will you do your part to make your church what it ought to be in the Kingdom of God? Where do you stand?

— The Goal Post

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Leaf from leaf Christ knows;  
Himself the Lily and the Rose:

Sheep from sheep Christ tells;  
Himself the Shepherd, no one else:

Star and star He names,  
Himself outblazing all their flames:

Dove by dove, He calls  
To set each on the golden walls:

Drop by drop, He counts  
The flood of ocean as it mounts:

Grain by grain, His hand,  
Numbers the innumerable sand.

Lord, I lift to Thee  
In peace what is and what shall be:

Lord, in peace I trust  
To Thee all spirits and all dust.

Christina Rossetti

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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NUMBER 1

## *Scripture and the Word of God*

By the Rev. W. R. McEwen

"One cannot say everything of the Scriptures which one can say of the Word of God . . . the Word of God endures forever; is perfect. But the Scripture is not eternal, and is also not perfect. Inspiration consists in this: that God spoke His Word through men, that He makes their words the instruments of His Word. As such, the human word stands in the service of God, and participates in the authority and infallibility of the Word of God. But it remains a human, and therefore also an inadequate instrument."

These words were contained in a paper given by Prof. Herman Ridderbos, of the Netherlands, at Gordon College, Boston, U.S.A., two years ago, and printed in the *International Reformed Bulletin*. They are important because they reflect, with remarkable clarity, a view of Scripture that is gaining increasing acceptance in the evangelical world; a view of such subtlety that many fail to see it for what it is.

It is, in many ways, an attractive view, in that it professes to do justice to the assured results of critical scholarship without sacrificing anything of the authority, inspiration, or infallibility of Scripture. Yet, it involves a decided shift from the historic evangelical view of Scripture.

Of course, its advocates deny that they are shifting. They see themselves only as correcting a faulty imbalance which arose in evangelical thinking as a reaction to the destructiveness of rationalistic modernism. Yet, the fact remains, that, while professing to be defenders of the authority of Scripture in the evangelical tradition, they have adopted a position which is a departure from the view that, for the ordinary believer, has long been identified with a believing approach to Scripture.

The key question is the inerrancy of Scripture. The advocates of this new position are quite ready to affirm the infallibility of Scripture but balk over its inerrancy. Closely allied to this is the relationship of Scripture and the Word of God. They do not say that Scripture only contains the Word of God; nor do they say that it becomes the Word of God. Yet, they like to make a point that Scripture cannot be in every respect identified with the Word of God. Everywhere Scripture confronts us with God's Word, they will say, so that, in reading Scripture we can say: This is the Word of God. Yet, we must say it with a distinct reserve; we say it in a qualified sense.

This, of course, is essential to the basic question of inerrancy. Fundamental to their position is the insistence that, while in all matters of revelation it is a sure, trustworthy, and infallible guide, that will not mislead us by so much as a fraction of an inch on any matter of faith, it is not possible to say that it has no mistakes at all. Due to the human factor which God did not totally over-ride, they contend errors may well have been in the original documents without affecting in any way its infallibility as the authoritative guide to the Christian faith.

The whole matter is full of such complexity and subtlety that it is little wonder if the plain man is confused. Yet, the issue is fundamentally simple. Is God the author of Scripture or is He not? If He is, as the Westminster divines confessed so plainly three centuries ago, then it is inconceivable that an error of any sort should be in what God has written. If He is, without qualification or equivocation, the author of Scripture, then it is, without equivocation or qualification, the Word of God.

We have not the space to argue the question in detail here. We are satisfied, however, that the historic view of the Church, which holds that God is, in the most absolute sense, the author of Scripture, is that view which Scripture gives of itself, and will withstand any fair, scholarly challenge. The view of the new evangelical, with its equivocation and hesitation over the inerrancy issue, we must hold, fails to do justice to this divine authorship.

**Note:** The foregoing article is reproduced here, with grateful acknowledgment, from *Evangelical Action* (Australia), issue of August 1, 1970. The position set forth by Mr. McEwen is that officially held by the Reformed Presbyterian Church and all bodies holding the Westminster Confession of Faith, which affirms of Scripture "the entire perfection thereof" (I.5). The Reformed Presbyterian Testimony rejects as an error the proposition "That there can be any errors in the Bible" (Chap. III Error 4, page 155). —Editor.

Wood is not more ready to be set on fire than men are to follow superstition.

—John Calvin

No theology that seeks to satisfy the false requirements of the natural man can fairly be said to be a reformation theology.

—Cornelius Van Til

# Studies in the Book of Genesis

(Continued from last issue)

## LESSON 53

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

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

Abraham's servant raises a possible objection to the requirement that he get Isaac a wife from Nahor's descendants. Perhaps the woman will not be willing to make the trip to Canaan. Is the servant then to take Isaac back to Mesopotamia? Abraham immediately warns against this in the strongest terms (24:6). To take Isaac to Mesopotamia would be a backward step and would run counter to the revealed purpose of God. Such a thing is therefore under no circumstances to be done. Abraham rather assures his servant that the God who has called him and given him promises will work things out: "He shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence" (24:7). However, if the woman refuses her consent, then the servant will have discharged his sworn obligation and will not be responsible for the refusal; only under no circumstances is Isaac to return to Mesopotamia. The servant is now clear as to just what he is swearing to, and swears the oath as required by Abraham (24:9).

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

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

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

dictating to God what is to be done; he is praying in submission to the sovereign counsel of God; indeed we should say that it was God who led him to pray this prayer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bethuel and his family now have the facts on which to base a decision. The servant has not actually made any request. He lets his story, with its implied request, speak for itself. The facts as related are a challenge to their religious faith. And Laban and Bethuel recognize this, for they reply: "The thing proceedeth from the Lord; we cannot speak unto thee bad or good" (24:50). This statement of Bethuel and Laban should not be in-

terpreted as meaning "We cannot make any decision, either favorable or unfavorable." For in the very next verse they add "Behold, Rebekah is before thee; take her, and go . . .". Therefore the statement "we cannot speak unto thee bad or good" must have some other meaning. Evidently "bad" and "good" are mentioned here as two extremes covering all possibilities between the two. The meaning then is: "God has already spoken all that can be spoken on this matter; we cannot add anything to what God has already spoken by His providence." Bethuel and family, therefore, have granted consent for Rebekah to become Isaac's wife. The servant understands this perfectly, and responds by worshipping the Lord, bowing himself to the earth (24:52).

Next, costly gifts of silver, gold and clothing are given to Rebekah. These constitute the customary wedding gift given by the bridegroom to the bride at the time of betrothal. The giving and acceptance of such gifts would be regarded as evidences of good faith on the part of the two parties. Thus the agreement would be regarded as sealed or pledged. Leupold rightly points out that there is no hint here of the heathenish custom of purchasing a bride from her father or her family, a practice unknown among the Israelites.

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

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

No doubt there were busy preparations, which however are not mentioned in the narrative. Rebekah's nurse is sent with her, and also her damsels, that is, a number of girls of about her own age who would not only be her maids but would also help to keep her from becoming too homesick in a strange country. A solemn blessing is pronounced upon Rebekah: "Thou art our sister; be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them"

(24:60). This blessing has been literally fulfilled, which

**Questions:**

1. What possible objection does Abraham's servant mention before swearing the oath?
2. What course does the servant suggest as a possibility in case the woman will not come to Canaan?
3. How does Abraham answer this objection?
4. Why must Isaac not return to Mesopotamia?
5. What verses show the servant's eagerness to discharge his obligation as soon as possible?
6. How do we know that other men besides Abraham's "eldest servant" went along?
7. Was it right for Abraham's servant to pray the kind of prayer he did? Would it be right for us today to ask God such a sign?
8. What reason can be suggested why the servant specified willingness to water the camels as the sign to be provided?
9. What other qualities of personality or character would willingness to draw water for the camels show?
10. What gifts did the servant give Rebekah at the well?
11. What is the correct meaning of the word translated "earring"?
12. How much did the gifts weigh, and what would be the present value of the fold in them?

may explain why it is recorded in the Bible.

13. What trait of Laban's character is seen almost as soon as he enters the story?
14. What hospitality was accorded to Abraham's servant in the household of Bethuel?
15. What does the servant insist on doing before partaking of food?
16. What impression did the servant's story produce upon Rebekah's family?
17. What is the probable meaning of the statement "We cannot speak unto thee bad or good"?
18. Why did the servant give additional gifts to Rebekah?
19. To whom besides Rebekah did the servant give presents?
20. Why did Abraham's servant wish to return to Canaan immediately?
21. Why did Rebekah's family wish for a few days' delay?
22. How was this difference settled?
23. Who accompanied Rebekah from Mesopotamia to Canaan?
24. What blessing was pronounced upon Rebekah just before her departure?

**LESSON 54**

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

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

The caravan trip to Canaan is accomplished without incident. Isaac is on his way back from the place called Beer-lahai-roi. The word "beer" means "well." The place referred to was named Beer-lahai-roi because of Hagar's experience there. (16:7-14). The meaning of the name was explained in a previous lesson, on chapter 16. This well was evidently regarded as a sacred spot on account of the divine revelation granted to Hagar there. Moses adds the explanatory note that Isaac "dwelt in the south country," that is, in the portion of Canaan called the Negeb. After his return from Beer-lahai-roi Isaac goes out into the fields to meditate in the evening time. Some have thought that Isaac was still mourning for his mother Sarah. However Sarah had been dead three years, as is shown by comparison of 21:5, 23:1 and 25:20. We may infer, therefore, that Isaac's purpose in going to the fields was religious meditation and prayer rather than a mere nursing of grief. Leupold comments

that at this point we see Isaac's prayers had to do with the success of Abraham's servant in his trip to Mesopotamia and back? It is while in the fields for meditation that Isaac sees a caravan of camels on the horizon. As the caravan approaches nearer, Rebekah sees Isaac, and inquires of the servant as to who this man is. On being informed that it is her future husband, Rebekah dismounts from her camel and veils herself (24:65). The dismounting from the camel was a common token of courtesy. The veil was worn as a sign of modesty and respect. Leupold remarks that while Rebekah was courageous, she was not bold.

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

"And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (24:67). Isaac showed tactful courtesy in con-

ducting Rebekah immediately to a tent, and he showed her honor by giving her the tent which had been that of his mother Sarah. Isaac's marriage to Rebekah followed. We may say that this was a marriage made in heaven, and entered into on earth in the fear of God. It is no wonder, therefore, that the union was a happy one, and that it was cemented by love. Even though Isaac and Rebekah had been strangers before marriage, love followed their marriage. Moses adds that Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. It is probable that Sarah's death had caused him intense grief.

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

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

Abraham's second wife is Keturah. There is a Jewish story that Keturah was identical with Hagar, whom Abraham is said to have married after Sarah's death. There is no basis for this idea, however. As to who Keturah was — her race and background — we know nothing. She presumably was or became a believer in Jehovah. It was through Abraham's marriage to Keturah that the promise that he should be "father of a multitude of nations" was to be fulfilled.

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

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

Chapter 25 verses 7 to 10 record the death and burial of Abraham. First we are informed that he lived to the age of 175 years. The expression "gave up the ghost" means "drew his last breath." The statement that

Abraham died "full of years" does not mean that he was weary of life, but rather that all his desires and wants had been satisfied.

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

Abraham's mortal remains were buried in the cave of Machpelah, where the body of Sarah had already been laid to rest. On the cave of Machpelah, see the discussion in Lesson 52.

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

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

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

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

out, they are treated only briefly and then dropped. Isaac's descendants, on the other hand, are not dropped, for it was from them that the Christ would be born.

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

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

In general it may be said that the descendants of Abraham through Ishmael (as also his descendants through the sons of Keturah, and the descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot) are today represented by the people of Arabia. Of course there has been much intermarriage between tribes or clans during the past four thousand years, so that we should not expect to find these various families of Abraham's day represented by particular Arabian tribes of the present day, although the modern Arabs do make genealogical distinctions, especially distinguishing those descended from Ishmael from those descended from Joktan (Gen. 10:26-30).

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

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

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

#### Questions:

1. From what place had Isaac just returned when he first saw Rebekah?
2. For what purpose did Isaac go out into the fields toward evening?
3. How long after Sarah's death was the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah?
4. What was implied by Rebekah's actions of dismounting and veiling herself?
5. What living quarters were assigned to Rebekah on her arrival in Canaan?
6. How old was Abraham at the time of Isaac's marriage?
7. How can we explain the seeming difficulty about Abraham begetting children many years after the birth of Isaac?
8. How many descendants of Abraham and Keturah are listed in 25:2-4?
9. What provision did Abraham make for the sons of Keturah?
10. In what direction did Abraham send them away during his lifetime?
11. What provision did Abraham make for his son Isaac?
12. What is the meaning of the expression "gave up the ghost"?
13. What is implied in the statement that Abraham died "full of years"?
14. How should the statement that Abraham "was gathered unto his people" be understood?
15. Where was Abraham's body buried?
16. Who made the arrangements for Abraham's burial?
17. Where did Isaac live after the death of Abraham?
18. What is the meaning of the formula "These are the generations of . . . "?
19. How many times does this formula occur in Genesis?
20. Why are Isaac's descendants so much more important than Ishmael's?
21. How many sons of Ishmael are listed?
22. What promises of God to Abraham and Hagar were fulfilled by Ishmael's sons?

23. Who are the descendants of Ishmael today?
24. How old was Ishmael at the time of his death? How does this compare with the length of life of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

25. What can be said about the question of whether Ishmael was saved?

26. What general area was occupied by the descendants of Ishmael in ancient times?

#### LESSON 55

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

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

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

The first new fact stated in the history of Isaac is his prayer to the Lord on behalf of his wife Rebekah, who had borne no children. The Lord answered this prayer of Isaac (25:21) and so Rebekah is soon to become a mother. She is to be the mother of twins, and before they are born there comes a revelation from God to Rebekah (25:22,23). It is said to Rebekah that twin sons will be born and that two nations shall be descended from them. It is further revealed that "the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (25:23). That the one nation should be stronger than the other would occasion no surprise; but the prediction that the elder should serve the younger would cause wonder, because it runs contrary to nature and custom. Here in this history of Rebekah we see a profound truth disclosed. In God's dealings with mankind, grace is more important than nature, and takes priority over it. God's purpose of redemption is a sovereign purpose and cannot be limited to natural, reasonable and customary channels. God in His sovereignty chooses and decides as He pleases and no being in the universe has a right to challenge His decisions. Contrary to nature and human custom God has chosen the younger in preference to the elder.

This revelation to Rebekah is developed later in the Bible. In Malachi 1:2,3 we read: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau . . .". Then in the New Testament the apostle Paul comments on it in Romans 9:10-13, "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac: (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

The apostle Paul points out that this discrimination on the part of God was sovereign, not based on any merit

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

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

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

As the boys grow to maturity, they develop along quite different lines. Esau becomes a skillful hunter, "a man of the field" — an outdoor man, rugged and ac-

customed to a rough and difficult life. Jacob, on the other hand, is described as a "plain" man that is, a man of quiet or peaceful habits and manner of life, no doubt much like his father Isaac in this respect. He is also described as a tent-dweller. It would seem that in the early part of his life Jacob was a lover of ease and comfort; later as a shepherd working for his uncle Laban he learned to struggle against hardships (31:40).

"And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob" (25:28). This partiality on the part of the parents was bad, and it was made worse by the obvious ways in which the parents manifested their attachments. It has often been observed that people tend to be attracted, not to those most like themselves, but to those whose traits are opposite to their own. This was true, certainly, in this family. The quiet, contemplative Isaac is attracted to the active, rugged Esau; the active, energetic Rebekah, on the other hand, is attracted to the quiet disposition of Jacob. The great mistake of the parents, of course, lay in making their preferences so obvious that the sons could not avoid noting them. Some have referred to Jacob as a soft or "sissy" type of personality at this early stage of his life, a boy who stayed around the women's tents and learned how to cook, whereas Esau is pictured as a strongly masculine type, as evidenced by his outdoor life as a hunter. However this may be, we need not hold Jacob's learning how to cook against him, for Esau also learned how to cook; if Jacob cooked pottage of lentiles, Esau cooked venison.

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

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

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

As for Jacob, we may wonder what his motive was.

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

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

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

The New Testament (Hebrews 12:16) comments on this incident and in doing so pronounces Esau to be "a profane person" because he sold his birthright for a common meal. "Profaneness" is not the same thing as "profanity"; the latter means taking God's name in vain, and related violations of the third commandment; "profaneness" means regarding what is sacred as if it were common. Esau was profane because he did not regard the birthright as a sacred possession. In the same way, the modern-day secularist is profane, for he has no regard for what is spiritual and sacred, but thinks only of pleasures, money, worldly profit or success, and the like.

It has been said that Esau ate the most expensive dinner ever eaten by man, which is true if we allow an exception for the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil eaten by Adam and Eve. For Esau paid a high price for his dinner of bread and pottage of lentiles. It cost him his place in the history of redemption and the Kingdom of God. This is true even though the choice of Jacob had been revealed by God to Rebekah many years

before, even prior to the birth of the twins. Esau cannot blame his destiny on God, for it was truly the product of

his own decision, made without constraint, actuated by his own sinful motives.

**Questions:**

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

evident from the time of their birth?

12. How long after the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah were the twins born?
13. What differences appeared in the two boys as they grew to maturity?
14. How can we explain the fact that Isaac loved Esau whereas Rebekah loved Jacob?
15. Does Jacob's learning how to cook prove that he was a person lacking in manliness?
16. According to the law of Moses, what benefits did the birthright include?
17. What may have been the motive of Jacob in seeking the transfer of the birthright?
18. How should we understand Esau's statement "I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me"?
19. What does the Epistle to the Hebrews say about Esau?
20. What is the difference between profanity and profaneness?
21. What does Esau's decision show about his character?
22. What did Esau's meal of bread and pottage cost him?

**LESSON 56**

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

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

We now come to chapter 26 of the Book of Genesis. This chapter deals with events in the life of Isaac, and portrays the only scenes we have in which Isaac is the most prominent character, for his son Jacob soon comes to occupy the center of attention. The character of Isaac as portrayed in Genesis is rather passive than active; in this respect Isaac forms a contrast to his father Abraham. Also, there is little that is original in the life of Isaac; most of the recorded events are parallel to similar events in the life of Abraham (the barrenness of his wife, danger in Gerar, treatment by Abimelech, two sons of each patriarch differing sharply in character). This passive and unoriginal character of Isaac serves to bring out a principle of God's plan of redemption and revelation. "The redeeming work of God passes by its very nature through three stages. Its beginnings are marked by a high degree of energy and productivity; they are creative beginnings. The middle stage is a stage

of suffering and self-surrender, and is therefore passive in its aspect. This in turn is followed by the resumed energy of the subjective transformation, characterizing the third stage. Now the middle one of these stages is represented by Isaac. The principle finds expression, however, not merely in the general lack of originality, but more positively also in the account of the demanded sacrifice of Isaac" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 106). The structure of the plan of redemption and revelation just described finds its fullest realization, of course, in the Biblical structure of the history of redemption. The preparatory period from Adam to Christ ("creative beginnings") is represented by the active life of Abraham; the period of Christ's earthly ministry and passion ("suffering and self-surrender") is represented by the quiet, passive life of Isaac; the period of application, from Christ's resurrection to the end of time ("resumed energy of subjective transformation") is represented by the life of Jacob with its new activity and subjective transformation.

The common method of treatment of the history of the patriarchs, as seen countless times in Sabbath School lesson helps and the like, errs, we believe, in placing the

chief emphasis on the personal character of these men. Their character is not the most important thing; what is most important is their place and function in the divine plan. "In the history of revelation, character is not to be regarded as an ultimate datum; the revelation does not spring from the character; on the contrary, the character is predetermined by the necessities of the revelation" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 106). This means that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not vehicles of revelation because their character fitted them to be such, but on the contrary that their character became what it was because God had chosen them to be vehicles of revelation. It was not a case of God finding men fit to be channels of revelation, but of God making them such. In other words, their character was the product, not the source, of their place in the divine structure of redemption-revelation. Our religiously man-centered age tends to think of character rather than of redemption, and of ethics rather than theology.

The first incident recorded in chapter 26 is a famine in the land of Canaan. This was about a century since the famine in Abraham's time (12:10). Isaac went to Gerar, in the Philistine country along the southwest coast of Palestine. The king of the Philistines is called Abimelech. It is uncertain whether this is a personal name, or a title of all Philistine kings, like "Pharaoh" in Egypt and "Caesar" in Rome. In any case, the Abimelech of chapter 26 was probably not the same individual as the one in chapter 20.

While Isaac is living at Gerar, the Lord appears to him and warns him not to enter Egypt. It is possible that Isaac was planning to go to Egypt, as Abraham had done. But God forbids this, and the word to Isaac is: "dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of." This means that Isaac is to dwell wherever God may direct him to from time to time. He is to sojourn in the land of Canaan, and God will be with him, and will bless him.

Next, the divine promises to Abraham are renewed to Isaac. The oath sworn by God to Abraham shall certainly be performed. The promises are three in number: (1) the inheritance of the land; (2) numerous posterity; (3) blessings to come to all the nations of the earth through Isaac's seed. The statement of the promises is followed by the statement: "Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." This is a strong emphasis on Abraham's faithful obedience to God. Yet the basis of the promises is not man's faithfulness but Jehovah's oath, as seen by the last clause of verse 3; the basis of the promises is not human works but divine grace. "Moses does not mean that Abraham's obedience was the reason why the promise of God was confirmed and ratified to him; but from what has been said before, (chap. 22:18), where we have a similar expression, we learn, that what God freely bestows upon the faithful is sometimes, beyond their desert, ascribed to themselves; that they, knowing their intention to be approved by the Lord, may the more ardently addict and devote themselves entirely to his service: so he now commends the obedience of Abraham, in order that Isaac may be stimulated to an imitation of his example" (Calvin).

As Isaac continues to dwell at Gerar, he repeats Abraham's sin of untruthfulness, telling the men of Gerar that his wife is his sister. It is strange that Isaac had not learned from the history of his father the wrongness and folly of such conduct; but, as Leupold comments, sin is never logical. The liberal critics, of course, allege that this incident is just another version of the "legend" about Abraham in chapter 20. But this is shown to be untrue by the clear differences between the two accounts. In chapter 20 there was no famine; in chap. 26 there is one. In chap. 20 Sarah was actually taken, but in chap. 26 Rebekah is not taken by the Philistines. In chapter 20 God intervened to solve the problem, but in chap. 26 the discovery is accidentally made by Abimelech that Rebekah is Isaac's wife not his sister. Moreover, in chap. 20 Abraham is given a lavish gift, but in chap. 26 there is no mention of such a transaction. Clearly, then, the two accounts, though they have their main theme in common, differ greatly in circumstances and details. Certainly there is no reason for identifying the two or regarding either of them as a mere "legend" as the critics tend to do. The critics fail to realize that history repeats itself; they reason as if the same kind of sin can be committed only once in a given family line.

"And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife" (26:8). The word "sporting" Leupold translates as "caressing." Obviously this was not the way a man would treat his sister; therefore, the king concludes, she must be his wife. Isaac is summoned and charged with untruthfulness. It is certainly a shame to the covenant people of God when the people of the world can justly charge them with being unethical. Isaac must have been terribly ashamed. Having no real excuse, all he can say is that he feared death on account of Rebekah being his wife.

Isaac is duly rebuked by Abimelech, who possibly remembers hearing about the incident concerning Abraham (chap. 20). Thereupon Abimelech issues strict orders to his people that neither Isaac nor Rebekah is to be molested, on penalty of death (26:11). In this history we can see not only the shameful lapse of Isaac into sin, but also the common grace of God at work among the Philistines. Even where salvation is not found, God's common grace operates restraining sin and promoting civic righteousness. Abimelech was not, like Isaac, heir to redemptive promises of God; but he is used by God to restrain human sinfulness and maintain law, order and justice in human society.

"Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundred fold: and the Lord blessed him" (26:12). Isaac is the first of the patriarchs to engage in any form of agriculture, so far as is shown by the record. There is no record of Abraham planting seed or harvesting crops. This, therefore, is at least one element of originality in the life of Isaac. Isaac stands on the borderline between nomadic life and settled life. The bountiful harvest reaped was due, we are informed, to the blessing of the Lord.

"And the man waxed great, and went forward, and

grew till he became very great: for he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him" (26:13,14). We know that Abraham was a rich man (13:2), but evidently Isaac's material wealth far surpassed that of his father. We may note in passing that the Bible never represents material wealth as an evil in itself. It is not sinful to possess wealth that has been honestly gained. What is sinful is rather (a) acquisition of wealth by dishonest means, and (b) godless and selfish use of wealth.

The possession of wealth, however, may create problems, and in Isaac's case it created a problem in that the Philistines came to envy his great prosperity. This envious attitude on the part of the Philistines, moreover, led to lawless action on their part: they filled in the wells which the servants of Abraham had dug. In a country where water supply is so critically important, this was a very provocative act. Moreover, this was an act motivated by pure spite. To cut off Isaac's water supply would certainly not benefit the Philistines in any way. If the Philistines had merely claimed the wells as their own and refused Isaac's servants access to them, their action, though still lawless, could be regarded as motivated by need for water. But once the wells were filled in with earth they would be of use to no one — neither to Isaac nor to the Philistines.

Finally the Philistines add insult to injury and tell Isaac "Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we" (26:16). As Leupold remarks, this command was a combination of an ungracious attitude with flattery. Isaac is a man who seeks peace and pursues it. He therefore peaceably withdraws from the immediate locality and moves his establishment farther up the valley (southeast of Gerar). If the statement of the Philistines was true, that Isaac was much more powerful than they, he could have forced the issue and insisted on his rights. He prefers instead, to avoid strife by not insisting upon his lawful rights.

In the new location, Isaac patiently undertakes the re-digging of some of the old wells originally dug by Abraham, which the Philistines had filled in with earth. These wells are presumably not the same ones as those nearer Gerar, which were mentioned in verse 15. The narrative seems to imply that Isaac abandoned some of the old wells, moved to a new location, and then proceeded to re-dig other old wells to ensure a water supply. We should realize that Isaac's large flocks and herds would range over a large tract of country and a great many wells were probably involved. Isaac re-names the re-opened wells, using the original names given to them by Abraham, thus establishing his rightful claim to them.

The new digging operations occasioned further trouble with the Philistines, however. Digging in the valley, Isaac's servants find a well of springing water, that is, running water. Obviously this new well belonged to Isaac, as his servants had dug it. Yet the Philistines claim it as theirs. So the well was named Esek, which means contention.

Again Isaac shows his great-hearted forbearance by abandoning the new (and valuable) well rather than

let it be an occasion of strife. Another location is decided on; another well is dug; and again the Philistines claim it. Did they think Isaac was soft, or did they think he was really afraid of them? The arrogant and aggressive never understand the true motive of those who love peace and are willing to sacrifice for it. They regard the man of forbearance as an easy mark, to be further imposed upon. Isaac calls the new well Sitnah (hostility), abandons it to the Philistines, and tries in another location.

"And he moved from thence" (26:22a). This presumably means that Isaac moved his entire establishment to a more distant location — a matter involving a good deal of work and trouble. Another well is dug, "and for that they strove not." The reason for this absence of strife is not stated. Perhaps it was the mere distance from Gerar; perhaps the Philistines were finally shamed into a measure of human decency. Isaac calls this last well Rehoboth, which means "Sufficient room." He states: "Now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" (26:22b). The statement about fruitfulness probably refers to numerical increase of the family (note verse 4).

#### Questions:

1. How may the character of Isaac as portrayed in Genesis be described?
2. How can we explain the fact that Isaac appears as a rather passive character, lacking in originality?
3. How are the successive stages or periods of God's historical work of redemption illustrated by the history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?
4. Which is more important in the history of the patriarchs, their character or their function in the divine plan? Why?
5. How long after the famine of Abraham's day was the famine in Isaac's day?
6. Why did Isaac not enter Egypt in the time of famine?
7. What divine promises are renewed to Isaac?
8. What is the basis or ground of these promises?
9. Why is Abraham's obedience strongly stressed by the Lord immediately after giving the promises to Isaac?
10. What view do liberal critics take of the incident of Isaac representing Rebekah as his sister?
11. Why was this incident particularly shameful on Isaac's part?
12. How is God's common grace shown in this account?
13. What new activity is ascribed to Isaac in 26:12?

14. What was the rate of increase obtained by Isaac?
15. To what is this productivity attributed by the record?
16. What was the economic status of Isaac at this time?
17. What is the Bible's attitude toward the possession of wealth?
18. What problem arose from Isaac's great wealth?
19. What lawless action was perpetrated by the Philistines?

20. What motive led the Philistines to act as they did?
21. How did the Philistines add insult to injury?
22. Why did Isaac not insist upon his legal rights?
23. How did Isaac notify the public of his lawful claim to the newly re-dug wells?
24. What is the meaning of the words Esek, Sitnah and Rehoboth?
25. What may have been the reason or reasons why the Philistines did not strive for the possession of the last well?

## LESSON 57

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

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

Next, Isaac went up to Beersheba. This place, which formed the traditional southern limit of Palestine, is said to be actually of lower altitude than Gerar. It seems that "the general expression for approaching any part of Palestine from the southwest is to 'go up' " (Leupold).

"And the Lord appeared unto him the same night" (26:24a). This is the second and last time that the Lord is said to have appeared to Isaac (the first time was in 26:2). Just what the mode of this appearance was, we are not informed. We may be sure that a very deep impression was produced upon Isaac.

The covenant relationship is confirmed: "I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake" (26:24). We should note here the divine initiative and the unconditional character of this covenant promise. It is not an agreement between God and Isaac, by which God will do certain things if Isaac does certain things; rather, it is an absolute, unconditional statement of fact ("I am the God of Abraham thy father . . . I am with thee") and of promise ("I will bless thee, and multiply thy seed"). This is to be done "for my servant Abraham's sake" that is, because of God's gracious promise and oath to Abraham. The Biblical idea of a covenant between God and man is often obscured at the present day by speaking of this relationship as an "agreement" or a "compact" without at the same time bringing out clearly that the initiative is with God, all the power is of God, and all the terms are specified by God. Man is the recipient of the covenant relationship; God and man are never regarded as equals or negotiating parties. It is particularly important in our day to emphasize the sovereignty of God in the covenant relationship, because the overwhelming tendency of the day is to emphasize man — his decisions, activities, powers — rather than God.

Isaac responds to God's appearing to him, by building an altar at the place, and solemnly worshipping the Lord there ("called upon the name of the Lord") (26:25). The offering of sacrifice on the altar is not specifically mentioned, but is implied. An altar had no other use than to offer sacrifices on it. The modern metaphorical use of the term "altar", as for example in such expressions as "the family altar" (meaning the practice of family worship in the home) is unknown in the Bible. An altar in Scripture is a literal object on which literal sacrifices were offered. Only in the New Testament Epistles (Hebrews 13:10) is the concept of "an altar" spiritualized to refer to the benefits purchased by Christ's death on the cross. Something can be said for a return to the old term "family worship" in place of the more recently popular expression "family altar."

Isaac shows his devotion to the Lord by pitching his tent at or near the spot where the Lord appeared to him. Again his servants dig a well, this one being near the altar and Isaac's tent.

The next development is the establishment of a covenant between Isaac and the Philistines. The initiative in this was taken by Abimelech and his officers (26:26). It is possible that **Phicol** was a standard Philistine title for the commander of the army. Isaac seems surprised that they approach him, and remarks that their action is inconsistent. They hate him, and have driven him away; yet they come seeking to establish a pact of friendship with him. It is quite understandable that Isaac should rebuke them in this manner. They well deserved it after the way they had treated Isaac.

The Philistine leaders then state their reason, which is that it is obvious that Isaac and his establishment are being specially blessed by the Lord. This being the case, they consider it advisable to be on good terms with him. Accordingly, they propose a pact in the form of a covenant ratified with an oath. Isaac is asked to pledge himself to do the Philistines no hurt. They add in support of this plea, "as we have done thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace." In view of the high-handed action of the Philistines in the disputes over the

wells, this is a remarkable claim, to say the least. Leupold suggests that Abimelech and Phicol may have been indeed innocent of the matter about the wells. This, however, cannot excuse them, for the covenant which is sought is not to be between Isaac and these men as individuals, but between him representing his clan and them representing their nation. In this self-righteous claim of the Philistine leaders we have a specimen of the easy-going falsification of facts to which diplomatic negotiators are peculiarly liable. Someone has remarked that an ambassador is a man sent abroad to tell lies for his country. While this is of course an exaggeration, yet diplomatic negotiations have often been characterized by distortion and suppression of the truth.

Isaac no doubt realizes that the claim of Abimelech and Phicol ("we have done unto thee nothing but good") cannot be entirely sincere. However, argument over the matter would be useless, so the peace-loving Isaac does not dispute their claim, but agrees to their request for a covenant.

"And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. And they rose up betimes in the morning, and swore one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace" (26:30,31). According to the usual custom of the day in such matters, Isaac prepares a feast for his guests. Early the following morning the oaths are sworn by the two parties, after which Isaac lets them depart from him in peace. We see herein Isaac's readiness to do all in his power for the sake of peace. After the way the Philistines had treated him, he might have refused to have any dealings with them. But instead of this, he overlooks past wrongs and seeks a stable peace for the future.

It is worthy of note that the Philistines believe that Isaac will regard an oath as binding and will keep his oath. Otherwise it would not have been worth while seeking an oath-bound covenant with him. Their dislike of Isaac did not keep them from recognizing that his religion involved a high ethical standard.

The pact between Isaac and the Philistines is to be regarded as a civil bond only and did not involve any compromise on Isaac's part with the religion of the Philistines, nor any religious fellowship between the two parties. Whether the Philistine leaders swore by the name of Jehovah or by the name of their own gods is not stated. At all events there is no evidence that Isaac raised any questions about this point.

"And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beersheba unto this day" (26:32, 33). The happy outcome of the search for water, on the very same day that the covenant had been sworn between Isaac and the Philistines, was of course not the result of chance, but the product of divine providence. This was a special blessing from God to Isaac who had certainly gone "the second mile" in seeking a peaceable existence. Isaac called the new well "Shebah". This word means "seven" or "an oath." Beer-sheba properly means "well of seven." There was apparently some connection between

the idea of "seven" and the idea of "an oath." Note Gen. 21:30-32, where Abraham called the same place Beer-sheba ("well of the seven") because Abimelech had accepted seven ewe lambs from Abraham as a witness that Abraham had dug the well. Isaac in his time renamed the place, using the name given it by his father Abraham many years previously.

At this point Esau is mentioned. At the age of forty years he married two Hittite women, namely Judith the daughter of Beeri, and Basemath the daughter of Elon. Moses states that these Hittite wives of Esau "were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah" (26:34, 35). This double marriage with women of alien race and pagan religion indicates Esau's lack of concern for spiritual things. This is quite in keeping with Esau's attitude in despising his birthright. Esau has a godly background but he is interested in the things of the world, not in the things of God. While presumably claiming to be a believer in Jehovah, Esau is one of those people who do not intend to let their religion get in their way. He is a specimen of those who profess to serve God, but actually conform their lives to the world's standards.

What was it about Esau's Hittite wives that caused grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah? Among other things, Esau's polygamy may have grieved his parents. Apart from that, it was doubtless the corrupt pagan religious and moral standards of these women. There is no reason to suppose that these Hittite women became believers in Jehovah, nor that Esau was inclined to seek their conversion to the Lord. Mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers are forbidden in the Word of God. Apart from the fact that they are wrong because forbidden by God, such marriages are open to the most serious objection because of the well-known fact that the almost invariable result is that the believer is influenced by the standards of the unbeliever, rather than vice versa.

Chapter 27 opens with Isaac in advanced age, his eyesight failing — if indeed he was not already totally blind. The patriarch's age at this point is computed as 137 years (cf. 25:26; 31:38, 41:46, 47:9). At this same time Jacob was about 77 years old, and Esau of course was of the same age. The common idea that Jacob at the time of his going to Laban was a mere youth in his teens is therefore contrary to the facts.

Isaac evidently feels that his death is approaching. It is possible that he was influenced by the fact that his half-brother Ishmael had died at the age of 137 years (25:17). As a matter of fact, Isaac lived 43 more years, and died at the age of 180 years (35:28, 29). But the patriarch of course did not know that he still had 43 years to live. Some commentators have supposed that Isaac had been sick and that this led him to suppose that his death was near.

Believing that he would soon die (27:2) Isaac calls for his son Esau, who seems to have been his favorite. Esau is commanded to take his bow and arrows and shoot a deer, that he may prepare venison such as Isaac loved. Isaac will eat the venison and bless Esau before he dies.

This raises the problem how Isaac could propose to

give the blessing to Esau, knowing as he did that God had chosen Jacob (25:23). True, Isaac's action is overruled by God, and Jacob gets the blessing, but still we cannot understand how as godly a man as Isaac could disregard so clear a revelation of God's purpose as 25:23. Leupold's comment is perhaps the best explanation possible: "He that knows the duplicity and treachery of the human heart will not find it difficult to understand how a man will circumvent a word of God, no matter how clear it be, if his heart is really set on what is at variance with that word" (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, II, p. 736).

**Questions:**

1. What place was the traditional southern limit of Palestine?
2. What experience did Isaac have at this place?
3. What is meant by "the divine initiative of the covenant promise"?
4. What is meant by the "unconditional character" of the covenant promise?
5. How does the common use of the terms "agreement" and "compact" tend to obscure the Biblical idea of a covenant between God and man?
6. What was Isaac's response to God's appearing to him?
7. What is an altar?
8. What should be thought about the common use of the term "family altar" to mean the practice of family worship?
9. What inconsistency did the Philistine leaders manifest in approaching Isaac?
10. Why did the Philistines consider it advisable to be on good terms with Isaac?
11. What claim did the Philistine leaders make concerning their past treatment of Isaac?
12. Why can this claim not be regarded as entirely sincere?
13. What request did the Philistines make of Isaac?
14. What was Isaac's response to their request?
15. What does Isaac's response show concerning his character?
16. What was the nature of the bond between Isaac and the Philistines?
17. What happy event occurred the same day that Isaac made a covenant with Abimelech?
18. What is the lesson taught by this event?
19. What is the meaning of Shebah? Of Beer-sheba?
20. Whom did Esau marry at the age of forty years?
21. What was the effect of Esau's marriage on Isaac and Rebekah?
22. What does Esau's marriage show concerning his character and standards?
23. What objections can be urged against mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers?
24. How old was Isaac at the opening of Chapter 27?
25. How old was Jacob at this same time?
26. What was Isaac's physical condition at the time?
27. What may have led him to think he would die soon?
28. How can we explain Isaac's preferential treatment of Esau when he knew the divine revelation of 25:23?

**LESSON 58**

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

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

Isaac's request for venison reminds us that conditions have changed vastly in Palestine since the days of the Patriarchs. There is little or no forest in Palestine today except the rank jungle at the bottom of the Jordan Valley. In Patriarchal times, however, a large part of the country was still wooded. The watershed ridge and the western slope were heavily forested (Unger, Archaeology and the Old Testament, p. 113).

It seems to have been a custom of those times that pious men should pronounce a formal blessing upon their sons before their death. In the case of ordinary godly people, such blessing would be the expression of pious wishes, or perhaps we could regard them as equivalent to a prayer. But the blessing which Isaac proposed to pronounce upon his son involves more than this. It involves a supernatural factor and is really a prophecy. We may say that it is not merely a wish or a prayer for the blessing, but a conferring of the blessing. God would honor it and it would come true in due time. That the blessing was regarded as being supernaturally effective is proved by Isaac's statement in 27:33 ("I have blessed him. Yea, and he shall be blessed").

The question has been asked, Why did Isaac want to partake of specially prepared venison before pronouncing the patriarchal blessing? Some have suggested that he needed this to get bodily strength to pronounce a good blessing. Others have supposed that it was needed for a psychological reason, to get Isaac in the proper mood for the occasion. Leupold rejects both of these ideas, holding that the probable reason was that a festive meal would impart solemnity to the occasion.

The expression "that my soul may bless thee" requires some explanation. While the word "soul" is often used without any distinctive meaning, being simply the equivalent of "I" or "me," still in the present case more seems to be meant than merely "that I may bless thee." The use of the word "soul" here seems to imply that Isaac's inner or deepest personality would participate in imparting the blessing on his son.

Esau, as instructed, has gone off to the hills to hunt deer. Meantime, Rebekah becomes active. She was eavesdropping when Isaac gave his instructions to Esau. Immediately she forms a scheming plot to gain the blessing for Jacob, her favorite son, instead of Esau. The story of how Rebekah conspired with Jacob to deceive Isaac is too well known to require long discussion. Goat meat is to be prepared as imitation venison; Jacob is to be fitted out with goat-skin to make him resemble his hairy brother Esau; Jacob is to impersonate Esau and gain the blessing by deceiving his blind father as to his identity.

As to the cleverness of this scheme there can be no question. Its cleverness is shown by the fact that it worked. The ethics of Rebekah's clever plan are however open to serious question. Calvin in his Commentary on Genesis is very outspoken as to the wrongness of Rebekah's action: "And surely the stratagem of Rebekah was not without fault; for although she could not guide her husband by salutary counsel, yet it was not a legitimate method of acting, to circumvent him by such deceit. For, as a lie is in itself culpable, she sinned more grievously still in this, that she desired to sport in a sacred matter with such wiles. She knew that the decree by which Jacob had been elected and adopted was immutable; why then does she not patiently wait till God shall confirm it in fact, and shall show that what he had once pronounced from heaven is certain? Therefore, she darkens the celestial oracle by her lie, and abolishes, as far as she was able, the grace promised to her son." Calvin goes on to say that Rebekah's motive was a good one, even though her method was wrong. She was actuated by faith in the revealed promise of God.

Jacob, instructed by his mother, cooperates in her plan. The imitation venison is prepared; the rough goat skins are placed upon Jacob's smooth hands and neck. Thus prepared and coached by his mother, he enters his blind father's presence intent upon obtaining the patriarchal blessing by deceit.

When Rebekah's scheme was first proposed to her son Jacob, he raised an objection: "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him

as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing" (27:12). It should be noted here that Jacob is not objecting to the use of deceit on the ground that it is wrong, but because of the probability of getting caught. He does not shrink from sin, but only from the consequences of sin. This shows us how far short Jacob fell at this time from God's standard of moral uprightness. He is not worried about the sin of deceiving his father, but only about the difficulty of doing so successfully.

As for his mother Rebekah, her aim was clearly to obtain the covenant blessing for her son Jacob. That Jacob was destined to have this blessing was already a certainty, from the divine revelation and promise of 25:23. But Rebekah feels that she must do something to help make the promise come true, and she does not hesitate to use means which are sinful to accomplish her purpose. Rebekah in this situation is therefore doing evil that good may come. This was overruled by God and all worked out toward the accomplishment of the real divine plan. But certainly this history, with its use of unethical means, should serve to remind us that God's election is not based upon man's character and conduct but upon the sovereign grace of God. God did not choose these people because they were morally upright; on the contrary, they finally became upright because God had chosen them.

The fact that all this history was the working out of the purpose of God, of course in no way excuses the human sin that was involved. God makes the wrath of man to praise Him, it is true, but man is guilty nonetheless. Nor can unethical methods, such as the use of deceit, be excused because they are used with the intention of accomplishing a good purpose.

In addition to the goat skin disguise, Jacob was also dressed in Esau's clothes (27:15). These were "goodly garments", that is, they were Esau's better clothes, which he would wear on special occasions. Thus Rebekah overlooks nothing that might help to deceive her husband.

The imitation venison is ready at last, and Jacob, fully disguised, takes the meat, with bread, to his father Isaac. In the next few minutes Jacob tells one lie after another (verses 19, 20, 24). Particularly outrageous is Jacob's lie in answer to the question how he had killed a deer so quickly (verse 20): "Because the Lord thy God brought it to me." Leupold calls this "almost the most flagrant instance of abuse of the divine name recorded anywhere in the Scriptures." Jacob attributes to God's providence what in reality was only his own deceit.

Although Isaac is somewhat suspicious, especially because "the voice is Jacob's voice" (27:22), he finally decides that the weight of the evidence shows that it is Esau that he is dealing with. Accordingly, he eats the venison and drinks the wine which Jacob has brought, and then proceeds to pronounce the patriarchal blessing upon him.

"And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him. . ." (27:26,27). This is the first occurrence in the

Bible of the kiss as a token of love. Jacob does not hesitate to use this token of love as a part of his program of deceit. We recall the treachery of Joab (II Sam. 20:9,10) and the base act of Judas in betraying our Lord with a kiss (Luke 22:47,48).

**Questions:**

1. How much of Palestine was forested in patriarchal times?
2. How much of Palestine is forested at the present day?
3. What custom is reflected in Isaac's desire to bless his son?
4. How did the blessing pronounced by Isaac differ from the blessing any godly father might invoke upon his son?
5. What may have been Isaac's reason for wishing to partake of venison before blessing Esau?
6. What is implied by the use of the word "soul" in the expression "that my soul may bless thee"?
7. What was Rebekah's scheme for getting the patriarchal blessing for Jacob?
8. What can be said about the ethics of Rebekah's

scheme?

9. What was Calvin's view of Rebekah's actions?
10. What objection did Jacob raise to his mother's scheme?
11. What was Jacob seeking to avoid?
12. Why is it wrong to do evil that good may come?
13. What does this story, with its use of unethical means, show concerning God's election?
14. Why is not sin excusable on the ground that it accomplishes God's purpose in the end?
15. What disguise did Jacob use in addition to goat skin on his hands and neck?
16. How many lies did Jacob tell after entering his father's presence?
17. Why is Jacob's lie recorded in 27:20 particularly flagrant?
18. What was shameful in Jacob's kissing his father?
19. What parallels exist in the Bible to Jacob's misuse of the kiss?

**LESSON 59**

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

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

The blessing which Isaac pronounced upon Jacob is recorded in 27:27-29. The language used is poetical, as shown both by poetic Hebrew words and by the parallel structure. While Hebrew poetry is devoid of rhyme and does not have metre as we think of it, it is marked by parallelism, that is, by expressing the same thought over again in different words. Note the parallels which occur in these three verses:

"God give thee of the dew of heaven — and the fatness of the earth."

"Let people serve thee — and nations bow down to thee."

"Be lord over thy brethren — and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee."

"Cursed be every one that curseth thee — and blessed be he that blesseth thee."

Sometimes the second member of a parallelism expresses the same thought as the first member, sometimes a similar but slightly different thought, and sometimes a contrasting thought.

Isaac has caught the smell of fragrant herbs from Esau's clothes which Jacob is wearing. He uses this thought to suggest the blessings which will come to Jacob from the Lord: "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed" (27:27). Naturally the good smell of earth and fields calls to mind the kindness of God. The blessings mentioned by Isaac are partly natural, and partly social or political. Fertile soil, abundant harvests — these are the natural blessings. The social and political are expressed in verse 29. Jacob (whom Isaac supposes to be Esau) is to be lord over his brethren. Besides this, those who curse him shall be cursed, and those who bless him shall be blessed.

Isaac's blessing pronounced upon Jacob is remarkable for what it leaves out as well as for what it contains. To understand this we must keep in mind the fact that Isaac thinks he is blessing Esau. The missing element is the redemptive or Messianic promise. In Gen. 12:3 the Lord says to Abraham, "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: **and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.**" This last promise, of course, implies that the Saviour of the world shall be born from the seed of Abraham. Later it was revealed to Abraham that this Messianic or redemptive promise should be transmitted to the future through Isaac: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (21:12b). Still later, divine revelation granted to Rebekah had made it clear that the Messianic promise is to be transmitted through Jacob, not through Esau (Gen. 25:23; Mal. 1:2,3; Rom. 9:11-13). Isaac of course knew that the future

of God's redemptive program was tied to Jacob, not Esau. He naturally does not dare disregard the revelation of Gen. 25:23. If he had known that he was blessing Jacob, it would have been another matter. But as matters stood, Isaac thinks he is pronouncing a blessing upon Esau. Esau is his favorite and he wants to give him the best possible blessing, short of actually contradicting the revealed purpose of God. This may explain why the Messianic promise of 12:3b is not found at the close of 27:29. In 28:4, where Isaac knows that he is dealing with Jacob not Esau, he does not hesitate to invoke "the blessing of Abraham" upon Jacob. This "blessing of Abraham" is of course the special covenant blessing which included the Messianic promise.

It was a fine blessing that Jacob received, even though it did not include the "blessing of Abraham" and even though it was marred by the unethical manner in which Jacob and Rebekah had acted in connection with it. All of this would be overruled by God for the accomplishment of His redemptive purpose. And by the grace of God Jacob would eventually become honest and upright in his character and conduct. As Augustine said, the grace of God does not find men fit for salvation, but makes them so.

Isaac has barely finished blessing Jacob (whom he supposes to be Esau), and Jacob has barely withdrawn from his father's tent, when the real Esau appears (27:30), having prepared real venison for his father to enjoy. Isaac is naturally surprised, and when the new arrival emphatically asserts that he is Esau, "Isaac trembled very exceedingly" (27:33). If he had previously had some suspicions, they are now confirmed by a rude and sudden shock. In his intense emotional shock, he asks "Who?" But it could not have taken more than a moment for Isaac to realize that there could be only one answer to his question "Who?" Jacob is the only person in the world who could have impersonated Esau and obtained his father's blessing by trickery. So before the end of verse 33 it is clear that Isaac realizes that he has been deceived by Jacob. At the same time it would quickly dawn on his mind that God's purpose was operative in what had happened. He had known for a long time that the divine redemptive promise would be for Jacob not for Esau. Now Isaac realizes that he has blessed Jacob in spite of himself — his own plan of blessing Esau has only resulted in the plan of God being fulfilled. So he concludes, "Yea, and he shall be blessed" (27:33b).

Esau, realizing that Jacob has obtained the blessing by deceit, makes a desperate attempt to get the blessing after all. He cries with "a great and exceeding bitter cry" (27:34). In the New Testament we are told that Esau "found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:17). This verse is more accurately translated in the American Revised Version (1901) as follows: "For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for a change of mind in his father, though he sought it diligently with tears." The word "repentance" here means "change of mind" and the reference is to Isaac, not to Esau. Esau could not get Isaac to change his mind, though he implored his father with tears. The same New Testament passage declares

that Esau was a profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. This makes it clear that there was a necessary connection between the birthright and the blessing. When Esau sold the one, he lost his right to claim the other. His readiness to part with the birthright marks him as a profane person — a person who regards sacred things as common.

As a matter of fact, therefore, Esau has no ground to stand on in his weeping plea to his father. He voluntarily renounced the birthright, and with it the claim to the blessing, in exchange for a common meal. His air of injured innocence on discovering what Jacob has done is the frustration of a man whose own deeds have caught up with him, rather than a genuine sense of outrage at real injustice.

For the deceit and conspiracy had not all been practiced by Jacob and Rebekah. The fact is that Esau and Isaac have been having a sort of conspiracy of their own, with the intention of gaining the blessing for Esau in spite of the divine revelation of 25:23 and in spite of Esau's own sale of the birthright to Jacob. "Isaac and Esau, though not admitting that it was so, were conspiring to deflect to Esau a blessing both knew he had forfeited, in fact, was never destined to have" (Leupold). For it is almost incredible that Isaac could have been ignorant of the sale of the birthright.

In view of the facts, Esau really has no basis for his charge in verse 36: "Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing." This casual reference to the birthright, without explanation, indicates that Isaac already knew about it. But Esau's charge that Jacob "took away" the birthright was false, and is contrary to the inspired statements of Scripture on the matter. The truth was, Esau had voluntarily sold the birthright to Jacob. Scripture tells us that Esau despised his birthright (Gen. 25:34). Therefore, even though he may have regretted the sale of the birthright, he is wrong in charging Jacob with taking it away. And the "taking away" of the blessing was subordinate to the bargain about the birthright, as Hebrews 12 implies.

In Esau's attitude, therefore, we see the common tendency of sinful man to justify himself and blame others when things go wrong. Instead of admitting any guilt himself, Esau roundly accuses Jacob of wrongdoing. It is an old pattern, going clear back to that early day when Adam tried to place the blame for his disobedience to God on Eve.

#### Questions:

1. How is the poetical character of the blessing which Isaac pronounced on Jacob shown?
2. How does Hebrew poetry differ from English poetry?
3. What is meant by "parallelism" in Hebrew poetry?
4. What instances of parallelism can be seen in the blessing?

5. What did the odor of Esau's clothing, being worn by Jacob, call to Isaac's mind?

6. In the blessing pronounced upon Jacob, what two elements can be distinguished?

7. What element is conspicuously absent from the blessing which Isaac pronounced upon Jacob?

8. Why would Isaac hesitate to pronounce the Messianic or redemptive blessing upon Esau?

9. What was included in the "blessing of Abraham"?

10. What was Isaac's reaction when the real Esau came into his presence?

11. What did Isaac realize concerning God's working, when he found that he had blessed Jacob instead of Esau?

12. What was Esau's reaction to the discovery that Jacob had obtained the blessing before him?

13. What does the New Testament tell us about Esau's conduct on this occasion?

14. What is the correct translation of "found no place of repentance"?

15. What is meant by the statement that Esau was a profane person?

16. Why is it true that Esau had no ground to stand on in his tearful plea to his father?

17. What must be the true explanation of Esau's air of injured innocence?

18. Besides the conspiracy of Rebekah and Jacob, what conspiracy had been going on?

19. Why was Esau's charge that Jacob "took away" the birthright a false charge?

20. What common pattern of sinful man is exhibited by Esau on this occasion?

#### LESSON 60

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

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

Isaac's mind cannot be changed, just because the purpose of God cannot be changed. Isaac "trembled very exceedingly" when he suddenly realized how the mysterious working of God's providence had frustrated his own desires and accomplished God's desires.

Esau, however, does not drop the matter. He still seeks a blessing: "Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?" (27:36). While realizing that the special blessing he had wanted is gone and cannot be regained, he hopes to get at least something out of the situation. Isaac replies, enumerating the good things which have been conferred upon Jacob (27:37). With further weeping Esau implores his father to give him also a blessing. Leupold comments that here Esau's attitude seems to be superstitious; he is overvaluing the blessing, as though everything in life depended on it alone. Esau did not appreciate spiritual things, and as for worldly success, his life turned out to be quite successful without the blessing which Jacob had gained. Still, Esau is bitterly disappointed. No doubt during the hunting trip while out hunting deer he had felt quite optimistic about his prospects for gaining the paternal blessing and so outwitting Jacob after all. But now all his hopes have been frustrated, and he feels very sorry for himself.

Finally, Isaac pronounces a blessing on Esau also. But it is a second-rate blessing (27:39,40); in fact, it is more a prophecy than a blessing. We are to regard this, as in the case of the blessing on Jacob, as uttered under prophetic inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What God had planned and foreordained, He also announced beforehand through these prophetic utterances on the

part of the patriarch Isaac. The remarkable manner in which both utterances have been fulfilled down through the centuries of history is sufficient to show us that there is here something much deeper than a mere expression and some pious wishes of Isaac.

Esau's dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. The "of" which occurs twice in verse 39 may be translated "away from" (so American Revised Version margin). This transaction "away from" is probably correct and makes Isaac's utterance much easier to understand. The meaning would then be: "Behold, thy dwelling shall be away from the fatness of the earth, and away from the dew of heaven from above". That is, the homeland of Esau and his descendants is to be the desert, not the fertile land of Canaan. As a matter of fact it turned out that way. Esau's descendants were the Edomites who are represented today by some of the Arabs.

"And by thy sword shalt thou live" (27:40a) — this is a prophecy of a life of conflict and strife. And in spite of the power of Esau's sword, he shall serve his brother (the meaning, of course, is that Esau's descendants shall serve Jacob's descendants). This came to pass, for from the time of King David the land of Edom was subject to Israel. Eventually, about 126 B.C., the Jews completely conquered the Edomites (or Idumeans) and compelled them to receive circumcision. The notorious Herod family, some of whose members are prominent in the New Testament, were Edomites or Idumeans who had become Jews.

"And it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck" (27:40b). Here Esau is promised that eventually his descendants shall become free from the dominion of the descendants of Jacob. If we inquire when this was fulfilled, the year 63 B.C., when the Jews became subject

to Rome, may be mentioned. After that date the Jews were not truly independent but were under the power of Rome. In 70 A.D. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans and the Jewish state completely liquidated. In the 7th century after Christ the new religion of Mohammedanism or Islam appeared, and the Arab peoples increasingly dominated the life of the Near East. So it is clear that Esau has indeed thrown off Jacob's yoke.

"And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father had blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob" (27:41). In Esau's attitude toward his brother Jacob we have further evidence that he was indeed "a profane person." That Esau was displeased by the way things had turned out is understandable, but that he should give way to bitter hatred and plan to murder his brother shows that he was not actuated by fear of God. Thinking that Isaac's death cannot be very far in the future, Esau proposes to bide his time. He will not break the old father's heart by killing Jacob during Isaac's lifetime. But once Isaac is dead, Esau proposes to murder Jacob. Our Lord Jesus Christ said "he that hateth his brother is a murderer." Esau first hated his brother, then planned to murder him. As a matter of fact, this murderous intention was never carried out, but that does not lessen Esau's guilt for his hatred and evil intention.

Esau evidently did not keep this plan of murdering Jacob to himself, for someone reported Esau's words to Rebekah. Possibly Esau relieved his feelings somewhat by talking to others and telling what he intended to do to his deceitful, supplanting brother. Herein we see Esau's foolishness. If he had kept quiet he might have been able to kill Jacob, although of course it was many years before Isaac died. A man who is planning a murder should be more careful about talking about it in advance of the deed. But Esau talked, and Rebekah learned of his intentions, and she in turn informed Jacob: "Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee" (27:42). This is a grim kind of "comfort" but no doubt it is psychologically true to life. Rebekah warns Jacob, in order to frustrate Esau's design. She tells Jacob to flee to her brother Laban in Mesopotamia, and "tarry with him a few days" until Esau's murderous anger could cool off. Then Rebekah would send for Jacob to come home again.

From Jacob's point of view this was undoubtedly a wise plan. However the "few days" mentioned by Rebekah turned out to be twenty years or more. As a matter of fact, Jacob and his mother never saw each other again after his departure to Mesopotamia, so far as can be known from the record.

"Why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?" (27:45b). If Esau should succeed in killing Jacob, it would be highly probable that an "avenger of blood" would soon kill Esau, and thus Rebekah would lose both of her sons.

Rebekah's plan has been disclosed to Jacob, who apparently agreed to it without question. Now the matter must be presented to Isaac in such a way as to win his approval. We may assume that Isaac was somewhat

provoked by Jacob's recent conduct in obtaining the blessing by deceit. Even though Isaac well knew that this was really the plan of God, still he would probably feel some resentment against the son who had taken such a shameless advantage of his aged, blind father. Therefore Rebekah presents the matter to Isaac in as favorable a light as possible.

It would not do, of course, to tell Isaac the real reason why she wanted Jacob to leave home. So Rebekah very subtly mentions another reason entirely. She says: "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" (27:46). Rebekah's statement about the Hittite women no doubt reflects her bad impression of Esau's Hittite wives mentioned at the end of chapter 26. Even though Rebekah had good reason for her attitude toward the "daughters of Heth," still her use of this as a reason for sending Jacob to Mesopotamia, without telling her real reason to Isaac, involves an element of insincerity and lack of frankness. There is evidently something less than perfect sympathy and understanding between Isaac and Rebekah. She gives a reason which would have been a sufficient reason, but as a matter of fact it was not her real reason.

Did Isaac know that Esau was planning to kill Jacob? It is possible that he did, either at this time or later; however there is no evidence that he knew. If he had known, he could perhaps have done something to restrain Esau. At any rate, Isaac readily agrees to Rebekah's proposal, which indeed appeared very pious and praiseworthy. Accordingly, Jacob is summoned to his father's tent and there told to avoid marriage with the Canaanite women, but instead to journey to Padanaram to the house of his grandfather Bethuel, to obtain a wife from the daughters of Laban his mother's brother.

"And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people, and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham" (28:3,4). The term here translated "God Almighty" is *El Shaddai* (cf. 17:1; 35:11; 48:3; Ex. 6:3). This divine name stresses the sovereignty and power of God. Salvation and all blessings depend ultimately upon the fact that God is almighty. Without the almighty power of God there could be no Christianity. Note here how God is regarded as the source of all good and the one who takes the initiative and carries out the redemptive purpose. God is the Agent of redemption; man is only the recipient of redemption. So everything is ascribed to God. It would be an anachronism to call Isaac a Calvinist, yet Calvinism is precisely that system which ascribes all our salvation and good solely to the power and grace of God. The Reformed or Calvinistic theology is deeply rooted in the Biblical conception of God, which is so clearly exemplified by such passages as the one we are considering.

#### Questions:

1. What may have been the cause of Isaac's violent trembling?

2. What new plea does Esau make to his father?
3. What was Isaac's answer to his son's tearful plea?
4. Is it correct to say that Esau overvalued the blessing?
5. How can we explain Esau's sudden disappointment?
6. What is the character of the blessing which Isaac finally pronounces upon Esau?
7. How can we know that these blessings were uttered by prophetic inspiration and were not merely human wishes?
8. How should the statements of verse 39 about Esau's dwelling be translated?
9. How has the prophecy of verse 39 been historically fulfilled?
10. What is meant by the statement that Esau would live by his sword?
11. What is meant by the prediction that Esau would serve his brother?
12. How was this prediction fulfilled in later history?
13. How has the prediction of Esau breaking Jacob's yoke off his neck been historically fulfilled?
14. What was Esau's attitude toward Jacob when he found that Jacob had succeeded in obtaining the blessing?
15. What does Esau's attitude show concerning his real character?
16. Was Esau really a murderer?
17. How did Rebekah know what Esau was planning to do?
18. What course of action does Rebekah enjoin upon Jacob?
19. How did Rebekah gain Isaac's consent for Jacob's journey?
20. What may be said about the ethics of Rebekah's way of gaining Isaac's consent?
21. What is the Hebrew term for God which is translated as "God Almighty" in verse 3?
22. What does this divine name emphasize concerning God?
23. What is the relation of the idea of God represented by this name to the Biblical doctrine of salvation?

#### LESSON 61

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

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

The blessing now given to Jacob on the occasion of his departure to go to Mesopotamia is "the blessing of Abraham" (28:4). Therefore it includes the specifically Messianic element. Isaac is now no longer seeking to give the main blessing to Esau contrary to the plan of God. He now willingly and freely invokes the Messianic blessing on Jacob. This promise includes a numerous posterity and the possession of the land of Canaan. By implication it includes what God had promised in addition to Abraham, namely that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed — that is, that the redemption of the world from sin would finally come through one descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Thus blessed by his father Jacob leaves home for Padan-aram where his uncle Laban lived.

The next few verses tell about the further profaneness of Esau (28:6-9). The more we see of Esau the clearer it becomes that there is a radical spiritual difference between him and those who truly know the Lord. He is a sample of those with a covenant background and environment who turn to the ways of the world and commit sin without conscientious scruples.

Esau must have known, of course, that Jacob was being sent away to a foreign country to get a wife. He must have known, also, that his grandfather Abraham would not allow a marriage with a Canaanite woman to be arranged for Isaac. He doubtless also knew that Isaac had commanded Jacob not to marry a Canaanite woman (28:1), for it is recorded that he observed Jacob's obedience to this command of his father (verses 6, 7). Besides all this, Esau has become aware that "the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father" (verse 8), although he himself had already married two of them (26:34,35). We might suppose that Esau would have realized long before what was objectionable about the women of Canaan. But Esau is spiritually dull and stupid; he is spiritually obtuse. His covenant standing means nothing to him; he cannot see any reason why the people of God should be different from the world.

Finally realizing that his Hittite wives were not pleasing to his parents, Esau tries to remedy the situation, but not in a way that would do any real good. He takes a third wife, this time not from the Hittites, but from the stock of Ishmael. Had Esau been in the least spiritually alert and sensitive he would have realized that this was no real remedy for the wrongness of his marriage to Hittite women. Perhaps a woman of the Ishmaelite stock might be better than the Hittites or other Canaanites, but Esau's action was still not really in line with God's requirements. As Leupold points out, Esau allows the previous evil to continue "and merely adds

something that may be half right" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 770).

"And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran" (28:10). The last clause may be translated "and came to Haran." The verse exemplifies something that is common in the Old Testament, namely the use of a topic sentence which briefly states the whole matter, after which the details are given in following sentences.

"And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night" (28:11). The common notion that this was Jacob's first stopping place after leaving home is without foundation. This "certain place" was the locality originally called Luz, and later named Bethel. It was a good 70 miles or more from Beer-sheba. Obviously Jacob could not have travelled that far in a single day. The record does not state that he was travelling on foot, nor on the other hand does it mention his riding a donkey or other beast. Even if mounted, however, he could not cover the 70 mile distance in one day. Moreover, there was no need for urgent haste. Esau's plan was not to murder Jacob at once, but only after the death of Isaac. So we may conclude that the night at Bethel, where Jacob had his vision of the ladder, was perhaps his third or fourth night away from home.

Jacob has reached a "certain place" (which we later learn was called Luz, later called Bethel), and because the sun had set, he stops there all night. No doubt Jacob was accustomed to a shepherd's outdoor life and would not hesitate to sleep under the stars with a stone for a headrest. It is said that shepherds in Palestine and Syria often do the same at the present day.

During that night Jacob dreams a dream of a ladder set up on the earth, the top of which reaches heaven, and the angels of God are seen ascending and descending on it. This is the first known divine revelation granted to Jacob, but by no means the last. The ladder seen in the dream was alluded to by our Lord in his statement to Nathanael (John 1:51). In view of this statement of our Lord, we may say that the ladder seen by Jacob represents Christ, the Mediator between God and man, who bridges the gap between heaven and earth.

What Jacob saw in his dream was accompanied by what he heard. "And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. . ." (28:13). God reveals Himself to Jacob, not simply as God, but as Jehovah, the God of Abraham and Isaac — the God, therefore, of the gracious covenant promises.

These gracious promises are now repeated and confirmed to Jacob. What was implied in the "blessing of Abraham" invoked upon the departing Jacob by Isaac, is now specifically promised to Jacob by God Himself. As in the case of Abraham, three great promises are included: (1) the promise of inheritance of the land; (2) the promise of a very numerous posterity; and (3) the promise that in Jacob and his seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. We have already considered the meaning of these promises in a previous lesson on the history of Abraham.

To these great covenant promises there is now added another which specifically promises divine guidance and protection to Jacob: "And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (28:15).

We should note the sovereign, gracious, unconditional character of these promises made to Jacob. God takes the initiative and undertakes to bring all these things to pass. The promises are not made contingent upon Jacob's faithfulness; rather, they proceed from God's faithfulness. This divine initiative and monergism (it all starts with God and all the power is of God) is the very heart of what is known as Calvinism or the Reformed Faith. Calvin did not invent this theology; neither did Augustine or the Apostle Paul. It is deeply imbedded in the Scriptures, and in the Old Testament no less than in the New. Calvinism does not depend upon a special interpretation of a few selected texts; it is the very warp and woof of the Bible, it is woven into its very texture and built into its very structure.

It has been held by some commentators that Jacob must have repented of his misdeeds and wrong attitudes before this revelation of God could have been granted to him. If he had repented already, there is no mention of it in the passage. The only thing that could in anyway suggest it is the fact that he obeyed his father and mother in leaving home. But this does not necessarily imply any spiritual change on Jacob's part. To leave home was the sensible thing to do, in view of the fact that Esau was planning to kill him. Whether Jacob was at this point truly repentant and truly in a right subjective relationship to God, we cannot say. But at any rate we are safe in saying that his receiving a revelation from God does not imply that he was already repentant. It can with equal plausibility be argued that Jacob's repentance was the result of his having been granted this revelation.

#### Questions:

1. What was included in the blessing invoked on Jacob on the occasion of his departure from home?
2. What was Esau's reaction to Jacob's departure to obtain a wife in Mesopotamia?
3. What does this reveal concerning Esau's character?
4. From what people does Esau take his third wife?
5. How should Esau's third marriage be regarded, in the light of God's standards?
6. What literary device common in the Old Testament is exemplified by 28:10?
7. How may the last clause of verse 10 be translated?
8. How far was the "certain place" mentioned in verse 11 from Beer-sheba?

9. How long may this have been after Jacob's departure from home?

10. Why would it not be a great hardship for Jacob to sleep under the stars with a stone for a head-rest?

11. What did Jacob see in his dream?

12. What statement of Christ contains an allusion to Jacob's dream?

13. What may the ladder have symbolized?

14. How did God introduce Himself to Jacob?

15. What three great promises were confirmed to

Jacob?

16. What special additional promise was given to him?

17. What is meant by the divine initiative and monergism?

18. What is meant by saying that the promises made to Jacob were sovereign, gracious and unconditional?

19. What can be said about the question of whether Jacob had repented of his sins before he received this revelation from God?

## LESSON 62

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

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

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (28:16,17). Jacob's reaction to the divine revelation is a reverential awe. Jacob's statement, "the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not," must not be taken as implying that Jacob thought of God as limited to a particular locality. The Hebrew patriarchs knew more about God than modern critical scholars are willing to concede to them. Jacob must have had some knowledge of the spirituality and omnipresence of God. God is everywhere, He fills all things (this is sometimes called the cosmic presence of God). But God does not manifest Himself everywhere as the Lord, Jehovah, the covenant God of grace and redemption and revelation. Jacob's statement, "the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not" means "This is a place where God manifests Himself as Jehovah; I had not realized that before."

"How dreadful is this place!" Jacob is filled with awe and wonder. This sense of awe and wonder seems to be largely lacking from the popular religion of our own day. Many people — sometimes even ministers in their public prayers — seem overly familiar in their approaches to God. Whereas the Bible speaks constantly of the fear of God, people today prefer to speak of religion as "a personal relationship to God" or "accepting Christ" — modes of expression which tend to obscure the divine majesty, and to regard God and man as more or less equal partners in a project.

"This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (28:17b). It was "the house of God" and "the gate of heaven" because in that spot God had supernaturally revealed Himself as Jehovah, the God of redemption. And surely such a spot would be regarded as holy ground. For God might reveal Himself there again; or at any rate, it would be a suitable spot for worshipping God and offering sacrifices to Him.

In the morning, Jacob set up the stone that he had used for a head-rest as a marker to identify the spot. He poured oil on the top of it, as a sign that it was marked as sacred and special. Possibly the oil may be regarded as a sort of token sacrifice (cf. 35:14), though this is not certain.

Jacob named the place Bethel, which means "House of God" ("Beth" means "house" and "El" means "God"). Moses adds that the name of the city was originally Luz. Presumably Jacob had slept out in the open country. The city mentioned, if it had already been built, must have been located somewhere not far away; or it is possible that it was built by the Canaanites between the time of Jacob and the time of Moses, and called

Next we read of Jacob's vow. This is part of his response to the divine revelation with its gracious promises. Since God has promised him safety, protection and everything needful, so that he is assured of returning home to his father's house in peace, Jacob confesses "then shall the Lord be my God." Spurgeon once preached a remarkable sermon upon the brief phrase "My God" which occurs many times in the Scriptures. To possess God as "my God" in the true sense is to have the sum total of all good — forgiveness, salvation, eternal life, all are included in this covenant relationship to the living God. God has granted gracious promises to Jacob. Jacob responds by declaring that Jehovah shall be his God.

This confession of Jehovah as "his God" will be outwardly manifested in two ways. First, the stone which has been set up shall remain as a marker of a spot dedicated to the worship of Jehovah; and secondly, of all that God gives Jacob, he will surely give the tenth part back to God.

The "if" in verse 20 should be understood in the sense of "since" or "because" — "inasmuch as". Jacob is not bargaining with God and trying to obtain blessings on a commercial basis. The blessings have already been promised him upon an absolutely unconditional and gracious basis, which Jacob doubtless understood. In verses 20-22 Jacob is not bargaining with God; he is

responding to God's gracious promises. God will take care of Jacob; therefore the Lord shall be Jacob's God and this will not be a mere profession, formal and empty, but it is to be manifested in Jacob's daily life.

This is the second reference to the tithe in the Bible, the first being in the history of Abraham (14:20). Nothing is said as to the disposition of Jacob's tithes. Possibly they were to be used to maintain Bethel as a sacred place unto the Lord. Obviously in that day when religion was constituted upon a patriarchal basis and there was neither temple nor tabernacle, priesthood nor ministry, home missions nor foreign missions, Jacob's tithes could not be expended for objects similar to those for which the tithes of God's people are expended today. This is one of the matters concerning which the Bible does not satisfy our curiosity. It tells us what we need to know, not all that we would like to know.

We have now come to chapter 29, which narrates Jacob's arrival at the home of his uncle Laban. "Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east" (29:1). This expression, "the land of the people of the east," as used here, evidently means the area between Palestine and Mesopotamia. Nothing further is said about Jacob's journey through "the land of the people of the east." In verse 2 he has already arrived at Mesopotamia where his kindred lived.

Two words in verse 2 — "behold" and "lo" — indicate that the fact stated in the verse is a remarkable one, namely that Jacob had reached the very locality where his kindred lived. Jacob has reached a well where flocks of sheep were regularly watered. "A great stone was upon the well's mouth." Discoveries in Bible lands indicate that such wells ordinarily were not springs of "living water" but rather supplies of stored-up water. The narrative explains that it was the custom to wait until all the flocks of the various shepherds were assembled, then open the well, water the sheep, and cover the well again. In verse 7 Jacob expresses surprise that they should be waiting there with sheep long before evening, thus losing time that could be spent in grazing, but he is told that the sheep cannot be watered until all have arrived. This apparently means that there was a common custom or agreement that the well was to be opened but once, for all the flocks together, and some shepherds would arrive early in the hope of being first to water their sheep; then they would have to wait there in idleness until the rest had arrived.

Jacob inquires of the shepherds as to whence they are and is told that they are of Haran. Asked whether they know Laban the son of Nahor, they reply that they do. It seems that Jacob and these shepherds spoke the same language, or at any rate that his language and theirs were close enough that they could understand each other without difficulty. Doubtless Jacob was surprised to learn that he had arrived at his exact destination. He inquires whether Laban is well, and is told that such is the case. In addition, Jacob is told that Rachel, Laban's daughter, is soon to arrive with a flock of sheep. Very likely Jacob may have wished that the shepherds would water their sheep and move on, while they on their part wanted to be present to witness the meeting of Jacob and Rachel.

Presently Rachel arrived with her father's sheep. Jacob first looks at Rachel, then at the sheep. Rachel, of course, was his first cousin, the daughter of his mother's brother. Jacob then by his own unaided strength removes the great stone from the top of the well, and waters Rachel's flock of sheep, no doubt to the surprise of the other shepherds who would be accustomed to move the stone by the united strength of two or three men.

First Jacob kisses Rachel, then tells her who he is. We might think it would have been more proper for him to disclose his identity first, and kiss her after that, when she knew he was her cousin. Rachel must have been rather surprised at being kissed by a total stranger. The record does not indicate whether this was "love at first sight" or only Jacob's joyous surprise at meeting one of his kindred. Jacob was evidently a man of powerful emotions, for having kissed his cousin, he "lifted up his voice, and wept" (29:11). After this, Jacob tells Rachel that he is "her father's brother", that is, her father's relative or kinsman, the son of Rebekah. Rachel in turn runs — apparently leaving the flock of sheep at the well — to tell the news to her father.

We have met Laban earlier in the book of Genesis. It was in chapter 24 where he as Rebekah's brother took a leading part in the negotiations for the marriage of Rebekah to Isaac. In the same chapter Laban's acquisitive nature was brought out, when having noted the valuable gold nose-ring and bracelets displayed by his sister, he said to Abraham's servant, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?" (24:31). As we shall soon see, Laban has not changed in character but continues true to form.

Laban runs to the well to meet Jacob, greets him according to custom, and brings him to the family home as a guest. Jacob then gives Laban a report of himself, including no doubt how he came to meet with Rachel, and perhaps also his reasons for leaving his home.

Laban treats Jacob as a welcome guest, saying "Surely thou art my bone and my flesh" (29:14), that is, a near relative who would have a special claim to hospitality. Jacob remains there as a guest in the household for one month.

Next Laban proposes a more permanent arrangement. He recognizes that Jacob will make a competent shepherd, and proposes that he, Laban, shall employ him at wages to be agreed upon. This proposal of Laban may have been in good faith, even though we know that Laban was a selfish and tricky person in his dealings with others.

The record states that Laban had two daughters, of which the elder was Leah and the younger Rachel. Leah means "wild cow," while Rachel means "ewe." Leah was "tender-eyed," Leupold in his commentary states that this does not imply any diseased condition nor even defective vision, but merely the lack of "that clear-cut brilliance and lustre that the Orientals love" (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, II, p. 793). Rachel, on the other hand, is described as "beautiful and well-favored," that is, beautiful in form and looks (Leupold). Jacob definitely prefers Rachel, and proposes to Laban that he serve him seven years for his younger daughter Rachel.

We should remember that when this proposal was made, Jacob had been living in Laban's household for a month already, therefore this was not exactly a sudden proposal of marriage.

Laban agrees to Jacob's offer, saying that he would rather have his daughter marry Jacob than some other man. The offer is therefore accepted and Jacob serves the seven years that he has promised in order to marry Rachel. "And they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her" (29:20). Jacob is looking forward to marriage with his beloved Rachel, quite unsuspecting of the mean trick his uncle Laban is planning to play on him.

**Questions:**

1. What was Jacob's reaction to the divine revelation that had been granted him?
2. What did Jacob mean by his statement, "The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not"?
3. What evidences are there that the sense of awe and wonder at the greatness of God is lacking in present-day popular religion?
4. What did Jacob mean by saying that the place where he had had his dream was the house of God and the gate of heaven?
5. How did Jacob mark the spot?
6. What may have been the meaning of pouring oil on the stone?
7. What is the meaning of the name "Bethel"?
8. What vow did Jacob make in response to God's promises?
9. How was Jacob's allegiance to God to be manifested in his daily life?

10. What may have been the use to which Jacob's tithes were put?

11. What is meant by "the land of the people of the east"?

12. What kind of well, probably, was the well which Jacob came to?

13. Why was Jacob surprised at the gathering of the shepherds at the well long before evening?

14. What explanation of this was given him by the shepherds?

15. What did Jacob do immediately after meeting Rachel?

16. What is strange about the circumstances of Jacob's kissing Rachel?

17. Where in the Book of Genesis have we already met Laban?

18. What trait of his character was revealed there?

19. How did Laban welcome Jacob, and what hospitality was given him?

20. What arrangement does Laban propose to Jacob?

21. What is the meaning of the names Leah and Rachel?

22. What, probably, is implied by the statement that Leah was tender-eyed?

23. What agreement was made between Laban and Jacob?

24. What fact indicates Jacob's love for Rachel?

**LESSON 63**

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

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

The seven years that Jacob promised to work for his marriage to Rachel have passed. The proper thing at this point would have been for Laban to take the initiative and arrange for the marriage feast. But the true character of Laban is suggested by the fact that he neglects to do so, thereby forcing Jacob to demand that Laban keep his agreement. "And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her" (29:21). This is a rather short and plain-spoken demand. It may be regarded as an indication that Jacob has already sized up Laban's character and realizes that he will not do the honorable thing without some pressure.

Upon Jacob's demand, Laban prepares a marriage feast. It is to be a community affair: "And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast" (29:22). Laban's tricky character here comes more fully to light. While it was probably customary to invite the public to a marriage feast, still, as Leupold points out, this fitted in exactly with what Laban was secretly plotting. When Jacob finally finds himself married to Leah by fraud, the fact that there were many guests present at the feast will make it difficult and embarrassing for him to reject Leah. Laban, of course, is deceitfully plotting to get his elder daughter Leah married off.

"And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her" (29:23). This was indeed a mean, dishonorable and shameful trick to play on a man. Jacob's mean deceiving of his aged father Isaac is

coming home to him now in personal experience. He is learning by bitter experience how it feels to be deceived by a near relative in a supremely important personal matter.

Some have wondered how Laban could deceive Jacob successfully. It has even been suggested that Jacob must have been drunk at the time, or that Laban had intentionally gotten him drunk. This supposition is quite unnecessary, and there is nothing in the narrative to support it. While it would indeed be quite impossible to palm off the wrong woman on a bridegroom at an American wedding of the present day, things were different in Mesopotamia three thousand and more years ago. Leupold in his commentary suggests several considerations which adequately explain how Laban could successfully deceive Jacob. For example, it was already dark when Leah was brought to Jacob. Probably there was no artificial illumination in the tent. Leah would be heavily veiled, according to the prevailing custom of the day. Very likely the two sisters differed only in facial appearance, not in size or height. Presumably, too, conversations would be whispered during that night, and the bride would naturally be reticent. Also betrothed persons did not associate closely prior to marriage as is customary today. These and other considerations that can be suggested seem quite sufficient to account for the possibility of Jacob having been successfully deceived by his uncle Laban.

The guilt of this shameful deceit rested primarily upon Laban, but part of the blame must be borne by Leah. Even allowing for the weight of parental authority in those days, Leah's connivance in her father's plan cannot be excused. It was a clear-cut issue of right and wrong. It is unquestionable that Leah must have realized this. The only right course would have been to refuse to be a party to such disgraceful deception. Leah could have refused when the matter was first proposed to her by her father. Or she could have revealed her true identity to Jacob as soon as she was brought to his tent. But she did not, and thereby she became guilty along with Laban of the sin that was committed. As to Leah's motives, the record gives us no information. She may have been secretly in love with Jacob; she may have been jealous of her younger sister; she may have regarded this as her last and only chance to get a husband.

Laban at the same time gives Leah Zilpah his maid for a maidservant. Leah is treated less generously than Rebekah had been, for Rebekah on the occasion of leaving home for marriage to Isaac had received both a nurse and a group of damsels (24:59,61). The stingy character of Laban becomes more and more evident.

The next morning, of course, Laban's outrageous deceit is discovered. We can only imagine the shock that this must have been to Jacob. After patiently working seven years for Rachel, the unwanted Leah has been palmed off on him by base trickery. The feelings of disillusionment, anger and disgust must have been mingled in Jacob's mind.

Jacob immediately takes Laban to task for his deceit. "What is this that thou hast done unto me? did I

not serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me" (29:25). Jacob thus charges Laban not only with deceit, but with breaking his agreement.

Laban's reply is apparently based on the notion that "a poor excuse is better than none." He lamely states that the common custom of the community requires that the elder daughter be married before the younger. This may, of course, have been true. If so, the time for Laban to mention it would have been at the time of making the original agreement, not after Jacob has served seven years for the younger daughter. On the other hand, Laban may have been lying or at any rate distorting the truth. It is possible that there was only a certain amount of public opinion in favor of the elder daughter marrying first, rather than a hard and fast custom that amounted practically to law. If Laban is not actually lying, he may be exaggerating a good deal in his statement to Jacob about the local customs.

Having blamed his deceitful conduct on the customs of the country, Laban next says to Jacob: "Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years" (29:27). This statement of Laban has sometimes been misunderstood, as if the statement "Fulfil her week" was a reference to the additional seven years of service necessary if Jacob was to marry Rachel. The idea of this interpretation is that the term "week" means a period of seven years. It is, however, highly improbable that this is the correct interpretation. Much more probable is the view that "her week" refers to the week-long festivities accompanying Jacob's marriage to Leah. That is, Laban is asking Jacob to keep up appearances as if everything were all right as to his marriage with Leah, through the week-long marriage feast.

It will be realized that if Laban has gotten Jacob into a tight spot, it is also true that Jacob has Laban in a tight spot. If Jacob now backs out of his marriage to Leah on the ground that he has been imposed upon by fraud, he will be a laughingstock of the entire community. On the other hand, if Jacob backs out of the marriage to Leah, Leah herself will be a laughingstock to the community and a permanent embarrassment to her father Laban. If Jacob refuses to keep her as his wife, certainly no one else will want to marry her. Therefore neither Jacob nor Laban is in a position to act freely as he may please. Both men are under considerable pressure of circumstances. Jacob is not in a position to insist upon his strict legal rights, because if he does he will appear as a fool to the community. Laban, on the other hand, cannot venture to press Jacob too hard, for fear that Jacob may repudiate Leah regardless of the consequences. Under these circumstances Laban makes a plea and a proposal which Jacob decides to accept.

Under the circumstances, Jacob's attitude toward Laban seems remarkably meek. It is possible that this is partly caused by Jacob's guilty conscience concerning the somewhat similar deceit which he had perpetrated upon his aged father Isaac. Perhaps Jacob sees the justice of God in the fact that he, the erstwhile deceiver, is now the victim of deceit. This may have led Jacob to expostulate only mildly to Laban concerning the latter's outrageous conduct.

Laban was probably somewhat surprised that Jacob did not become violently angry. Perhaps Laban, noting the rather meek and mild character of Jacob's reaction to the fraud, decides to be as reasonable as possible, and let Jacob have Rachel after all. However, the stingy meanness of Laban comes to light in this also. He proposes to give Rachel to Jacob, but only on condition that Jacob shall serve an additional seven years for Rachel. In view of the fact that Jacob has already served seven years for Rachel, according to agreement, and never did want Leah, and has been grievously tricked into marrying the unwanted Leah, it would seem that this latest proposal of Laban involved a remarkable amount of "cheek" or "nerve." One would think that the proper thing would have been for Laban to apologize humbly for his deceitful conduct, beg Jacob to keep Leah as a matter of grace, and immediately give him Rachel without demand for further service. But it is not in Laban to do anything out of sheer justice, let alone anything out of generosity. So, even though in a sense Jacob has him in a tight place, Laban proceeds to drive an additional hard bargain. Jacob can have Rachel, but to obtain her he must first go through the week's feast of Leah's marriage, and then he must agree to work seven more years for Rachel. Jacob, under the circumstances, agrees to this proposal.

The question has been raised as to whether Jacob married Rachel before or after the second seven years of service. It has sometimes been assumed that the marriage to Rachel did not take place until the second seven years of service had been actually rendered — in other words that Jacob really had to serve Laban for fourteen years before he could marry Rachel. The probability is that this view is incorrect, and that Rachel was given to Jacob immediately after the completion of the week's festivities of the marriage to Leah. This is Leupold's view of the matter. He states: "Then, not waiting till the second period of seven years' service was terminated, Laban at once gave Rachel to Jacob. Very likely, Laban sensed that Jacob would be adamant in insisting on his right, at least on this one point, and so Laban conceded what could not be avoided" (Exposition of Genesis, II, p. 799).

An ethical question may be raised as to the moral rightness of Jacob continuing to keep Leah as his wife, and also as to the moral rightness of Jacob being a polygamist. In law a marriage brought about by fraud is not valid and can be annulled by a court order. Jacob had been tricked into marrying Leah by fraud. He could have rejected her as soon as the fraud was discovered without guilt. Originally the marriage between Jacob and Leah was not a true marriage because it was not based upon free consent between the parties. Later, however, it seems clear that real love, and therefore consent, came to exist between Jacob and Leah. As to the moral rightness of a polygamous marriage, it must be pronounced wrong in the sense of being out of accord with the original institution of marriage as ordained by God. However, polygamy was an evil which existed as a matter of fact in the Old Testament period, and while not sanctioned or condoned by God, it was temporarily tolerated until in the course of time it would be eliminated by the greater religious enlightenment and progress of the people of Israel. It is with this con-

sideration in view that the conduct of Jacob should be appraised.

#### Questions:

1. How was the stingy and base character of Laban evidenced at the end of Jacob's seven years of service?
2. What action was Jacob forced to take to obtain his rights?
3. What preparation did Laban make for the marriage feast?
4. Why may Laban have wanted to have a large number of guests?
5. What event in Jacob's earlier life is similar to Laban's treatment of him?
6. How can we explain Laban's success in deceiving Jacob?
7. Why can Leah not be excused for her share in the deceit?
8. What may possibly have been Leah's motives?
9. What feelings must Jacob have experienced when he discovered how his uncle had deceived him?
10. What accusations did Jacob make against Laban?
11. What reply did Laban make to Jacob's charges?
12. How can it be shown that Laban's reply was insincere?
13. How has Laban's request to Jacob, "Fulfil her week," often been misunderstood?
14. What is probably the true meaning of Laban's request to Jacob to "Fulfil her week"?
15. What embarrassing situation has Laban gotten Jacob into?
16. Why was Laban not in a position to act with complete freedom?
17. What may be the reason for Jacob's meekness in dealing with Laban?
18. How does the mean, stingy character of Laban come to light in his next proposal?
19. What would have been the proper thing for Laban to do under the circumstances?
20. Why did Laban probably give Rachel to Jacob at the beginning rather than the end of the second seven years of service?

21. What can be said about the moral rightness of Jacob's continuing the marriage to Leah?

22. What is the status of polygamy in the Old Testament?

#### LESSON 64

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

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

"And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week; and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also" (29:28). Jacob thus agrees to Laban's rather hard bargain, it being the best he can do under the circumstances. The week of festivities connected with Leah's marriage being completed, Jacob thereupon marries Rachel in addition. The seven years of added service presumably start from this point.

The next item in the record is the information that Laban gave his handmaid Bilhah to Rachel to be her maidservant. The name of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, means "dropping" or "a drop"; the name of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, means perhaps "bashfulness" (Davis Bible Dictionary) or "terror" (Leupold).

From this point we have an account of the increase of Jacob's family and also of the remarkable increase of his material wealth. This is the fulfilment of the Lord's promise to Jacob to be with him and to bless him. The birth of Leah's sons Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah is first recorded (29:31-35). This evidently occupied a period of several years, during all of which time Rachel remained childless.

Naturally Rachel was grieved and disappointed by this state of affairs, and she "envied her sister" (30:1). Rachel says to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." Rachel's jealousy of Leah, and her impatient demand that she too become a mother, are understandable, but not excusable, for they involve an element of distrust of the wisdom and providence of God. The record is calculated to impress upon our minds the truth that the fulfilment of the redemptive promise depends upon the sovereignty of God, not upon human plans or desires. As a matter of fact, the Saviour of the world was to be descended from Leah, not from Rachel. And in the period of the kingdom, it was the tribe of Judah, descended from Leah, that proved comparatively faithful to God, while the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, descended from Rachel, became notoriously apostate. We must pronounce Rachel's attitude sinful. Later in the history we have an account of conduct of Rachel which was not very ethical, to say the least (31:30-35).

"And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel; and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?" (30:2). Here we see that Jacob has a truer religious faith than Rachel. Jacob believes in the Providence of God which controls what comes to pass. He is angry because Rachel looks at the matter as if it were a merely human problem and does not see the hand of God in the situation. Jacob has a practical, not merely theoretical, faith in the sovereignty of God.

Rachel next proposes an expedient similar to the union of Abraham and Hagar. That Jacob agreed to this doubtful expedient shows that his own faith, though better than that of Rachel, was really weak and inadequate. Instead of repeating the method used in the case of Abraham and Hagar, Jacob should have remembered the attitude and conduct of his own father Isaac under similar circumstances: "Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived" (25:21). Instead of yielding to Rachel's improper proposal, Jacob should have tried prayer. It is clear that Jacob is still spiritually immature, though he has a true faith.

The course advocated by Rachel is actually adopted, and Jacob marries Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, with the understanding, of course, that the children that may be born shall be reckoned as Rachel's. Although it is evident that this was a common enough expedient in the ancient Near East, and involved no social stigma nor public disapproval, still from the standpoint of the divine institution and law of marriage, such practices cannot be justified. What Jacob did was doubtless "legal" in the sense that the customs and public opinion of the day sanctioned it, but it was not really right in the sight of God.

The union between Jacob and Bilhah results in the birth of two sons, Dan and Naphtali. It will be noted that Bilhah bears the sons, but Rachel rejoices over them and names them.

Next, Leah imitates the example set by Rachel, and gives her maidservant Zilpah to Jacob as his wife. From this union are born Gad and Asher. As in the case of Bilhah and Rachel, the maidservant bears the sons, but the mistress does the rejoicing and the naming of them.

"And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said unto Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes" (30:14). The story here shows some of the evils of polygamy, with its inevitable strifes and jealousies.

The reference to the wheat harvest shows that the clan of Laban practiced agriculture and were not merely shepherds and cattlemen. Reuben was perhaps four years old at this time, "just old enough to toddle into the field after the reapers" (Leupold, II, 811). He brings home some yellow berries, called "mandrakes" in the King James version. In those days it was commonly believed that this fruit had the power of stimulating sexual desire and of increasing fertility. The mention of the incident in the Bible does not imply that the Bible endorses this idea as true. It is evident, though, that Leah and Rachel held this notion; otherwise they would not have disputed so bitterly over the mandrakes. Reuben has given the mandrakes to his mother. Rachel is naturally still concerned about her own sterility, and

asks Leah for some — not all — of the mandrakes. The result is a bitter outburst on Leah's part, in which she very unfairly accuses Rachel of alienating her husband's affections. "Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband. . .?" (30:15). Rachel, wishing to preserve peace, yields to Leah. "The frank narrative of the Scriptures on this point makes us blush with shame at the indelicate bargaining of the sisters — one of the fruits of a bigamous connection" (Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, II, p. 812).

Next we are informed of the birth of Leah's sons Issachar and Zebulun. That Leah, in spite of her bitter rivalry of Rachel, also had some faith in God is shown by her statements in verses 18 and 20, in which she recognizes that it is by the gift of God that she has children, and the statement of verse 17, "And God hearkened unto Leah. . .". The statement that "God hearkened" implies that it was an answer to prayer.

After recording the birth of Zebulun, the record states that a daughter was born to Jacob and Leah, named Dinah. That Dinah was not Jacob's only daughter is known from 37:35 and 46:7,15, which mention Jacob's "daughters", in the plural. Yet Dinah is the only one of the daughters whose name we know. Obviously she is mentioned by name to prepare for the events recorded in chapter 34. The other daughters are left unnamed, presumably because there was nothing special to record about them in the later history.

Jacob now has ten sons, besides one daughter whose name is known. The ten sons include six born of Leah, two born of Zilpah and two born of Bilhah. Rachel is still without children of her own. "And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her" (30:22). A son is born to Jacob and Rachel, and is named Joseph. Rachel's other son, Benjamin, was not born until after the return of the family to the land of Canaan (35:16-20). We should note that Rachel gives the glory to God, showing an attitude somewhat changed from her apparently haughty attitude of earlier days. The statement of 30:24, "The Lord shall add to me another son" may be better translated, "May the Lord add to me another son." It is to be regarded as a prayer rather than a prophecy.

At this point in the narrative, Jacob makes his first proposal to Laban that they part company and Jacob return to his own country. "Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee" (30:25,26). This proposal was apparently made at the expiration of the fourteen years of service which Jacob had promised to render in return for the privilege of marrying Laban's daughters. It was not until the second seven years of service had been completed that Jacob could call the entire family his own in the strict sense. Laban is now asked to recognize that the previously existing obligation has been satisfied. Jacob claims to have rendered honest and faithful service through the whole period of fourteen years: "Thou knowest my service which I have done thee."

Laban, however, is quite unwilling to have Jacob

leave. Very respectfully does he entreat Jacob to remain. He says "I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake" (30:27). The clause, "I have learned by experience" is more accurately translated "I have consulted the omens." How Laban "consulted the omens" is not explained, but the statement indicates a heathenish superstition which was certainly incompatible with the faith of Jacob. Leupold states that Laban is practically marked as an idolater. He adds that Laban would not have needed to consult any omens to discover that God had blessed him for Jacob's sake; it was a clear fact that could easily be discerned.

Laban does not want Jacob to depart; therefore he says, "Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it" (30:28). While this sounds reasonable and even generous, the truth is that Laban is a selfish man, and he now makes what seems to be a generous offer only because this is the only way he can hope to retain Jacob's services.

Jacob replies, in verses 29, 30, recounting how faithfully he had served Laban, and reminding the latter that a time must come when he will provide for his own estate. Jacob is careful to give the credit to God: "the Lord hath blessed thee since my coming." Apparently Jacob's arrival was followed by a marked increase in Laban's material wealth. We should keep in mind, of course, that in those days, among such people, wealth consisted largely if not almost exclusively of livestock.

Jacob names his own terms. Realizing that Laban is a stingy man at heart, he says, "Thou shalt not give me any thing." Jacob does not want anything of value from Laban at the outset. No doubt he realizes that if Laban, in response to a demand, were to give him a certain number of sheep and goats immediately, he would soon change his mind and want them back, and would try to find ways to get them back. Instead, Jacob proposes a plan by which a proportion of the flocks shall be his. He will go at once through Laban's flocks, removing all those which are abnormally colored. These abnormally colored specimens are to be removed by Laban. They are to be Jacob's flock, but for the time being under the care of Laban. What would be left would be the normally colored specimens, namely white sheep and black goats. These, though belonging to Laban, would be under the care of Jacob. Any normally colored specimens (solid white sheep or solid black goats) which might be produced in the future from Jacob's flock (which would be under Laban's care) were to belong to Laban. On the other hand, any abnormally colored specimens (speckled, etc.) which might be produced from Laban's flock (which would be under Jacob's care) would rightfully belong to Jacob. The proposed arrangement implied re-sorting the flocks from time to time, perhaps twice a year, the speckled, etc., being placed under Laban's care (but belonging to Jacob), and the solid-colored being placed under Jacob's care (but belonging to Laban). Jacob claims only the abnormally colored fraction (present and future) as his hire (30:32). This is an act of faith on Jacob's part, which leaves the amount of his wages in the hand of God, for the proportion of abnormally colored specimens to be produced in the future would not be subject to human calculation or control. Laban agrees to Jacob's proposal, probably thinking it very advantageous to himself.

**Questions:**

1. Why did Jacob agree to Laban's hard bargain?
2. What may be the meaning of the names Zilpah and Bilhah?
3. What promise of God to Jacob began to be remarkably fulfilled at this point?
4. What sinful attitude was Rachel guilty of?
5. In what way was Rachel's religious faith defective?
6. In what respect did Jacob have a better faith than Rachel?
7. Why did Jacob become angry with Rachel?
8. What expedient did Rachel propose as a solution of her problem?
9. At what previous point in the history had a similar plan been adopted?
10. What fact about the life of his parents should Jacob have remembered when Rachel proposed her plan?
11. What should be said about the moral rightness of Jacob's act of marrying his wife's maidservant?
12. What sons were born to Jacob and Bilhah? Who named them?
13. What sons were born to Jacob and Zilpah?
14. How many children did Jacob have by this time?
15. What fact about the clan of Laban is indicated

by the mention of "wheat harvest"?

16. What were the "mandrakes" mentioned in 30:14?
17. What popular belief existed concerning mandrakes? Does the Bible endorse this belief as true?
18. What statement in the record indicates that Leah had faith in God?
19. What was the name of the daughter born to Jacob and Leah?
20. How do we know that Jacob had other daughters?
21. How many sons did Jacob have at this point of the story?
22. How many of these were sons of Leah? How many of Bilhah? How many of Zilpah?
23. What son was born to Jacob and Rachel?
24. What statement of Rachel indicates that she had faith in God?
25. How long had Jacob been working for Laban when he first proposed to leave his service and return home?
26. What is the correct translation of Laban's statement, "I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake"?
27. What change had taken place in the fortunes of Laban after Jacob's arrival?
28. What plan did Jacob propose for future payment of wages to him by Laban? How does this show Jacob's faith in God?

**LESSON 65****III. History of the Covenant People from Abraham to Joseph. 11:27 to 50:26, cont.****4. The history of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. 25:19 to 35:29, cont.**

The proposal was that Jacob go through Laban's flocks, separating the abnormally colored specimens from the rest. Laban has accepted Jacob's terms, but when it came to carrying the agreement out, Laban evidently did not fully trust Jacob to do it honestly. For in verses 34-36 Laban is the subject of the sentences, doing the actions mentioned. This means that Laban himself went through the flocks, separating the abnormally colored specimens, which he handed over to his sons to take care of. "His sons" must mean Laban's sons, not Jacob's sons. Laban with his own sons and the abnormally colored flocks next remove three days' journey from Jacob, who remains where he had been, tending the rest of Laban's flocks (the normally colored majority).

These last actions of Laban not only indicated distrust of Jacob, but were actually insulting. The meanness of Laban's character is more and more obvious. The narrative implies that Laban, if he had been in Jacob's place, would have tried to do something dishonest; consequently he assumes that Jacob will make such an attempt, and so he suspects him of it. Putting a space of three days' journey between the now separated abnormally colored flocks and the ones left under Jacob's care was a positive insult. Jacob instead of being treated as a partner in the enterprise is treated as if he were a paroled thief. Had it not been for Jacob's humble, patient faith in the Lord, he might have resented Laban's attitude so strongly that he would have left his service immediately.

Next we are told of the strange devices used by Jacob to influence the processes of genetics. This seems to be a step down on Jacob's part from the high level of faith which he had previously occupied. Perhaps his

awareness of Laban's suspicions led him to use these devices, taking matters into his own hands as it were, instead of leaving this issue simply in the hands of God.

Two questions arise in our minds as to the measures taken by Jacob (related in 30:37-42). In the first place, is it scientifically possible to influence the color of the offspring of animals by such methods? In the second place, was Jacob morally justified in doing what he did?

With regard to the first question, two things may be said. First, there seems to have been, in both ancient and modern times, a strong belief in the possibility of influencing the offspring by such methods. Leupold says: "The observations of the ancients, backed by experience of many moderns, seems to confirm the practicability of the device here described" (Exposition of Genesis, II, p. 824) The New Bible Commentary (Davidson, Stibbs and Kevan), says "A physiological principle is here employed by Jacob. This kind of device is adopted for obtaining certain colours of horses and dogs. White lambs, even now, are secured by surrounding the troughs with white objects" (p. 98). Though the writer of these notes hesitates to contradict two such excellent commentaries, he must register his dissent. The modern science of genetics knows nothing of any such influence of environment on the color of the offspring. Acquired characteristics cannot be inherited, and the color, etc., of the offspring is determined by the heredity-bearing factors known as genes which exist in the germ cells of the parents. Except for occasional changes known as "mutations" the color of the offspring is determined by the heredity transmitted by the parents, which combines according to Mendel's laws. The present writer does not believe that there is any scientific explanation for the results which Jacob is recorded as having obtained by the methods which he employed. We do not question the reality of the results, but attribute them entirely to the overruling providence of God, not at all to the effectiveness of white rods or other such objects placed where the flocks could see them.

As to the moral rightfulness of Jacob's actions, we are compelled to question this. When Jacob made his agreement with Laban, obviously the plain meaning of the terms agreed upon was that the abnormally colored specimens **born under normal circumstances** were to be Jacob's. Perhaps Laban's suspicious attitude and actions led Jacob to feel that he was justified in taking matters into his own hands and attempting to influence the normal processes of nature by his white rods, etc. We must reluctantly pronounce Jacob's action to be unrighteous, even though we have already said that only by the overruling providence of God could the method be effective.

On the other hand, it may be said that God in His sovereignty chose to bless Jacob's actions, in spite of their unethical character, in order to give the advantage, in this rather unequal contest, to the man who on the whole was righteous and pleasing to God. This does not justify Jacob in his actions but it does explain how God could bless him in spite of his ethically doubtful methods.

To sum the matter up, as time passes Jacob increases greatly in wealth. His flocks are large and vigorous. He is fast catching up with his uncle Laban in

wealth. "And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses" (30:43). Jacob has come a long way since the time, some twenty years earlier, when he had arrived alone at Laban's household.

Chapter 31 brings us to Jacob's escape from his uncle Laban, followed by the settlement of the dispute between the two men. Trouble began by a statement of Laban's sons reaching the ears of Jacob. Laban's sons were saying: "Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory" (31:1). The injustice and falsity of this charge are obvious. What Jacob had, he had obtained lawfully. Laban's sons speak as if Jacob were under an obligation to work for Laban without any compensation. When a man has earned something by discharging stipulated obligations, what he has earned belongs to him, not to the employer who has hired him. We once heard a minister criticized for leaving one denomination and joining another. The criticism was on the ground that since he had received a salary from the first denomination for several years, he really owed everything he had to that denomination and had no right to leave it to join another, for any reason whatever. This type of twisted thinking is not infrequently met with. If a minister earns his salary, it becomes his own and no longer belongs to the church which has paid it. Similarly, what Jacob possessed, he owned by reason of hard work accompanied by the blessing of God. Besides this, it is apparent that Laban himself was much richer after Jacob had been with him twenty years than he had been before that. But, as someone has wisely remarked, sin is never logical; and envy being a sin, we cannot expect it to be logical. So Laban's sons illogically and very unjustly say that Jacob has taken wealth that rightly belongs to their father.

As for Laban himself, he is a bit more cautious than his sons and does not come out in the open and accuse Jacob of anything. But he says by his looks and manner what he does not say with words. "And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before" (31:2). Laban had once appeared friendly, though we may question the depth and genuineness of his friendship with Jacob. But now he eyes Jacob with suspicious eyes. Jacob cannot help noticing this fact, and is concerned about it.

Then a revelation from the Lord comes to Jacob, commanding him to return to the land of Canaan and to his kindred, and promising that the Lord will be with him (31:3). Thus the promise made by God to Jacob years before at Bethel is renewed. For a man of Jacob's faith and obedience to God, this settles the matter. He determines to leave Laban.

Jacob calls his two wives Leah and Rachel out into the fields in order to talk with them. The reason for his calling them to the fields is not stated, but probably it was for the sake of privacy. In those days the only sure way of obtaining privacy for a secret conversation was to get out into the open fields where one could see a good distance around him in all directions and be sure that there were no eavesdroppers within earshot. We recall how David arranged to meet Jonathan in an open field in order to have a strictly confidential talk with him. Jacob

has to make sure of secrecy so he calls Leah and Rachel to meet him in the open. Note that Bilhah and Zilpah are not called, nor are any of the children.

Jacob tells Leah and Rachel that their father Laban is no longer favorable toward him, but he adds "the God of my father hath been with me" (31:5). This is followed by a recital of the double-dealing of Laban toward him. Jacob sums it up by saying: "Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me" (31:9). From these statements of Jacob we learn something new, namely that the original arrangement with Laban had repeatedly been changed on Laban's initiative, but all without favorable result for Laban. The statement "God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me" must not be interpreted so literally as to mean that Jacob now possessed all the flocks and Laban none at all. It only means that the relative increase of Jacob's flocks had been decidedly greater than that of Laban's.

Next Jacob tells Rachel and Leah of a dream he had had. He does not state when he had this dream. Some critics have tended to discount this dream, or attempt to explain it purely psychologically; they reason that Jacob's brooding over the matter induced the dream, and that God had nothing to do with it. But Jacob being a man of devout faith, we cannot take such a view of the matter. As truly as the dream of the ladder at Bethel, this dream must be regarded as a real revelation from God to Jacob.

In the dream, Jacob was watching the flocks during the breeding season. The dream concerned the breeding of the animals. It was intended, not to teach Jacob how to bargain effectively with Laban the next time, but rather to reassure Jacob and remind him that the whole matter was under the providential control of God. This, incidentally, accords well with our view that none of Jacob's own devices can sufficiently explain the increase of the abnormally colored specimens in the flocks, but that the only adequate explanation is the overruling providence of God.

In the dream, Jacob is told to watch the speckled, grizzled and ring-streaked rams. The Lord adds: "I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee from out this land, and return to the land of thy kindred" (31:12,13).

Rachel and Leah immediately and unquestioningly agree to accompany Jacob to the land of Canaan. They say: "Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money. For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do" (31:14-16).

In these words of Rachel and Leah — doubtless a condensed summary of what they actually said — there is betrayed more than a trace of bitterness toward their father Laban. Apparently Laban's stingy meanness did not please even his own daughters. The words of Rachel and Leah also indicate bitter resentment at the terms on which their father had arranged their marriage to

Jacob. Even in those days there was a better way of arranging for one's daughter's marriage, and they of course realized this. They resented the fact that Laban had "sold" them in exchange for seven years of work for each. Moreover, a generous and high-minded father would have used anything received from his prospective son-in-law to provide a dowry for his daughter, instead of selfishly "devouring our money" as Rachel and Leah accuse Laban of having done. The bitterness of years of grievance come to the surface at last in the words of Rachel and Leah. They must now choose between their father and their husband, and without hesitation they choose the latter.

#### Questions:

1. What proposal did Jacob make to Laban as to his wages?
2. What change did Laban make when it came to carrying out the terms?
3. Who is the speaker in verses 34-36?
4. Whose sons are meant by "his sons" at the end of verse 35?
5. What attitude of Laban toward Jacob was indicated by Laban's conduct?
6. Why did Jacob not become angry and leave Laban at once?
7. What should be thought of Jacob's attempt to influence the processes of genetics, so far as faith in God is concerned?
8. What should be thought of Jacob's attempted method of influencing the color of sheep and goats to be born, as to the scientific possibility of doing this successfully?
9. If we hold that it is scientifically impossible to influence the offspring by such devices as Jacob used, how can we account for the fact that the desired results were actually obtained?
10. What should be thought about the moral rightfulness of Jacob's methods?
11. If we say that Jacob's actions were unethical, how can we account for the fact that God blessed his actions?
12. To what extent had Jacob's wealth increased by the end of chapter 30?
13. What statement of Laban's sons reached the ears of Jacob?
14. Why was the charge of Laban's sons false and unjust?
15. Why can envy not be expected to be logical?
16. What new revelation of God came to Jacob at this point?

17. What did Jacob resolve to do?
18. Where did Jacob talk with Rachel and Leah? Why there?
19. What new information about Laban's dealings comes to light in the words of Jacob to Rachel and Leah?
20. Why can Jacob's dream not be regarded as merely psychological?
21. What did the dream indicate concerning Jacob's problems?
22. What was the reaction of Rachel and Leah to Jacob's proposal to go to the land of Canaan?
23. What bitterness against Laban is revealed by the words of Rachel and Leah?
24. What was wrong with the type of arrangements Laban had made for the marriage of his daughters?

(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 New Covenant and its Relation to the Old**

"The analysis of the covenant concept inevitably leads us to the living reality of the Old Testament religion because it deals with the problem of man standing before God."<sup>100</sup> As the promise of the New Covenant testifies there was a need for something more. However, as the writer to Hebrews assures us, the necessity does not arise from a fault in God's promise but "in them," that is, in Israel (Heb. 8:8). God has one objective from the beginning: the kingdom of God, a willing people (Ps. 110:3). They are a people elect, called, chosen, justified, sanctified by the death and resurrection of Christ and the ministry of the Spirit. The Old Covenant projects the accomplishment of this into the New.

The Old Covenant was, and still is, a 'schoolmaster' to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24-25). . . .

The New Covenant is designed to implement — to bring to fulfillment — the unfulfilled promises of the earlier covenants.<sup>101</sup>

The kingdom, purpose, revelation are thus one: and the later form of these things stands in relation to the former as the developed organism does to its embryo, or, to drop all illustrative language, as fulfillment does to promise.<sup>102</sup>

Although during the period of their walk with the Lord the disciples were "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken" (Luke 24:25), the Holy Spirit taught them all things (John 14:26). In the days after Pentecost they declare plainly their understanding that they are the continuation of the people of God who came into being when God called Abraham and took him from Ur to lead him into the possession of eternal life. They recognized that they were living in the days when the old chrysalis was being cast off and the life within was bursting forth in new and more magnificent form. They

sought to be true to the old and yet give full scope for the development of the new. They were experiencing the events that still baffle interpreters. They were acting within the "frame work" that made them the people of God. This was both internal power and external expression involving both the individual and the whole body.

What they recognized as the "frame work" was not a static pattern, a rigid structure, or a binding set of rules; but the extension of life to them from God through the Covenant. They were "the sons of the prophets and the covenant God gave to the fathers." They themselves were Jews to whom first God had sent His servant whom He had raised from the dead to bless them by turning them away from their wickedness, and then to the Gentiles to whom He "had given repentance unto life" (Acts 3:25-26; 11:18). Christ was the son of Abraham, the son of David whom God had raised to sit on his throne and send forth the Spirit to bring salvation to the ends of the earth, and that He might command all men everywhere to repent because the day of judgment has been already set.

God's covenant was not just a legal bond (Ezek. 20:37) that "witnessed against them" (Deut. 31:26). It was the instrument of their union and communion with God. God Himself called it "covenant of life" (Mal. 2:5). Outside the covenant the Gentiles were "without hope and without God" (Eph. 2:12), but now that Christ had removed what separated man from God — sin, as revealed in the law of commandments — both Jew and Gentile by faith in Him had become together "one new man," fellow citizens and householders of God, and were being built up together by the Spirit as a dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:13-22). "The covenanted community is the temple in which the Spirit dwells and works."<sup>103</sup>

### **Conclusions: New Covenant Community Life**

When the fulfillment had come in Christ, as the apostles and church at Jerusalem, Samaria, Syria and

Antioch realized it had, their task was to recognize what was merely temporary in what they had received from the past and let it fall as the fading petals of the blossom fall before the developing fruit. To do this they met as a covenant body to seek the mind and will of the Lord. This was not a meeting of minds, but a careful examination of "the words of the prophets" in relation to the present situation. Their submission to one another in the Lord was manifest in that the sharp difference at the beginning was resolved by a unanimous decision. "What seemed good to the Holy Spirit" was recorded and sent to the church for covenant action. The decrees can be described only as the Spirit's word, not "devising terms of agreement," but "solemn pledging of devotion to His service."<sup>104</sup> The people of God must be characterized by a clear-cut, open loyalty to Jesus Christ, as opposed to all that are no-gods and that which is of the world. Individual conduct must aim at glorifying God, strengthening covenant brethren, and the salvation of all men.

The church through union with Christ is characterized by "the mind of Christ," active for the interests of the brethren, and obedience to the Lord (Phil. 2:5-8). To Israel under the Old Covenant and to the church under the New, "the will of the Lord" was not received by subjective consideration, but by examination of the covenant revelation. "God spoke all these words. . . ." "These are the words. . . ." "Hear . . . the statutes and the ordinances. . . ." "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable . . . for training in righteousness. . . ." <sup>105</sup> The covenant concept bears witness most emphatically to an objective Word of God directing the lives of His people, and to His own immediate presence giving understanding and enabling response. The gift of the Holy Spirit does not liberate from the objective word of the covenants which God spoke and caused to be written, the Old and the New Testaments. He only enables man to receive and be shaped by it.<sup>106</sup> Community action in the church is not the result of "agreement," in the common understanding of the word; it is achieved by common submission to the revealed will of the Lord.

The apostle Paul is constantly urging to maturity, stability, solidarity in life and witness to the grace of Christ. Although this development must take place in the

individual it is centered primarily in the corporate body of Christ, for the exhortation is directed to the whole, often in the figures of temple, body, vine. It is no more possible for the individual to receive the full benefits of the covenant promises or realize fully the covenant goal apart from the covenant body under the New Covenant than it was under the Old. This fact is clearly set forth in the New Testament at many places.<sup>107</sup> It demands that the church today strengthen her inner life and her mission to the world by corporately applying the words of Scripture to herself as the Bride of Christ, and to the world in which she lives. Her loyalty as Bride and faithfulness as Witness will be demonstrated by the extent to which she does corporately seek the Lord and live in love to Him and to one another.

#### Notes

100 Quell, p. 111.

101 Roderick Campbell, *Israel and the New Covenant* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1954), p.222.

102 E. F. Kevan, "The Covenants and the Interpretation of the Old Testament," *Evangelical Quarterly*, XXVI, 21.

103 Campbell, p. 228.

104 Cf. n. 99, p. 90, *supra* and compare the reading of the book of the covenant (Ex. 24:7), the rehearsing of the commandments before the act of covenanting in the plains of Moab (summary, Deut. 30:11), and the preparation of a written covenant from the Law of Moses by Joshua (chap. 24), and Nehemiah (9:38) and Josiah's use of the book of the covenant (II Kings 23:23).

105 Ex. 20:1; Deut. 1:1; 5:1,5; II Tim. 3:16.

106 I Cor. 2:11-14.

107 John 15; I Cor. 3:16,17; 12; Eph. 4, espec. v. 13; Heb. 13:17; I Peter 2:5-6,9; etc.

The End

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

Prepared by Dr. James A. Hughes

(Continued from last issue)

### Chapter XVIII Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation

I. Although hypocrites, and other unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and with presumptions from their corrupt nature of being in God's favor and in the state of salvation (which hope shall come to nothing), yet those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus and love Him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may in this

life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace and may rejoice in the hope of the state of glory, which is from God (which hope shall never disappoint them).

II. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded in an uncertain hope, but a certain assurance of faith, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of

the graces answering to these promises, the witness of the Spirit of adoption testifying with our spirits that we are the children of God, which Spirit is the surety of our inheritance, by whom we were sealed until the day of redemption.

III. This certain assurance does not belong to the essence of faith to such an extent that a true believer may not wait a long time and be confronted with many difficulties before he is a partaker of it; yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him by God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, by a proper use of ordinary means, attain to the assurance of salvation. And therefore it is the duty of everyone to be very diligent about confirming his calling and election, that thereby his heart may grow in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience — the proper fruits of this assurance, so far

removed is this assurance from inclining men toward laxity.

IV. True believers may in various ways have the assurance of their salvation shaken, diminished and made intermittent, such as by negligence in preserving it; by falling into some special sin, which wounds the conscience and grieves the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation; and by God's withdrawing the light of His countenance and allowing even those who reverence Him to walk in darkness and to have no light — yet they are never utterly destitute of the seed of God and life of faith, of love for Christ and for the brethren, of sincerity of heart and consciousness of duty, from which, by the working of the Spirit, this assurance may in due time be revived, and by which, in the meantime, they are kept from utter despair.

(To be continued)

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## *Religious Terms Defined*

**DEISM.** The false system which holds that God created the universe and then left it to function automatically without providential control.

**DEITY OF CHRIST.** The truth that the historical person Jesus Christ, by reason of His divine nature, was and is the only true God, Creator of the universe, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (I John 5:20. John 1:1-3. Col. 2:9).

**DEMONISM, DEMON POSSESSION.** An activity of demons or evil spirits described in the New Testament, by which one or more of them gained control of a human personality and dominated it for Satanic purposes. In the New Testament this is distinguished (a) from ordinary insanity or mental disease, and (b) from bodily disease. The common notion that those described in Scripture as demon-possessed were in reality only mentally ill is therefore wrong. The symptoms may have been similar, but the cause was different.

**DEPRAVITY, TOTAL.** The truth that the unsaved sinner is corrupted by sin in every part of his personality, including both body and soul, so that apart from the special work of the Holy Spirit he cannot choose to love God, nor do anything spiritually good in God's sight. Total depravity does not mean absolute depravity, nor does it imply that anyone in this life is so bad that he could not become worse. The depravity spoken of is total in its extent, not in its degree.

**DEVIL, THE.** The chief of the fallen angels, who, by the providential permission of God, heads the kingdom of evil in opposition to the kingdom of God until the time appointed by God for him to be cast into hell (Rev. 20:10).

**DISPENSATION.** A particular manner of God's dealing with His creatures, or the period of time that coincides with the same. In the Bible, three dispensations are distinguished: (1) The Covenant of Works,

from the creation of mankind to Adam's fall. (2) The Old Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, from Adam's fall to the crucifixion of Christ. (3) The New Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, from the crucifixion of Christ to His second coming. These three are dispensations within history. Beyond them is "the age to come" or the eternal order of things.

**DISPENSATIONALISM.** The false system of Bible interpretation represented by the writings of J. N. Darby and the Scofield Reference Bible, which divides the history of mankind into seven distinct periods or "dispensations", and affirms that in each period God deals with the human race on the basis of some one specific principle. (Dispensationalism denies the continuity and spiritual identity of the New Testament Church with the Old Testament Israel, and tends to set grace and law against each other as mutually exclusive principles.)

**DIVINE NATURE OF CHRIST.** Christ's deity, by which He existed from all eternity as the living and true God, of the same substance with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

**DOCTRINE.** A truth of the Bible set forth in logical form in its relation to other truths of the Bible. True doctrines consist of (1) facts, plus (2) the divinely revealed meaning of the facts.

**DONATISTS.** A separatist sect of North African Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ, which held that the validity of a minister's official acts depends upon his personal piety, and that those who had denied Christ under persecution could never be restored to good standing in the Church. These errors were strongly opposed by the North African bishop Augustine of Hippo.

**DORT, SYNOD OF.** A synod summoned by the authority of the government, at Dort in the Netherlands,

1618-1619, for the purpose of settling the Arminian controversy. It was attended by delegates from Holland, England, Scotland, Switzerland and Germany. The synod condemned five leading propositions of the Arminians as false, and affirmed the contrary propositions of Calvinism as Biblical truths. The Westminster

Assembly of Divines, 25 years later, built upon this foundation.

DUTY. That which human beings ought to do, by reason of some relationship.

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## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

Blood which is not required from the murderer will be required from the magistrate, at least there is a danger lest it should.

— Matthew Henry on I Kings 2:31

It is our solemn conviction that where there can be no real spiritual communion there should be no pretences of fellowship. Fellowship with known and vital error is participation in sin. Those who know and love the truth of God cannot have fellowship with what is diametrically opposed thereto, and there can be no reason why they should pretend that they have such fellowship.

— C. H. Spurgeon

Those are fittest to be employed for God who are low in their own eyes and are made deeply sensible of their own weakness and unworthiness.

— Matthew Henry

No single error has yet been demonstrated to occur in the Scriptures as given by God to His Church.

— B. B. Warfield

No one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a pupil of Scripture.

— John Calvin

Scripture is not a dry tale or an old chronicle; it is the ever-living, ever youthful Word which God at the present time and always sends out to His people.

— Herman Bavinck

In heaven we shall appear, not in armour, but in robes of glory. But here our arms are to be worn night and day. We must walk, work, sleep in them, or else we are not true soldiers of Christ.

— Wm. Gurnall

We should not only resist the theory of evolution but

also attack it. The textbooks into which it has crept must be put aside, and we are not allowed to entrust our children to any teacher who teaches it. It must, as the deadly bacteria which come to destroy all spiritual life, be traced microscopically and excluded from every tissue of our lives.

— Abraham Kuyper

False teachers have ever abounded in the Church. All the apostles were called upon earnestly to oppose them. Witness the epistles of Paul, John, Peter, and James. No one of the apostolical epistles is silent on this subject. Good men may indeed hold erroneous doctrines; but the false teachers, the promoters of heresy and divisions, as a class, are characterized by Paul as not influenced by a desire to serve Christ, but as selfish in their aims, and plausible, flattering, and deceitful in their conduct.

— Charles Hodge

Christians should unite the harmlessness of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent. They should be careful neither to cause divisions or scandals themselves, nor allow others to deceive and beguile them into evil.

— Charles Hodge

However much the Church may be distracted and troubled, error and its advocates cannot finally prevail. Satan is a conquered enemy with a lengthened chain; God will ultimately bruise him under the feet of His people.

— Charles Hodge

The veracity of God, and not the reasonableness of any doctrine, is the ground of our faith. It is the work of the Gospel to cast down reasonings against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ.

— R. P. Testimony, IV. 4

The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government, in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.

— The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXX. 1

The Lord Jesus Christ hath instituted Church Discipline, in order to remove scandals, and prevent their unhappy effects; and no Church can, without the faithful and spiritual application of it, hope for His countenance and blessing.

— R. P. Testimony, XXXI. 3

The trouble with the paganism of ancient Greece as with the paganism of modern times, was not in the superstructure, which was glorious, but in the foundation, which was rotten.

— J. Gresham Machen

Faith is being exalted so high today that men are being satisfied with any kind of faith, just so it is faith.

— J. Gresham Machen

At the very root of the modern liberal movement is the loss of the consciousness of sin.

— J. Gresham Machen

Paganism is optimistic with regard to unaided human nature, whereas Christianity is the religion of the broken heart.

— J. Gresham Machen

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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.

**CHARITY AND ITS FRUITS**, by Jonathan Edwards. Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern St., London, W. I., England. 1970. 368 pp. \$4.00 or 21 shillings.

This book consists of a series of lectures by Edwards expounding I Corinthians 13. It has lost none of its power or relevancy. Of particular interest is the convincing argument (Lecture II, XV particularly) against the genuineness of the charismatic gifts in the Church today. Edwards says "we have no reason to look on such things, when pretended to in these days, as any other than delusion" (p. 44). Strong words, these, but read Edward's masterful argument and you will see why he said this. Highly recommended. Reprint of 1852 edition.

— G. I. Williamson

**THE UPPER ROOM**, by J. C. Ryle. Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern St., London, England. 1970, 467 pp., 25 Shillings.

This consists of a number of sermons and addresses by the noted evangelical Bishop of the Church of England. They are interesting, notably clear in thought, and soundly scriptural. Ryle had a masterful power to put big thoughts into simple little words. The lecture entitled 'Simplicity in Preaching' (pp. 35-55) is worth the price of the book. The other lectures and sermons constantly remind one of this lecture, and of the fact that Ryle practiced its precepts when he preached. Reprint of 1888 edition.

— G. I. Williamson

**AN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY OF MISSIONS**, by Harold Lindvall. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1970, 234 pp., paper cover, \$2.50.

This is a revised edition of a work written some

twenty years ago. While very competent as defense of Biblical Christianity as the basis of missions, it does not penetrate far enough into the current situation. It is sufficiently descriptive of the weaknesses of fundamentalism and the unfaithfulness of modernism. But the remedy offered here is too weak, in our judgment. The main value is in tracing the historical development of the present crisis.

— G. I. Williamson

**JOHN BUNYAN**, by Richard L. Greaves. William B. Eerdmans, Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49502, 1970, pp. 176. \$5.50.

This interesting piece of work, which in its original form, gained for its author the degree of Dr. Phil. by London University, is a scholarly and scientific attempt to define Bunyan's theological position — a task which was by no means easy considering the colourful personality and original genius of this saintly puritan. The author states that no single theological label without careful qualification will fit Bunyan. In the matter of justification and the nature of God the Lutheran influence upon his thinking is obvious; while his doctrine of the Church is coloured by local tradition. Apart from a tendency to Antinomianism his soteriology is Calvinistic. Bunyan's doctrine of predestination Dr. Greaves finds harsh and illogical.

— Norman MacLeod

**SET FORTH YOUR CASE**, by Clark H. Pinnock. The Craig Press, P.O. Box 185, Nutley, N.J., 07110. 1967, pp. 94, \$1.50, paperback.

The subtitle of this book is "Studies in Christian Apologetics". Mr. Pinnock rejects the "leap of faith into the dark" approach of dialectical theology and the

irrationalism of some branches of Protestant Orthodoxy which make an unbiblical appeal to the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Then he presents Christian Apologetics as an indispensable tool for evangelism. By a keen analysis of the philosophy and culture of the 20th century, he describes the death of hope and the hope of death of modern man. He writes "The root problem of the non-Christian humanist is the sheer pointlessness of existing in a godless world" (p. 17). Then he challenges the reader to turn to the Scriptures. Only there can he discover the God who has revealed Himself in history by His mighty acts. This revelation being especially given in the person and work of Jesus Christ and interpreted for us by the prophets and apostles. This is a splendid work which is also not very expensive! I highly recommend it.

— Donald Weilersbacher

**ALL THE TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS OF THE BIBLE**, by Herbert Lockyer. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1969, 327 pp., \$4.95.

How many are there? Two hundred ninety-five, says Lockyer. And while he treats under separate heading what are merely aspects of one 'occupation' (i.e. Elder and Bishop, or Minister and Pastor) he does present generally reliable information. With a good scripture text index it makes a handy reference book, which could prove of real value to a Bible school teacher or student. Of value for a Church library.

— G. I. Williamson

**IS IT — OR ISN'T IT?**, by Blaiklock, E. M. and D. A. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1968, pp. 83, \$2.95.

The subtitle of this book is "Why we believe in the existence of God." It was written by a father and son combination: the older being a professor of classics and the younger a biologist. Although evangelical throughout, the book is of mixed value: some chapters being rather dull, while others stimulating. Chapter IV "Plan or Accident" has many valuable illustrations of the evidence of design in nature. Chapter V "The Human Situation" touches on the emptiness of various humanistic philosophies of history. The price seems rather high for such a small volume.

— Donald Weilersbacher

**BIBLICAL PREDESTINATION**, by Gordon H. Clark. Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, Box 185, Nutley, N.J. 07110. 150 pp., paperback. \$1.95.

This volume, true to its name, is a thoroughly Biblical presentation of the doctrine of predestination. With admirable clarity, cogent reasoning, and attested by massive Scriptural authority, the author shows that predestination is a vital doctrine which permeates the Bible from cover to cover. With the same sustained argument he shows that the application of God's decree includes the thinking and actions of all his creatures.

It would have enhanced this able piece of work if the author had endeavoured to show how evil actions are predestinated, "and yet thereby God is neither the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature."

As an expositor Dr. Clark's ability can be gauged by his impressive clash with so great a giant as Dr. Charles Hodge over the exegetical problem of Ephesians 3:8-10.

We highly recommend this work, and wish it a wide circulation.

— Norman MacLeod

**THE PROTEST OF A TROUBLED PROTESTANT**, by Harold O. J. Brown. Zondervan Publishing House. Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1970, 282 pp., paperback. \$2.45.

This is a good book. We cannot agree with everything in it, but the basic thrust of the argument is right. Mr. Brown shows us the miserable situation in the Protestant Church as a whole. He also shows the wretched failure of evangelicals to face up to the problem of discipline. The fact is, as Mr. Brown demonstrates, that the evangelicals in many large denominations have evaded their plain duty under cover of pious activities. His remarks relative to the Confession of 1967 are well worth pondering (pp. 241-248). The weakness, however, is in Mr. Brown's lenient attitude toward Billy Graham's theological inclusivism. This is a serious weakness. But by all means read this protest.

— G. I. Williamson

**A SURVEY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**, by Robert H. Gundry. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506, 1970. pp. 400. \$6.95.

In recent years several fine books have been published on the New Testament. Among those presenting a conservative viewpoint there are *New Testament Times* by Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Introduction* by Donald Guthrie, and *Introduction to the New Testament* by Everett F. Harrison. In some respects this volume covers similar ground, but does so with a freshness of approach and a thoroughness of documentation as to give it a deserved place as a survey textbook for seminary students as well as a helpful aid to all students of the New Testament.

The book is divided into four rather unequal parts entitled: *The Backdrop*; *The Crucial Event*; *The Triumphant Aftermath*; and *The Explanation and Implications*. These sections cover respectively the background to the New Testament, the Life and Times of Christ, the Book of Acts, and the Epistles and Apocalypse. The themes are not discussed very thoroughly or deeply, but the approach is generally thought provoking and one that would stimulate Bible Class discussion. The material is well arranged with clear section headings and marginal themes.

While the book lays a fair claim to be orthodox and

evangelical, it draws frequently on material from authors from the liberal school. In a very exhaustive bibliography, given mainly in each chapter, the theological standpoint of the various writers is indicated. Occasionally Dr. Gundry places a writer in the orthodox and conservative bracket, and we doubt his discernment in this matter. His view of the Revelation is primarily futuristic, but he does insist that there is a message in it for Christians of every generation.

The book is profusely illustrated and contains a great deal of very helpful material for a discerning student of the Word of God.

— Adam Loughridge

**GEORGE WHITEFIELD**, by Arthur Dallimore. Vol. I. Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern St., London, W.1, England, 1970. pp. 600. 42 shillings (approximately \$5.00).

Lovers of good literature in general and of the Reformed Faith in particular will welcome this fine biography of George Whitefield. Through the years Whitefield has remained too little known and has undeservedly been hidden in the shadow of the Wesleys. Mr. Dallimore has repaired the injustice done to one of God's most illustrious servants.

The author has given the best part of a lifetime to research on this theme. New material has been unearthed that not only adds to Whitefield's stature as a mature Christian, a fine theologian and an outstanding preacher, but that increases the degree of suspicion with which some of the doctrines and experiences of his contemporaries may be viewed. The book is much more than a biography though it stands high in this category. It is an excellent history of the 18th Century revival in Britain and America. The writer has done justice to his subject. The book is excellently produced and easily read, and provides a fine incentive and encouragement to prayer for reformation and revival. We await with keen expectation the arrival of the second volume.

— Adam Loughridge

**BLACK AND FREE**, by Tom Skinner. Zondervan Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970. pp. 158. \$.95.

This is a paperback edition of the book reviewed in this magazine on page 79, April, 1969.

— Adam Loughridge

**APOSTLES OF DENIAL**, by Edmond Charles Gruss. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, P.O. Box 185, Nutley, N. J., 07110. 1970. pp. 324. \$4.50, paperback; \$6.50, hardbound.

We are indebted to the author, an associate professor of History and apologetics at Los Angeles Baptist College, for a masterly examination and exposure of the doctrines and claims of Jehovah's Wit-

nesses. The book is written from a first-hand experience of the cult. The author was brought up in a home where the teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses was accepted and practiced, especially by his mother. He had been baptised into the fellowship of Jehovah's Witnesses at the age of 11, and spent the next seven years in some form of practical service with its members, during which he became acquainted with the so-called Judge Rutherford. At the age of 17 he was converted and after a number of years in which he was assailed by doubts and difficulties, he moved into the clear light of the Truth of God.

This is by far the most thorough work that the reviewer has seen on this subject. It is the revised and expanded form of a thesis written in partial requirement for his M.Th. degree. When it is noted that in the 50 pages of appendices there are ten pages of Bibliography dealing mainly with source materials, one realises that this is a masterly assessment of a prevalent heresy.

The author traces the history of the movement, quoting extensively from their own documents. This is followed by a summary of their teaching and a refutation on Biblical grounds of their main errors. An interesting and profitable section deals with the translations and Bibles used by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (one of the alternative names for the organization). It is shown convincingly that their methods of interpretation are a gross misuse and misapplication of the Word of God. Helpful advice is given to readers how to deal with Jehovah's Witnesses and how to answer the challenge of this growing and aggressive heresy.

— Adam Loughridge

**BY CHRIST COMPELLED**, by Robert G. Lee. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1969. pp. 151. \$3.50.

This is a fantastic conglomeration of facts and statistics. The author has obviously a large library, a first class index system, and facility to make good use of his material. It is the sort of book that could have been 50 pages or 500 pages at the author's whim. There is apparently no limit to the number of illustrations he is able to use.

In the title theme, a sermon on II Corinthians 5:14, there are seven headings. Under the first heading he makes the statement: "All the tribute paid the great are deserved by them." He then proceeds to give illustrations of that statement from ten Bible Characters and from men in all walks of life from Abraham Lincoln to Oliver Cromwell. On the theme "Quit you like men" he sums up the lives of 27 men from Abraham to John Bunyan. This kind of compilation could have gone on ad infinitum. A section of sermon one is repeated almost verbatim in sermon two.

The sermon on the Second Coming of Christ is strongly dispensational and almost suggests that those who hold Post- or A-Millenarian views are guilty of unfaithfulness to the Word of God. He lists the names of about 120 prominent people in support of his argument. The sermons as a whole are characterized by an absence

of exegesis and exposition. The alliteration is at times forced and unnatural, (e.g. "delayless doing" on page 145). The book is not recommended.

— Adam Loughridge

AMOS, by Ray Beeley. The Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern St., London, W. 1, England. 1970. pp. 117 Five Shillings (sixty cents).

This little volume consists of notes made in the first instance of the author's own personal Bible Study. They were shared with young people and now appear in this slightly amplified form. Following brief introductory chapters on the background to the prophecy and a short summary of its contents, Mr. Beeley proceeds to give a verse by verse exposition of book. Difficult words in the text are explained. The text is printed in full from the King James Version.

The author excels in his rapid transition from exposition to application which is done in a practical and pointed manner and leaves the reader in no doubt regarding the purpose of Bible study. Useful suggestions for meditation are made at the end of each section. Mr. Beeley in his modesty seems surprised that he has written and published a book. He need offer no apology. His work is an excellent contribution to the all too few concise and readable commentaries and will prove most helpful to students of the Bible.

— Adam Loughridge

BIBLICAL NUMEROLOGY, by John J. Davis. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids Mich., 49506. 1968, pp. 174, paperback. \$2.95.

Few books on this subject are as clearly written and well-documented as this one. A scholarly orthodoxy pervades the whole work. The author states clearly: "All numbers of the Bible should be regarded as fundamentally dependable and the interpreter should be hesitant to change the traditional text unless there is clear evidence of textual corruption and only when he has sufficient evidence to support the new reading." He proceeds effectively to show the remarkable accuracy of Biblical arithmetic: a prime example is his detailed defense of the size of the Exodus.

Regarding the possibility of symbolical numbers in Scripture, the author decidedly opposes "allegorical arithmetic." His view is basically that of O.T. Allis, who views 666 as the only proven symbolical number in Scripture. In addition, however, Davis builds a good case for the admission of "7" to this class in certain circumstances. The only question one might ask is whether he deals enough with the occurrences of 40 and 70 in key aspects of redemptive history.

— R. W. Nickerson

THE MANIFOLD GRACE OF GOD, Papers read at the Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference, 1968. Providence House, 3 Speke Road, London, S.W. 11, England. pp. 95. Price not stated.

The student of church history will appreciate this compilation of papers from the Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference of 1968. Topics include two analyses of Arminianism in the light of the Synod of Dort; somewhat overcomplimentary essays on Wycliffe, John Fletcher, and William Williams; and a brief, but valuable, survey of Puritan Eschatology. The work culminates in a "hard-sell" by Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones for Calvinistic Methodism (including some tendency toward "second-blessing" experience), as the truest expression of Reformed faith and life — a highly debatable conclusion, but nonetheless a stimulating one. The evaluations of Arminianism tend to be consiliatory rather than severely critical; the final conclusions of Dr. J. I. Packer regarding Calvinist-Arminian evangelical brotherhood are not spelled out, but could present grave problems unless this is done.

— R. W. Nickerson

SOME LIGHT ON FASTING, by David R. Smith. The Rushworth Literature Enterprise Ltd., 14 Green End, Braughing, near Ware, Herts, England. 1954, pp.64, paperback. \$.45

The first twenty pages on the duty of fasting are a sane, Biblical call to a practice which is commonly missing from the life of the church today. The arguments are presented in a context of grace, not legalism. The later chapters are marred by a mystical view of guidance and quasimedical oversimplifications, but the author's intentions toward practicality are to be commended. The question of ecclesiastical authority in making fasts mandatory is not discussed — a definite weakness. Although this little work is valuable, this reviewer considers A. W. Pink's remarks in his work on the Sermon on the Mount to be the most lucid modern discussion in print.

— R. W. Nickerson

LEARNING FOR LOVING, by R. L. McFarland and J. D. Burton. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506, pp. 158. \$3.95.

This work skirts the central issues in healthy marital adjustments. It is supposedly evangelical in tone, but frequently uses theology as a psychological tool even to the extent of equating "being in Christ" with "being an internally-directed person," — a state which the author clearly says is also true for those who expouse Judaism.

Eric Fromm is an apparent mentor of the authors who have mixed together a strange blend of highly technical psychological terminology with popular expressions that are almost crude. Two chapters, "We Need to Belong" and "The Marriage Game" present fresh and valuable ideas. Especially disappointing because of its nebulosity, is the chapter on sexuality. The basic weakness of the whole work, however, is the lack of a consistent orientation of psychological problems in marriage to their basic root as Spiritual (sin) problems.

— R. W. Nickerson

A CHRISTIAN THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE, by C. Van Til. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Nutley, N.J., 1969, pp. 390.

In this book C. Van Til exposes the attempts of Christians and non-Christians to build their thinking on the autonomy of man, particularly on the autonomy of theoretical or scientific thought. Van Til again and again points out the disastrous consequences of any notion of neutrality of facts or "logic." Van Til has shown the unity within the variety of attempts to start with something "in itself," either facts, logic, innate ideas, or the human mind, and then to bring in the Christian position, as attempts which all result in a failure to challenge the unbeliever's position. The strength of the book is its wide coverage of a great variety of positions and its penetration in an economical way into the heart of these positions. The liveliness of style and its simplicity recommend it as a book to help orient evangelicals to the pit-falls of our times, and it also provides a direction out of these pit-falls.

Negatively, there seems to be a tint of theo-logicism in Van Til's thinking. It comes out in a rather subtle identification of the notions of law with logic and law with logical order. It is incomprehensible why he employs words like "supernatural," "reason," "reasonably," granted he has redefined these somewhat, but still worse how he can talk about combining facts and logic or universals and particulars in the manner he does. Facts, logic, universals and particulars are all subjected to the law word of Jahweh, while for Van Til universals, order, and logic are at times used interchangeably with law. This, it seems to this reviewer, is to view the Law-Word of God as having a logical character instead of its being the condition for the logical, and therefore results in a theo-logicism. This point of criticism needs to be expanded and made clear, but it cannot be done in this short review.

—Peter J. Steen

GOD I LIKE YOU, ed. by S.E. Wirt and C. Anderson. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 93. \$2.95.

A small book of poetry from Billy Graham's magazine *Decision*. The poems are brief, and very few have either rhyme or metre. Except for the format used in printing, most of them are really prose. The sentiment is evangelical and challenging.

—J.G. Vos

LOVE IS NOW, by Peter E. Gillquist. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 32, paperback. 75 cents.

Sub-titled "A study manual for groups and individuals", this booklet leads the reader in considering personal salvation and Christian commitment. Many Scripture passages are cited. The teaching is evangelical.

—J.G. Vos

BABYLON: THE CHURCH OF ROME, by C. Wordsworth. Protestant Publications, 110 Glebe Point Road, Glebe, N.S.W. 2037, Australia. 1970, reprint of 1856, paperback, pp. 122. Australian \$1.00.

This reprint of an old book raises the question "Is the Church of Rome the Babylon of the Apocalypse?" The author presents the traditional arguments to prove his thesis, that Roman Catholicism is the Babylon of the Book of Revelation.

A basic (but often ignored) principle in dealing with Biblical prophecy is that we must take care to distinguish sharply between the meaning and the fulfilment. To say that Revelation 13 predicts a world-dictator who will oppress Christianity, is to state the meaning of the prophecy. To go on and affirm that Napoleon or Hitler or Stalin is the dictator, is to attempt to identify the fulfilment. As long as we are searching for the meaning, we are on solid ground and can apply the recognized principles of Biblical exegesis. But when we attempt to identify the fulfilment, we are dealing in part with fallible human historical documents, news reports, human testimonies and opinions, so a wide possibility of error is opened up. It is possible that Roman Catholicism is the fulfilment of the "Babylon" passages of the Book of Revelation, but this cannot be proved beyond the level of fallible opinion or probability judgment. It is entirely possible that some anti-Christian system, still future and even more terrible than any power Christianity has yet had to face, is the real fulfilment. Until world history ends with the Lord's return, we cannot be sure that the fulfilment is not still future and more terrible than anything we know of in the past.

—J.G. Vos

CHURCH IDBITS, by Robin Jensen. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49606. 1970, pp. 60, paperback. 95 cents.

A booklet of religious cartoons in which people appear as stylized shapes, something like barrels or logs of wood. The purpose is to show up some of the weaknesses, foibles and inconsistencies of professing Christians.

—J.G. Vos

A SURVEY OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY, by Leon Wood. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 458. Maps. \$7.50.

The author is professor of Old Testament studies in the Grand Rapids Bible Seminary. The viewpoint is consistently that of Biblical supernaturalism. The author begins the history of Israel with Abraham and his background, though not any way discounting the truth of the earlier chapters of Genesis. The early chronology (placing the Exodus about 1446 B.C.) is consistently favored and defended. Actually 26 pages are devoted to scholarly discussion of the problem of chronology in this period. It is refreshing to read a book on Old Testament history which takes the Bible at face value and does not

try to explain it away. For example, the destruction of 185,000 of Sennacherib's troops by "the angel of the Lord" is frankly treated as a miracle. The book is amply supplied with maps and diagrams which assist the reader in grasping the subject matter. Heartily recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**THE REASON WHY**, by Robert A. Laidlaw. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970 (reprint), pp. 64, paperback, pocket size. 25 cents.

**THE STORY OF "THE REASON WHY"** by Robert A. Laidlaw. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1969, pp. 118, paperback. 95 cents

Robert A. Laidlaw is a Christian businessman with a personal witness for Christ. In *The Reason Why* he presents the way of salvation and calls on the reader to repent, receive Christ and witness for him. This booklet in previous printings has been very influential and the Lord has used it to bring many to a saving knowledge of Himself. More than ten million copies have been printed and circulated, and it has been translated into more than twenty languages. At the modest price of 25 cents any Christian can afford to have a supply of this booklet and to give it out from time to time along with a word of personal testimony.

In *The Story of "The Reason Why"* the author tells the story of his own life and conversion, of how he came to write the booklet, and something of how God has used it to bring people to Jesus Christ for salvation.

—J.G. Vos

**PONDER THIS**, by Leonard Andrews. Grosset & Dunlap, Inc., 51 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010. 1969, pp. 118. \$2.95.

This book consists of brief statements (of prose printed as if they were poetry) collected from the author's column in *The New York Daily News*. There is practical wisdom in many of the selections, but there is nothing distinctively Christian in any of them. In some there is a universalistic note (page 2, page 4); the evolutionary view of man is assumed (page 101); and the brotherhood of man is set forth (page 55). This book is a good illustration of C.S. Lewis' observation that today the great enemy of Christianity is not atheism but "religion" — the inclusive religion based upon man's experiences and consciousness, not upon God's special revelation and redemption. Not recommended. No one who is in Christ needs this book, and anyone who is out of Christ is likely to be tragically misled by it.

—J.G. Vos

**LEARNING TO BE A MAN**, by Kenneth G. Smith.

**LEARNING TO BE A WOMAN**, by Kenneth G. Smith. Both published by Inter-Varsity Press, Downers

Grove, Illinois 60515. Each book 116-118 pages, published 1970, paperbacks. \$1.50 for each book.

The author is Director of Young People's Work and Christian Education of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and thus known to many of our readers. The books are intended for group use but can also be used for individual study. They are intended for senior high school and college age young people, are ably and attractively prepared and eminently suited for actual practical use.

Apart from the attractive and usable presentation, the great merit of these books is their fidelity to the Bible. At every point the student is challenged to turn to the Word of God for the answers. There are spaces ruled for writing in the answers and for checking off matters studied and completed. The questions are thought-provoking and calculated to lead to real study of the Bible, not mere mechanical copying of texts for answers. Unlike many present-day authors of religious education materials, Mr. Smith is not guilty of using Scripture to prop up what is essentially a modern man-centered world view. His material is calculated to lead the student who follows it through to a grasp of the Biblical view of God, man and life. There is no attempt to "soft pedal" unpopular ideas — the author lets the Bible speak for itself, so that Scripture is really constitutive of the view presented in the books.

In our day when Biblical standards of right and wrong are everywhere being challenged it is most encouraging to have books like Mr. Smith's which faithfully and without apology uphold the moral principles of Scripture as universally and unchangingly valid. These two books are heartily recommended to our readers.

—J.G. Vos

**BEHOLD A PALE HORSE**, by Joe Musser. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 140. \$3.50.

The dust jacket calls this "a prophetic novel." It concerns Israel, the Middle East, Communist China, nuclear warfare, set within the framework of a premillennial view of Bible prophecy. The central idea is the pre-tribulation rapture. Readers should remember that this is a highly debatable idea among Bible-believing Christians. Fascinating and exciting as a story, this book should not be regarded as a doctrinal study in Biblical prophecy.

—J.G. Vos

**THE LATE GREAT PLANET EARTH**, by Hal Lindsey with C.C. Carlson. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 192. \$3.95.

The dust jacket calls this book "a penetrating look at incredible prophecies involving this generation." The book deals with current events and the present world situation, and seeks to link these with Biblical prophecies. The notion of a revived Roman Empire

(page 159) is prominent. The author's viewpoint is frankly premillennial. He states, quite incorrectly, that "The real issue between the amillennial and the premillennial viewpoints is whether prophecy should be interpreted literally or allegorically" (page 176). Readers who want a truly Biblical treatment of this question of literal versus figurative (not allegorical!) interpretation of prophecy should read Wyngaarden, *The Future of the Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*. Wyngaarden shows how the New Testament interprets many Old Testament prophecies figuratively rather than literally. (The book is out of print but can be found in some libraries and second hand book shops). Because of its premillennial framework and assumptions, which we believe to be un-Biblical and erroneous, we are unable to endorse *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

—J.G. Vos

**THE FIRST 7000 YEARS: A STUDY IN BIBLE CHRONOLOGY**, by C.G. Ozanne. Exposition Press, Inc., 50 Jericho Turnpike, Jericho, N.Y. 11753. 1970, pp. 229. \$5.00.

The author defends Ussher's chronology, including 4004 B.C. as the date of the creation. The highly controversial matter of the date of the Exodus is dealt with very briefly (less than two pages, 27 and 28) and we are told that in this period (Moses and Joshua) "the dates which concern us present no serious problems" (p. 27). Chapter 7 deals with Edwin R. Thiele's book, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (on the divided kingdom period). The author regards Thiele's conclusions as incorrect; he even regards widespread acceptance of Thiele's system of dates in evangelical circles as evidence "that the Bible no longer occupies the place of pre-eminence which once it held in the estimation of Christians" (p. 113). Appendix III (pp. 207-221) deals with the treatment of the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 by Byron C. Nelson, W.H. Green, B.B. Warfield and John C. Whitcomb. All of these scholars hold that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are not necessarily mathematically complete with no links omitted. Ozanne holds the contrary view. He holds that according to God's plan the history of the world comprises seven thousand years, and that the Millennium will begin in 1996 (page 160). If you read this book, by all means read Nelson, Green, Warfield and Whitcomb also.

—J.G. Vos

**SHOCK IT TO ME, DOCTOR**, by A. Dudley Denison. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. 1970, pp. 152. \$3.95.

The author is a medical doctor. The dust jacket calls the book "A skillful, honest and humorous dissection of the ills of our society by an able physician and campus counselor". The Introduction is by Billy Graham. With both serious earnestness and delightful humor the author brings out the weaknesses, failures and hypocrisies of present day American life, and places special emphasis on the life of today's college students. The teaching is sound and salutary. Our only important

criticism is the author's somewhat naive tendency to quote men of doubtful (or worse) orthodoxy in support of his statements (Norman Vincent Peale, p. 120; Paul Tillich (p. 23); the late Bishop Gore (p. 123).

—J.G. Vos

**GOD IN THE DOCK: ESSAYS ON THEOLOGY AND ETHICS**, by C.S. Lewis, ed. by Walter Hooper. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1970, pp. 346 \$6.95.

C.S. Lewis died in 1963. This volume consists of writings of Lewis, some previously published in various periodicals, some hitherto unpublished. Some of the subjects discussed are: *Evil and God*, *Miracles*, *Religion and Science*, *the Laws of Nature*, *Modern Translations of the Bible*, *Priestesses in the Church?*, *the Humanitarian Theory of Punishment*, *We Have no Right to Happiness*. Most of the essays are brief — four or five pages — and all are interesting and readable. Lewis had a real gift for stating old Christian truth in a fresh way that communicates with modern educated people, especially university students.

The material on *Miracles* and *the Laws of Nature* is similar to, but not identical with, the contents of Lewis' classic *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*. People who think that the laws (so-called) of nature are the causes of events should read this material and learn to do some straight thinking on the subject. So should those who say that God performed miracles by utilizing hidden laws of nature known to Him but not to mankind.

Lewis' stand against the so-called new morality and situation ethics is firm and unqualified. His treatment of divorce is sound. On many other issues he puts forth a clear call to maintain truly Christian standards.

With regret the reviewer must remind our readers that C.S. Lewis was not completely orthodox. He was not a trained theologian, but a professor of English literature. It is amazing that he was as familiar with theological literature as he was. In the present volume (pages 57,58) he treats parts of the Old Testament as "fabulous". Among the "fabulous" elements he lists Noah and the ark, and Jonah and the whale. Lewis was also a rather naive theistic evolutionist, but this reviewer has found no place in Lewis' writings where evolutionism was constitutive of his thinking or essential to his argument; he seems rather to have held to it uncritically without being aware of its dangers and controversial character. The Covenanters of Scotland are mentioned (unfavorably) on page 198 of this book. Lewis thought that the Covenanters treated their own utterances and platforms as if they had the authority of "thus saith the Lord" back of them — in the opinion of this reviewer, an unfair charge.

—J.G. Vos

**TEILHARD DE CHARDIN: AN ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT**, by D. Gareth Jones. Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515. 1969, pp. 72, paperback. \$1.25.

Teilhard de Chardin was a Frenchman, a Roman Catholic priest (Jesuit), and a thoroughgoing cosmic evolutionist. He died in New York City in 1955. His views were so controversial that his writings were banned by the Vatican during his lifetime; most of them have been published since his death. Teilhard made evolution the great principle of the universe, and struggled to reconcile this idea with the historic Christian Faith.

The author of the present book shows familiarity with the immense body of literature that has appeared concerning Teilhard and Teilhardism. Among many other writings he cites two outstanding articles by Dr. Hooykaas in *The Free University Quarterly* (Amsterdam), and one by Dr. Cornelius Van Til in *The Westminster Theological Journal* (p. 8).

"The essence of his vision is that the whole universe is of an evolutionary nature, and that it is absolutely necessary to adopt an evolutionary approach to nature" (p. 36). "Here is the problem posed by Teilhardism. A priest of the Roman Catholic church presents us with a thorough-going, all-inclusive, evolutionistic philosophy: a man to whom evolutionism is the central pivot of the universe" (p. 37). The author gives a penetrating critique of Teilhardism, showing especially that it involves "a fundamental shift in thinking away from the transcendent God and towards man" (p. 72). This book should warn us concerning the possible (or worse) outcome of a consistently held evolutionary philosophy.

—J.G. Vos

**EVOLUTION AND CHRISTIAN FAITH**, by Bolton Davidheiser. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 185, Nutley, N.J. 07110. 1969, pp. 372. \$6.50.

Bolton Davidheiser received his Ph.D. degree from Johns Hopkins University, his subject being genetics. He came from a religiously liberal background, and when he received his doctorate he was a convinced evolutionist. Later he was converted to Jesus Christ, and this revolutionized his life and thinking, including his thinking in the field of biology. *Evolution and Christian Faith* is Davidheiser's repudiation of evolutionary thinking as incompatible with Christianity. The reviewer knows of no book which so forthrightly rejects evolution on religious grounds. Davidheiser comes right out and says things plainly — evolutionism cannot be reconciled with Christian truth concerning man, sin, Christ and salvation.

Davidheiser is also scientifically opposed to evolutionism. He shows familiarity with the bulk of scientific literature on this subject, and cites numerous standard works in the bibliographic notes in the book. Herein is much of the value of this book for Christian readers — nobody can say that Davidheiser is a fundamentalist who is ignorant of science. He is certainly a qualified scientist who has been through the academic mill. But his new relationship to Christ changed the presuppositions of his scientific thinking, and therefore the conclusions also had to be changed.

Davidheiser goes further than most Christian writers who oppose evolution, in that he objects em-

phatically to the use of the term *evolution* for what some writers call "micro-evolution" — changes in living organisms on a limited scale, as opposed to "macro-evolution" — the notion that all life has come from a single origin, what Kerkut calls "the general theory of evolution". Davidheiser insists that it is playing into the hands of the enemy for Christians to admit that they believe in "some evolution" or "a little evolution." This is very likely true, for it gives the public the idea that the changes which have produced 100 breeds of chickens are of the same nature as those which are alleged to have produced the human race from the amoeba or other primitive organism.

This book gives a very interesting history of evolutionism from the ancient Greeks to Teilhard de Chardin, including (and most interesting) the real story of the Scopes trial (pages 88-104) over against the distorted accounts of it which have been published.

There is an increasing body of scientific literature which is critical of the theory of evolution. This book is a notable contribution to that body of literature. Heartily recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**GENES, GENESIS AND EVOLUTION**, by John Klotz. Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis, Mo. 63118. Second Revised Edition, 1970, pp. 544. \$9.95.

The first edition of this notable book appeared in 1955. Dr. Klotz is a minister of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church and a professor of science with a Ph.D. degree in biology from the University of Pittsburgh. The first edition of the book has been widely influential, and the reviewer predicts that the present edition will be even more influential.

After an introductory chapter on Science and Scripture, Klotz gives a History of Evolutionary theories. This is followed by a 34 page chapter on "The Species Problem." Darwin's great book was entitled "Origin of Species" and classic evolutionism holds that species have arisen from other species by an evolutionary process — but the evolutionists cannot frame a satisfactory definition of the term *species*. Klotz cites numerous statements from recognized authors.

The author goes over the whole range of alleged evidences for evolution and cites extensive scientific literature at the close of every chapter. The final chapter (Chap. 12) is entitled "Problems for the Evolutionist" (pages 477-523, including three solid pages of scientific bibliography). Often Klotz states the problem and cites the evidence bearing on it, and then leaves the reader to form his own conclusion.

The book is very well printed and bound, contains many illustrations, and is certainly worth much more than its price. Church libraries should have this book, to convince high school students (and some high school teachers of science!) that it is not true that all scientists accept evolution as "proved fact." Along with

Davidheiser's book, reviewed above, this book is a notable part of the increasing body of scientific literature critical of evolution.

—J.G. Vos

**EVOLUTION AND THE REFORMATION OF BIOLOGY**, by Hebden Taylor. Craig Press, Box 13, Nutley, N.J. 07110. 1967, pp.92, paperback. \$1.50

The author, Hebden Taylor, presents in this book "A study of the biological thought of Herman Dooyeweerd of Amsterdam and J.J. Duyvene de Wit, late Professor of Zoology at the University of Bloemfontein, South Africa." This book, besides being a critique of evolutionism, can well serve as a concise introduction to the Amsterdam philosophy of Dooyeweerd. The author shows that there is increasing scientific reaction against evolutionism. In particular he faults the evolutionists for claiming to explain the origin of man when they do not know what man is — they think of man as a more advanced animal, as essentially an animal, instead of thinking of man in terms of what makes man human. Because they have a basically wrong idea of what man is, they cannot possibly explain man's origin or development.

Among other things, the basic unorthodoxy of Dr. Jan Lever of Amsterdam is convincingly brought out.

On page 24 the word "principal" is misprinted as "princinal." This makes a sentence meaningless. On the same page the term *enkaptic*, *enkaptically* is used but nowhere explained or defined. The reviewer could not find it in any dictionary.

This is a very good book, and strongly recommended to our readers.

—J.G. Vos

**EVOLUTION AND THE MODERN CHRISTIAN**, by Henry M. Morris. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1967, pp. 72, paperback. \$1.00.

The author is a professor of engineering. He received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Minnesota. The present volume is a popular type book intended for the ordinary reader. Morris reviews the usual budget of alleged evidences for evolution and points out their weaknesses and fallacies. He specially emphasizes the Second Law of Thermodynamics (Entropy) as a great obstacle in the way of evolutionary theory. This law states that everything is becoming more and more random, whereas evolutionism requires that living organisms become more and more specialized. The author also shows convincingly the harm done by evolutionism — what it does to the thinking and religious life of people. Heartily recommended to our readers.

—J.G. Vos

**A SYMPOSIUM ON CREATION**, by Henry M. Morris and others. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1968, pp. 156, paperback. \$1.95.

The contributors are Henry M. Morris, John W. Klotz, Paul A. Zimmerman, R. Clyde McCone and Donald W. Patten. Morris writes on Science vs. Scientism, Klotz on Creationist Viewpoints, Zimmerman on Can we Accept Theistic Evolution? Other subjects discussed are The Origins of Civilization, the Flood and Mountain Making, the Ice Age, and Evolutionary Time. The reviewer hesitates to endorse all viewpoints in this book, especially the treatment of the Glacial Epoch. However this is a good book and well worth buying and reading and quoting. It shows that the easy-going acceptance of Theistic Evolution is wrong and harmful.

—J.G. Vos

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## *Contributions Received*

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## *Only A Word!*

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.

(Author Unknown)

## The Unbreakable Scripture

by J. G. Vos

The emblem of the British and Foreign Bible Society shows an old-fashioned blacksmith's anvil surrounded by many broken hammers. Surrounding this is an inscription reading: "Hammer away, ye hostile bands; the hammers break — the anvil stands." Many hammers have been broken on this anvil — the Word of God — down through the centuries, yet the anvil is still as sound and firm as ever. God's Word will not be destroyed by the attacks of men, nor will it pass away.

Yet we hear on almost every hand today that the old view of the Bible is dead. We are told that if we say "The Bible is the Word of God" we are "bibliolaters" — worshippers of the Bible — or that we believe in "a paper pope." We are told that the Bible only contains the Word of God, while at the same time it also contains a great deal of myth, legend, unreliable history and pre-scientific nonsense. More than any other single factor, probably, this changed attitude toward the Bible explains the present confusion, weakness and general frustration of the "mainstream" Protestant denominations. When the chart and compass are no longer trusted in as reliable, the ship cannot reach its proper destination.

It is claimed that modern scholarship has made it impossible for an intelligent, educated person to retain the old view of the Bible. This claim is simply false. It is not scholarship that has sabotaged faith in the Bible; it is scholarship in the hands of unbelieving scholars who start out with a naturalistic philosophy of religion. Before they even look at the facts, they put on their amber-colored glasses, so everything they see is amber-colored. Scholars who start out by assuming that nature is all that exists, that God has no independent existence (apart from the world), that God never could or did speak to any man, that miracles are impossible and never happened, and so forth, will of course hold that the historic view of the Bible is incredible and those who adhere to it are ignorant fools. But this is not scholarship; it is scholarship used and distorted by a philosophy that has no room for the living God.

Some people today say piously, "I believe in the

inspiration of the Bible, but I do not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible." This means, "I believe that the general ideas of the Bible are from God, but the exact words are not from God and often are wrong." The person who says this is a destroyer of faith in the Bible. The Bible is a book made up of words. Take away the words, and you have only blank paper left. Change the words, and you change the meaning. Exact thought can be expressed only in words. God could not give us an exact revelation of Himself and His will except by controlling the exact words in which it is stated. Besides, how does anyone know what the "general ideas" of the Bible are except by an induction from the actual words of the Bible? Do you sign a contract without reading the fine print, and then say, "I don't pay any attention to the fine print — I just go by the general ideas of the contract"—? Try telling this to a judge in a courtroom. The much-maligned verbal inspiration of the Bible is the only kind of inspiration that really means anything. When it is abandoned, the Bible no longer conveys a definite and trustworthy message.

Another popular evasion is to say, "We need Christ as a living person, not a dead Book." This means to pay high honor to Christ but really it dishonors Him, for it rejects His own explicit teaching about the nature of the Bible. Jesus said, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). How can people honor Christ as "a living Person" while they dishonor Him by rejecting His teaching about the written Word? The person who speaks this way is really saying, "I know better than Jesus Christ what the real nature of the Bible is." Moreover, it is from this so-called "dead book" that we learn all we know about the living Person, Christ. Christ and the written Word are not enemies, as if we had to choose between them, accepting one and rejecting the other. There is the most perfect and entire harmony between them. And it is a certainty that the future of the Christian Church is determined by its attitude toward the Bible. If the Bible is discounted and explained away, the Church will grow weaker and more ineffective in the modern world.

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## The Ultimate Priest

By J. G. Vos

The function of a priest is the counterpart of that of a prophet. Last month we considered Christ as the Absolute Prophet, the One who meets man's need for knowledge of absolute truth, who brings freedom from ignorance and error. As the prophet moves from God toward man with a revelation of truth, so the priest moves from man toward God with a sacrifice offered to satisfy God's justice and make possible the canceling of the guilt of man's sin. Christ, the ultimate Priest, meets man's need for forgiveness. He brings freedom from guilt and provides the basis for a right relationship to the holiness of God.

The term "guilt" was long considered outmoded, but has become respectable again through developments

in modern psychology. However, the psychologists mean subjective guilt, the feeling of guilt. Christ's function of priest, on the other hand, is related to objective guilt, that is, the displeasure of God with the sinner. A common Bible term for this displeasure is the wrath of God, not meaning a petulant loss of temper on God's part, but His holy reaction to all that is contrary to His nature. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men . . ." (Rom. 1:18). The guilty person is the object of God's holy wrath against sin.

The blood sacrifices of the Old Testament have occasioned much eye-brow-raising. A little girl asked her mother, "Why did God want all those animals to be

killed?" The mother tried to explain it by saying that religion was crude and primitive in those times. The child replied, "I know, mother; that was before God decided to be a Christian, wasn't it?" Modern evolutionistic works on anthropology and comparative religions explain the blood sacrifices as left-overs from crude primitivism — from the stone age, when life was raw. The truth, of course, is much deeper. Sacrifice is man's response to his consciousness of guilt. It corresponds to something very deep in the human personality. Guilt cannot be really rationalized away. It has to be canceled by the payment of a penalty. Psychiatry may succeed in getting people over the subjective feeling of guilt, but if the person is really guilty in the sight of God, psychiatry can never remove God's wrath from him.

Before the Chinese revolution of 1911-12 the Emperor of China sacrificed a horse annually for the sins of the people of China — an unclean animal, according to the Bible, but the fact of the sacrifice speaks volumes concerning the deep conviction of guilt. The poet Browning wrote: "It is by no breath, turn of eye, wave of

hand, that salvation joins issue with death." John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Any Jew hearing this would think instantly of two things in the Old Testament: the Passover lamb, and the Servant of Jehovah in Isaiah 53. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Ex. 12:13); "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). This is *atonement*, which means at-one-ment. It is the reconciliation of sinful man with the holy God by a sacrifice which cancels the guilt of sin. Offering the sacrifice is the function of a priest. Christ Himself is both the priest and the sacrifice. He offered Himself when he willingly died on the cross for our sins.

God forgives sinners, but He never forgives sins. Honesty compels God to require that the penalty be paid in every case. But in the case of the Christian, Christ suffers the penalty in his stead. This is the very heart of Christianity. Christ's function of priest is central and of supreme importance. Without it there could be no Gospel, no salvation, no hope of ever getting right with God.

---

## *Why Psalms?*

G. I. Williamson

Did you ever worship in a Church that sings only the psalms in worship? Today many people would probably say 'no.' But this wasn't always so. In fact, during most of the time since the Reformation, Churches have been singing the psalms. It is only in comparatively recent times that Presbyterian, Reformed, Baptist, and Congregational Churches have forsaken the psalms of the Bible in favor of modern hymns. (Next time you have a hymn-book in hand notice how many were not even written until after 1850!) The practice of the Reformed Presbyterian Church did not seem strange in times when many Protestant Churches sang psalms. But it does seem strange today to those who are only familiar with modern hymns. Thus we are often asked, 'Why do you sing psalms?'

In answer to this question we would first say simply this: we sing psalms because God has commanded us to do so. "Is any among you afflicted?" asks James, "let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (James 5:13). We pray because God commands us to pray. We also sing psalms because God commands us to sing psalms.

But of course someone will ask, 'Why do you sing *only* the psalms?' The answer again is simple to state: we sing only psalms because God has not commanded us to sing anything else. Or, in other words, we sing psalms because we are commanded to sing psalms, and we do not sing the modern hymns because we are not commanded to sing them.

Here it is necessary to remind ourselves of the great Reformation principle of the sole authority of Scripture. The Bible is the only rule of our faith and practice. Thus we can say to the Roman Catholic Church (for example) 'No, we cannot accept your seven sacraments, because five are not commanded in Scripture. We accept only two sacraments because only

two are commanded by God.' We do not have the right to add what we want to that which God has given. This we call the regulative principle of worship. If God has not commanded a particular thing in divine worship, it is therefore no legitimate part of true worship. It was on the basis of this teaching of the Bible (Deut. 12:32; Lev. 10:1,2; Isa. 1:12; Mk. 7:7; etc.) that the worship of God was purified at the time of the Reformation.

But again, someone may ask, 'Didn't the Apostle Paul command us to sing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs?' (Col. 3:16,17; Eph. 5:19) The answer is obvious: of course he did. But what did he mean when he wrote these words? That is the real question. And it is our conviction that the older Protestant view is correct. When Paul wrote these words he obviously referred to existing compositions. He did not command the Ephesians and Colossians to compose psalms, hymns and songs that they did not yet have. No, he told them to sing compositions already in their possession. And where were these psalms, hymns and songs that Paul commanded them to sing? Well, strange as it may seem to us today, they were right there in the Greek Bible used by these early Christians. Yes, in the Septuagint (Greek) version of the Old Testament we find psalms, hymns and songs in the book of Psalms. Just as we find "commandments, statutes, and judgments" as various kinds of laws, so we find "psalms, hymns, and songs" as various kinds of praise compositions in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Once this is understood, it will be easy to see why Paul commanded the Colossian Christians to "let the word of Christ dwell in" them "richly" by singing these compositions. The word of Christ can only be Scripture. It cannot be the uninspired poetry of men. We can also understand why Paul would command them to be "teaching and admonishing one another" as they sang.

Protestants have always refused to be admonished or taught by any authority other than Scripture. Only the Bible may be used for teaching and admonishing. And it is, if we sing only the psalms. Again we note that the psalms, hymns, and songs mentioned by the Apostle are to be "spiritual." The original ought to be translated "spiritual psalms, hymns, and songs." This is precisely what we have in the book of Psalms. We have spiritual (that is, divinely inspired) compositions, some of which are entitled psalms, and some hymns, and some songs. (Note the titles to Psalms 120—134 in the English Bible, for example).

Perhaps it will help if we state the matter briefly, as we find it in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18,19. To express it in a positive way: 1) we are commanded to become filled with Christ's Word and Spirit; 2) we are to effect this through mutual instruction and admonition in singing; and 3) the manual for this is the psalter because it alone contains inspired psalms, hymns, and songs. To express it negatively: 1) we are not commanded to compose our own praises, nor to be filled with the spirit and words of men; 2) we are not commanded to engage in self-expression, nor to be instructed and admonished by the thoughts and feelings of men; and 3) therefore we are not commanded to submit to any manual of instruction or admonition other than the inspired psalter.

But someone may yet ask, 'Doesn't this make you feel a great sense of loss — not to be free to sing the many well loved hymns of our day in worship?' In answer, let

us say, emphatically, 'no!' The writer of these lines was brought up on the uninspired hymns. Yes, they do evoke familiar memories. When I hear them I do sometimes get a nostalgic feeling. But this is precisely the point. When I come to worship God I want to be free — free from everything that is of mere human origin. I want to be free to worship God with words of praise and adoration that I know He will accept. And when I lift up my voice to praise Him with His own perfect word, I can be sure of this. With God's Spirit in my heart, and His Word in my mouth, I can indeed worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). This freedom I never had until I learned to sing the psalms alone in worship. Little wonder that Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

The writer once asked a friend two questions, 'When we worship God, should we offer up only the very best, or should it be less than the best?' His answer was immediate: 'Only the best.' 'Well then,' I asked, 'which is best: the divinely inspired psalms of the Bible, or the uninspired hymns that men write today?' Again his answer was without hesitation: 'The inspired psalms are better — far better — than the uninspired hymns. They may be good, very good. But the psalms are the very word of God.' 'Exactly,' I said, 'and that is why I can sing only the psalms in worship.'

And now, let me leave the reader with a final question. 'Why sing anything but the psalms in the worship of God?'

---

## *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 hands 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 rock 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.

## *All Saints*

By Christina G. Rossetti

As grains of sand, as stars, as drops of dew,  
Numbered and treasured by the Almighty Hand,  
The Saints triumphant throng that holy land  
Where all things and Jerusalem are new.

We know not half they sing or half they do,  
But this we know, they rest and understand;  
While like a conflagration, freshly fanned  
Their love glows upward, outward, through and through.

Lo like a stream of incense launched on flame  
Fresh Saints stream up from death to life above,  
To shine among those others and rejoice:  
What matters tribulation whence they came?  
All love and only love can find a voice  
Where God makes glad His saints, for God is love.

---

We suggest that what our nation and the world today needs is not a monopolistic totalitarian organization, with its emphasis on social problems such as race, poverty and war, but a spiritual revival brought about by the teaching of sound Biblical doctrine. That alone will produce a greater degree of personal holiness, which in turn will bring about the better social and economic conditions that we all seek to attain.

—Dr. Loraine Boettner

## *Blind Bartimeus*

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Blind Bartimeus at the gates  
of Jericho in darkness waits;  
He hears the crowd — he hears a breath  
Say, "It is Christ of Nazareth!"  
And calls, in tones of agony,  
"Jesus, have mercy now on me!"

The thronging multitudes increase;  
Blind Bartimeus, hold thy peace!  
But still, above the noisy crowd,  
The beggar's cry is shrill and loud;  
Until they say, "He calleth thee!"  
"Fear not, arise, He calleth thee!"

Then saith the Christ, as silent stands  
The crowd, "What wilt thou at my hands?"  
And he replies, "O give me light!  
Rabbi, restore the blind man's sight!"  
And Jesus answers, "Go in peace,  
Thy faith from blindness gives release!"

Ye that have eyes, yet cannot see,  
In darkness and in misery.  
Recall those mighty Voices Three,  
"Jesus, have mercy now on me!  
Fear not, arise, and go in peace!  
Thy faith from blindness gives release!"

## *Alabaster Love*

By Edna Janes Kayser

"... there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head."

— Mark 14:3

Dear Lord, this broken heart of mine  
Is just a box of Your design,  
An alabaster one for You,  
Your precious blood has made anew.  
Like Mary broke and poured with care  
Her tender love upon You there,  
The fragrance of my broken heart  
Emits a sweeter, purer part,  
As I pour out myself in love  
And know your presence from above.  
For broken things give loveliness  
More purely fair and always bless,  
With rich aroma, rare delight —  
And lift men's souls to greater height.  
You let my heart be broken so  
That spikenard might forever flow,  
In streams upon Your thorn-pressed head —  
Upon Your heart that cruelly bled!

## *Linger Not*

By Horatius Bonar

The time is short!  
If thou would'st work for God it must be now;  
If thou would'st win the garland for thy brow,  
Redeem the time!

Shake off earth's sloth!  
Go forth with staff in hand while yet 'tis day;  
Set out with girded loins upon the way;  
Up! Linger not!  
Fold not thy hands!  
What has the pilgrim of the cross and crown  
To do with luxury or couch of down?  
O Pilgrim, on!

With His reward  
He comes; He tarries not: His day is near;  
When men least look for Him will He be here.  
Prepare for Him!

Let not the flood  
Sweep the firm feet from the eternal rock;  
Face calmly, solemnly, the billow's shock,  
Nor fear the storm.

Withstand the foe!  
Die daily, that thou may'st forever live;  
Be faithful unto death: thy Lord will give  
The crown of life.

## *That His Light Shine*

By Esther Belle Heins

The craftsman cleansed and chipped the stone  
We had thought commonplace;  
His trained eye saw a beauty there  
No grime could quite efface.

Beneath an artist's hand appeared  
Small facets, wrought with care,  
But still — small value could be seen  
Till sunlight lingered there.

Each facet like a wound, a tear  
Deep in the Christian's heart,  
To better show the Light of God;  
Of His plan be a part.

When Peter, likened to a stone,  
Once wept, his grief sufficed—  
That God might mold a finer gem  
To glorify the Christ.

---

As the Lord loves a cheerful giver, so likewise a cheerful thanksgiver.

—John Boys

## PSALM 31:1-8

3

Lancashire 7.6.7.6D  
Henry Smart, 1836

1. In You, LORD, I take ref - uge; A - shamed let me not be.  
2. You are my rock and for - tress; For Your sake lead and guide.  
3. I hate those serv - ing i - dols; My trust is in the LORD.

Your right - eous - ness e - ter - nal Dis - play by sav - ing me.  
Free me from nets they've hid - den; My strong - hold You a - bide.  
I'll tri - umph in Your mer - cy; My an - guish You've ex - plored.

In - cline Your ear to hear me; With speed de - liv - er me.  
I now com - mit my spir - it In - to Your out - stretched hand.  
You've known my soul's af - flic - tions, Kept me from Sa - tan's hand.

To me O be a strong rock, A fort to res - cue me.  
I know You have re - deemed me, LORD God of vows that stand.  
My feet You have es - tab - lished where they have room to stand.

(Reprinted from *Adventures in Psalm Singing*. Copyright 1970 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.)



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# *The Grief Of Jesus*

By J. G. Vos

"Jesus wept". John 11:35

Jesus is standing outside Bethany. Mary has just said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died". With the friends who have come with her, she stands there weeping. Faced with this scene, Jesus "groaned in the spirit, and was troubled". Presently He is overcome with sorrow and breaks into tears. Let us consider the grief of Jesus, for it contains abundance of comfort and hope for His people.

## **JESUS' GRIEF SHOWS HIS TRUE**

### **HUMANITY**

God in Himself cannot suffer, for He is unchangeable. Only by becoming man could He suffer. So "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"; the infinite, eternal God took to Himself a human body and soul and was born as a baby in Bethlehem. This human nature was sinless, but complete and truly human. As man, Jesus could and did suffer. Because He had a human soul, he could feel grief. We should always remember that our Saviour is both God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever. Only such a Christ could be the Mediator between God and man; only such a Christ could really save us and bring us eternal life.

## **JESUS' GRIEF SHOWS HIS SYMPATHY**

As our Priest, Jesus must be able to sympathize with sinful human beings (Heb. 5:1,2). At Bethany Jesus provided needed sympathy. Even though He knew that He would soon call Lazarus forth from the tomb by a word of almighty power, still for the moment sympathy was needed, and Jesus provided it. The Gospels provide many accounts of Jesus' sympathy and compassion for the suffering and grief-stricken. Our Saviour who is now enthroned in the glory of heaven, still sympathizes with His people in their troubles, conflicts, disappointments, bereavements, weariness and pain. He is the great High Priest who sympathizes with His own and will comfort them by His Holy Spirit.

## **JESUS' GRIEF SHOWS HIS INDIGNATION**

### **AT EVIL**

Scripture never represents sin or death as tolerable; it has no sentimental attitude toward them. It represents them as absolutely evil, utterly dreadful, starkly contrary to God. The Bible calls death "the last enemy that shall be destroyed". Death is an enemy because it is the work of THE enemy, Satan. Jesus here stands face to face with death, the wages of sin, the fullest work of the enemy. Jesus groaned with the deepest moral indignation against that which absolutely ought not to be, this alien invasion of God's creation by the power of evil. Death is dreadful because it is the wages of sin; sin is dreadful because it is absolutely contrary to the nature of God. Death, and sin which causes death, are so evil that when the Son of God stood among sorrowing relatives at the grave of a beloved friend, His very soul was shaken by the sense of the awfulness of this work of the great enemy.

## **JESUS' GRIEF GUARANTEES THAT EVIL**

### **WILL BE ABOLISHED**

Jesus stands here not as a helpless spectator, but as a King, clothed with almighty power. He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, by His life, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming in glory. What made Jesus groan and weep must be abolished. God, not Satan, is in control of the universe; therefore evil will be abolished for God's children; and for those who are not God's children, evil will be isolated for all eternity in hell. In raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus presently gave a sample of the abolition of evil. When He comes in glory, all His people shall rise again, nevermore to die. When He comes again, He will not weep a single tear, nor will any of His people experience sorrow, sadness or heartache.

Do you know Jesus as your own Saviour, your own Prophet, Priest and King? Remember, it is for HIS PEOPLE that He has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Receive Him as your Saviour and Lord today.

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# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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## *Studies in the Book of Genesis*

(Continued from last issue)

## LESSON 66

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

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

Jacob next seizes a good opportunity to escape from Laban. He does this at a time when Laban is extremely busy with shearing his sheep. Shearing the sheep would not only keep Laban and his family busy, but would probably involve a big feast and a good deal of entertaining. It was a good time for Jacob to get away without any formal farewells. Assembling all his livestock and household goods, with his wives and children and servants, he "stole away unawares," without notifying Laban of his departure. Some may question the rightness of this act. We believe that, under the circumstances, Jacob was fully justified. As the sequel showed, Laban would never have given his consent voluntarily for Jacob and family to depart.

Along with the possessions which rightly belonged to Jacob and his family, Rachel stole "the images that were her father's". These "images" were *teraphim*, apparently a kind of local household gods. It is possible, and there seems to be some evidence to suggest this, that the possession of these household gods had something to do with the inheritance of the family name and property. Or it is possible that Rachel wanted the images simply out of her own tendency toward superstition and idolatry. As Leupold suggests, she may have been a believer in Jehovah, and yet inconsistently believed that the *teraphim* would bring a person good luck. The theft of the *teraphim* was, of course, unknown to Jacob. Perhaps Rachel did not dare to tell him what she was doing, realizing that he would not approve of it. What Jacob thought of the *teraphim* comes to light later (35:2-4) when we are told that Jacob buried them, with other objects, under an oak tree.

Jacob and his household make a clean getaway and succeeded in crossing the Euphrates River. From there the objective is "the mount Gilead," that is, the highlands on the east side of the Jordan River.

Three days have passed since Jacob's departure. Suddenly Laban's sheep-shearing and accompanying festivities are rudely interrupted by the news that Jacob and family are gone. Laban at once assembles a party of his relatives and starts out in pursuit. In the mountains

of Gilead Laban overtakes Jacob. At this point God intervenes directly, warning Laban in a dream: "Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad" (31:24). Laban has been warned, but he does not heed the warning.

The meeting of the two men is marked by angry accusations on Laban's part. Why has Jacob stolen away without formal farewell, taking Laban's daughters as if they were prisoners of war? Why did Jacob not give Laban an opportunity to give a grand farewell party, with music and feasting and general rejoicing. Why has Jacob not even allowed Laban to kiss his daughters good-bye?

Laban was very angry, and anger, like envy, is never logical. Most of Laban's charges suggest their own answer. Jacob has not forced Laban's daughters to accompany him; they are doing it of their own free will. As for the farewell party with music and mirth, Laban was too stingy a man to spend very much on that sort of thing; instead, he would have taken measures to try to prevent Jacob's departure. As to the matter of not letting him kiss his daughters — probably he had not bothered to kiss them for the past several years, when they were living near him; why should he suddenly want to kiss them now? His treatment of them was mercenary, and showed little paternal love. But now, in his anger, he makes an issue of all these matters.

Laban goes on: "It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad" (31:29). Laban's claim that it is in his power to harm Jacob is an arrogant boast. He as much as admits that he does not dare to do anything to hurt Jacob, for he repeats the divine warning given him. We repeat, anger is never logical. If Laban had been cool and logical, he would have realized that the warning from God which he had received, meant that Jacob was right and Laban was wrong. If God is protecting Jacob, then Laban's wild charges must be without real justification.

Finally Laban mentions the matter of the stolen idols. "Wherefore hast thou stolen my gods"? (31:30). Jacob replies, quite truthfully, that he had been afraid that Laban would not allow him to take Rachel and Leah away with him. As for the missing images, "With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live:

before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee" (31:32). Jacob, as is stated in the last part of verse 32, is unaware of the fact that Rachel had stolen the images.

Jacob, of course, should never have conceded that the person guilty of stealing the images should suffer the death penalty. But Jacob was doubtless agitated at the moment. Laban undertakes a systematic search, going through Jacob's tent, Leah's tent, Bilhah's tent, Zilpah's tent — all without finding what he was looking for — and finally coming to Rachel's tent. Now Rachel proves herself to be not only a thief but also a liar. Having concealed the idols in the camel's furniture, she sits on them and falsely tells her father that she is ill and cannot rise up to honor him as he enters the tent. While she may have been ill, still her statement to her father was a lie because it was intended to deceive him into believing that the images were not in the tent.

Up to this point it has been Laban that was angry. Now, after Laban's unsuccessful search of the tents for his teraphim, Jacob becomes angry and berates Laban for his ungenerous and unfair conduct. "And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban" (31:36). For years Jacob has kept his temper under control, so far as we have any record. Now, at last, he has had more than he can take. He lets go, and the angry words pour out, one statement on top of another. We must remember, of course, that Jacob does not yet know that Laban was right about the theft of the idols; he does not yet know that his beloved Rachel had stolen them.

Angrily protesting his innocence, he charges Laban with having "hotly pursued" after him. Laban has chased after Jacob as if Jacob were an escaped criminal. Laban has searched through all the household effects of Jacob's family, but has found nothing that belonged to him. Loudly and boldly Jacob challenges Laban to lay before their brethren whatever he has found. Of course Laban has found nothing, but this gives all the more effect to Jacob's demand that the kinsmen serve as a jury to decide matters between the two men. Laban, of course, could not reply a word to all this.

Following this, Jacob rehearses the history of his relations with Laban. He has served Laban faithfully and with the most scrupulous honesty. He, Jacob, has personally borne the loss of sheep torn of beasts; he has strictly refrained from butchering for the use of his family animals that belonged to Laban. He has served Laban twenty years, suffering hardships by day and by night — fourteen years for Laban's two daughters, and six years for livestock — during which time Laban has changed his contract "ten times".

Last of all, Jacob ascribes all his own success and prosperity to the blessing of God: "Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight" (31:42). It is clear that Jacob does not believe a word of Laban's loud protestations of love and friendship. He ascribes his success solely to the providence and intervention of God.

It would seem that there really was nothing that Laban could say in reply to this speech of Jacob (31:36-42). At the end of Jacob's speech Laban does make a reply, but it is in a greatly subdued tone as compared with his previous arrogance. He makes one last claim that "These daughters are my daughters", etc., and then confesses that, as they are in fact his own daughters, of course he will not harm them: "And what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have borne"? (31:43). After all, a man does not wish to injure his own children and grandchildren.

These words of Laban in verse 43 we take to be mere bluff and bluster. He has been decisively beaten in the argument; the justice of Jacob's defence is evident to all; but in order to avoid "losing face," Laban continues his blustering claims a bit longer. Then he subsides, and proposes a peaceful settlement: "Now therefore come thou let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for witness between me and thee" (31:44). Knowing himself to be definitely in the wrong, and perhaps fearing that Jacob may at some future time seek revenge, Laban seeks a covenant between Jacob and himself. It is noteworthy that Laban evidently believes that Jacob is a man who will keep a covenant once he has made it.

Laban proposed the covenant; it was he that needed it rather than Jacob. But it was Jacob who set up a stone for a pillar, and called upon his brethren to gather stones to build up a heap. This indicates Jacob's love of peace. He is not seeking revenge against Laban; he only wants to be able to depart to his own country and kindred in peace. So Jacob takes the initiative in setting up the pillar and building the heap of rocks.

The heap of rocks built, the assembled company sat down upon it to partake of a meal. This feast was regarded as necessary to make the covenant between the two men fully binding.

"And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed" (31:47). This interesting item is included by Moses in the narrative. Laban spoke Aramaic, the language of Mesopotamia; Jacob spoke Hebrew, the language of Canaan. Jacob, of course, having lived twenty years in Mesopotamia must have been able to speak and understand the Aramaic language. But in this sacred matter of a covenant he uses the language of Canaan, the land of promise. The two names, in Aramaic and Hebrew, mean approximately the same thing: "heap of testimony" or "heap of witness."

Leupold comments at this point on the interesting fact that the ancestors of the Hebrew nation were of a stock that originally spoke Aramaic, but in Palestine gave up Aramaic for Hebrew. Hebrew was their language for many centuries, only to be replaced by Aramaic after all, following the Babylonian Captivity of the sixth century before Christ. In the time of Christ Aramaic was the spoken language of the Jews of Palestine. This brings out the interesting fact that the language ordinarily spoken by Jesus was that of Laban, not that of Jacob, though Jesus certainly was able to read and understand Hebrew.

“And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day” (31:48a). Moses comments, “Therefore was the name of it called Galeed, and Mizpah; for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another” (31:48,49). Mizpah means “watch” or “watch-station”. From this verse the so-called Mizpah Benediction is derived. Often used as a prayer or benediction at the close of religious meetings, it is almost never correctly quoted. The writer has heard it so used probably hundreds of times and cannot recall hearing it correctly quoted a single time. The incorrect form in which it is commonly quoted is “The Lord watch between me and thee, while we are absent one from the other”, instead of “The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.” The differences are slight and verbal, of course, but when we quote the words of Scripture we should quote them with precision.

Apart from the common incorrect quotation, we may comment that it is a strange example of accommodation of Scripture that this verse has ever come to be used as a blessing in religious meetings. Probably the Christian Endeavor movement popularized it. As commonly used, it means something like this: “The Lord take good care of us all, until we meet again next Sabbath evening or at some future time.” But as used by Laban it had no such implication of blessing. The saying was Laban’s, not Jacob’s, and it is full of unkindness and suspicion. The obvious meaning is: “The Lord watch to see that neither of us breaks the terms of this covenant by harming the other.” It is an invocation of God to stand guard between two men, neither of whom really trusts the other. Leupold is correct in saying that the common use of the verse as a benediction “almost amounts to a wicked perversion of Scripture” (Exposition of Genesis, II, p. 856). A better character than Laban should be chosen from Scripture when we are looking for a form of benediction to use.

**Questions:**

1. What opportunity did Jacob seize for escaping from Laban?
2. Why was sheepshearing always a specially busy time?
3. Was Jacob justified in stealing away without notice to Laban?
4. What theft was perpetrated by Rachel on the eve of departure?
5. What may have been Rachel’s motive in this theft?
6. What disposition did Jacob finally make of what Rachel stole?
7. What great river did Jacob cross on his way to Canaan?
8. How far had Jacob gotten before Laban overtook him?
9. How much time had elapsed when Laban learned that Jacob was gone?

10. What warning came to Laban from God?
11. What accusations did Laban make on meeting Jacob?
12. To what extent were Laban’s charges justified?
13. What empty boast did Laban make in speaking with Jacob?
14. What rash promise did Jacob make to Laban concerning the unknown person guilty of stealing Laban’s images?
15. What act of Rachel showed her to be untruthful as well as dishonest?
16. At what point in the proceedings did Jacob become angry?
17. What fact was unknown to Jacob at the time when he became angry at Laban?
18. What challenge to Laban did Jacob utter?
19. What accusations did Jacob bring against Laban?
20. To what did Jacob ascribe his own prosperity and success?
21. What was the real character of Laban’s reply to Jacob’s speech?
22. What proposal did Laban make for a final settlement of the dispute?
23. What action was taken by Jacob to establish the settlement?
24. How was the covenant ratified?
25. What was the purpose of the heap of stones that was built up?
26. What language was spoken by Laban? What by Jacob?
27. Which was the original language of the ancestors of the Hebrew nation?
28. Which was their language in the time of Christ?
29. Which was their language during the greater part of their history?
30. What is the meaning of the name Mizpah?
31. How is the “Mizpah Benediction” often incorrectly quoted?
32. What is meant by “accommodation of Scripture”?
33. Why is the common use of the “Mizpah Benediction” an instance of accommodation of Scripture?

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

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

Laban continues his admonitions to Jacob: "If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee" (31:50). Here Laban suddenly shows an unusual concern for the welfare of his daughters. He casts a reflection on Jacob's character by suggesting the possibility that Jacob may treat Leah and Rachel badly, or may even marry new wives in addition to those he already had. This insinuation of Laban, we must say, is entirely uncalled for. As a matter of fact, Jacob had never really wanted more than one wife. It was, in fact, Laban's own fault that he had two. As for the addition of the maidservants Bilhah and Zilpah, Jacob was not primarily to blame for that either; he had yielded to the wishes of Rachel and Leah, but the idea had not been his in the first place. So for Laban at this time to insinuate that Jacob may be an abandoned and unprincipled polygamist, and perhaps also likely to treat his wives cruelly, was really adding insult to injury. Solemnly Laban calls upon God to be a witness between himself and Jacob if this (purely hypothetical) situation should ever arise. Laban is here trying to save his own face and make himself appear righteous by casting slurs upon a better man than himself.

Next, Laban suggests that Jacob might at some future time return with an expedition to take revenge. The heap of stones is to be a witness between himself and Jacob, that neither party is to advance beyond this spot to do the other harm. To add a color of piety to his insulting insinuations, Laban solemnly calls upon "the God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father" to act as judge between himself and Jacob. We must remember that the man who is thus solemnly pronouncing the name of "the God of Abraham," etc., is the same man who a little while before was complaining because someone had stolen his idols. It is possible that by "the God of Nahor" Laban means a different deity from "the God of Abraham." In fact, this seems to be indicated by the fact that the verb "judge" in the Hebrew is in the plural, not the singular number. Laban evidently believes in more than one god; he is a polytheist; if deities are to be called upon, Laban apparently thinks, then the more the better.

Jacob, on his part, swears "by the fear of his father Isaac." It is possible that this form of the name of God was deliberately chosen by Jacob in order to avoid use of the form employed by Laban, inasmuch as Laban seemed to be identifying the God of Abraham with his own God (Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, II, p. 858).

"Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount" (31:54). Note that it does not say that Jacob and Laban offered sacrifice jointly. This was not a union service. It was an act of worship on the part of Jacob, who certainly would not

participate in the offering of sacrifice with a known idolater such as his uncle Laban was. The eating of bread which is mentioned in the latter part of verse 54, therefore, is to be regarded as something separate from the actual offering of the sacrifice itself. Or possibly the "brethren" who are mentioned included only the men of Jacob's establishment, not Laban and his party.

"And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place" (31:55). The "sons" here mentioned are, of course, Laban's grandsons. The "daughters" would be both his granddaughters and his actual daughters. This marks the exit of Laban from the history.

Attempts have been made to identify the site of the heap of stones built by Jacob and called Galeed or Mizpah. The only thing that is certain about the location is that it must be somewhere in Transjordan north of the Jabbok River. As to the actual site, it is unknown. It is unlikely that it will ever be discovered, for the record mentions no identifying features such as an inscription. Obviously any great heap of stones in the area might be the right one, but there is no way of determining which it is.

Jacob is now almost home. "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim" (32:1,2). It is upon Jacob's entrance to the Promised Land that he encounters the angels of God. It is possible that angels had been accompanying Jacob all the way, but that at this point, as he again treads on the sacred soil of the Promised Land, they are visibly manifested. In any case, this supernatural manifestation would serve the necessary purpose of reassuring Jacob. He has now safely escaped from his uncle Laban, but another trouble looms on the horizon — soon he must meet his brother Esau. The last time he saw Esau, the latter was "comforting himself" with plans to kill Jacob. The appearance of angels betokened the near presence and special protection and favor of God. Jacob names the spot Mahanaim. This Hebrew noun is the dual number and means "two camps" or "two hosts". The "two hosts" would be the host of angels, and the host of Jacob's company. As in the case of Mizpah, the location of Mahanaim is unknown today. It is, however, repeatedly mentioned in the historical books of the Old Testament, so the location must have been known long after the time of Jacob.

Another question concerns whether the angels were seen by Jacob alone, or by all in his company. This cannot be positively answered, though it is possible, perhaps probable, that Jacob alone saw them. Certainly Jacob was the only one present who possessed, so far as we know, any real spiritual maturity.

The appearance of the angels is followed by Jacob's careful preparations for meeting his brother Esau. Jacob sends messengers to Esau in advance, to the land of Seir, the country of Edom. This is the region directly

south of the Dead Sea. It is some distance from the Jabbok River which Jacob is now approaching, perhaps about 75 miles. It will be recalled that Jacob's mother, Rebekah, promised to send for Jacob to come home when Esau's anger had cooled off (27:44,45). But the promise has not been kept. Jacob is returning home without having been sent for. The implication would seem, in his mind, to be that Esau is still angry, and therefore that Esau still plans to kill him. As a matter of fact, Esau's murderous wrath has cooled and he is no longer planning to murder Jacob, but Jacob of course has no way of knowing this. Therefore he carefully plans and carries out conciliatory measures. The messengers are to find Esau, then they are to convey a message from Jacob to him. Esau is to be addressed as "My lord Esau" and Jacob is to be referred to as "thy servant Jacob." Esau is to be informed that Jacob has sojourned with his uncle Laban until now; that Jacob now is a man of property, possessing oxen, asses, flocks, menservants and womenservants; and that Jacob entreats his favor, wishing to find grace in his sight. It is a very diplomatic procedure, calculated to win the good will of Esau (32:3-5).

The messengers have carried out their commission. They have found Esau and have conveyed the message. They also bring a reply. Esau is coming in person to meet Jacob, accompanied by four hundred men. (It is possible that the messengers did not have to travel all the way to Edom. Esau may have received advance news of Jacob's imminent arrival and have already set out to meet him. The messengers may have met Esau when but a couple of days' journey from Jacob's camp). In any case, Esau has not sent a favorable reply. He has not replied that Jacob has found grace in his sight. Instead, he is coming in person. The mention of four hundred men accompanying Esau would naturally alarm Jacob. People on peaceful and friendly errands do not usually travel accompanied by 400 men. Not unnaturally, Jacob feels dismayed. He was "greatly afraid and distressed" (32:7).

Taking precautionary measures, Jacob first divides his entire party into two bands — both the people and the animals. If Esau destroys one band, at least the other band may escape. Next, Jacob resorts to prayer, a very earnest prayer for protection from the malice of Esau (32:9-12). Some may be inclined to criticize Jacob for resorting to action first and leaving prayer until afterwards. We do not feel that way about it. While it sounds pious to say that prayer should always come first, the truth is that in emergencies sometimes action is our first duty. Action can be performed in the spirit of prayer even when our whole attention is necessarily absorbed by the action. If our house is on fire, it is our duty to devote all our energies to putting the fire out first; prayer properly comes afterwards.

In Jacob's prayer, note that he addresses God as "God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." This does not mean that he fails to recognize God as his own God, but rather that he pleads for like covenant mercies and blessings for himself, as had been given to Abraham and Isaac. Jacob pleads God's promises and his own need. He disclaims any personal worthiness, but mentions past blessings received from

God. Coming directly to the point, he pleads for divine deliverance from his brother Esau, adding "for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." Finally, he recalls the covenant promise of God which had been given to him (28:13,14).

The critics have taken this prayer of Jacob to pieces and raised various objections against it. In spite of the critics, we believe it to be a genuine prayer of Jacob and a splendid example of believing prayer in time of need. To the charge that this prayer contains no confession or sense of sin, it is sufficient to reply that Jacob professed utter unworthiness over against God. As Leupold points out, the thing that makes us unworthy is just sin.

Spending the night at that spot, Jacob assembles a present for his brother Esau, calculated to pacify his wrath if it is indeed in wrath that Esau is approaching. The gift was a lavish and costly one, such as might be expected to influence a man like Esau and win his favor. The total number of animals set apart and sent on to Esau is 580, so the value must have been correspondingly great. It indicates something of the great wealth of Jacob that he was in a position to send such a rich gift to his brother. The droves, one kind of animals in each drove, are properly spaced and sent on ahead at intervals. Esau, of course, would be duly surprised when the first drove reached him, and his astonishment would mount as drove followed drove. There were five droves in all. The servants who convey the droves to Esau are to state that the animals are a present from Jacob to Esau, and that Jacob himself is following them. They are to remember to address Esau as "my lord Esau" and to speak of Jacob as Esau's "servant." Thus the costly present has been dispatched to Esau's hands. "So went the present over before him; and himself lodged that night in the company" (32:21).

#### Questions:

1. How did Laban cast an unnecessary reflection on Jacob's character?
2. Why was this reflection on Jacob's character uncalled for?
3. How many wives did Jacob really want?
4. What must be regarded as Laban's real reason for casting slurs on Jacob?
5. What action did Laban insinuate Jacob might take at some future time?
6. Upon what God or deities did Laban call to ratify the agreement?
7. Why was Laban's calling upon "the God of Abraham" out of place and inconsistent on his part?
8. What may Laban have meant by "the God of Nahor"? What word in the Hebrew suggests this?
9. By what name of God did Jacob swear his oath?
10. Who offered sacrifice upon the mount? Why are

we warranted in saying that this was not a union service?

11. What did Laban do early the next morning?
12. What was the general location of the heap of stones called Mizpah and Galeed?
13. Why can the exact location of the heap not be known?
14. What supernatural manifestation was granted to Jacob at the time of his re-entrance to the Promised Land?
15. What purpose would be served by this supernatural visitation?
16. Why would Jacob specially need reassurance at this time?
17. What had been Esau's attitude toward Joseph when the two brothers had last seen each other?
18. What is the meaning of the name Mahanaim? Why did Jacob choose this name for the place?
19. What preparations did Jacob make for meeting Esau?

20. How far was Edom from the Jabbok River?
21. What fact would lead Jacob to conclude that Esau was still angry at him?
22. How are Jacob's messengers to address Esau? How are they to refer to Jacob?
23. What kind of reply did the messengers bring back to Jacob?
24. Why was Jacob "greatly afraid and distressed"?
25. What special precautionary measure did Jacob take as soon as he learned of the approach of Esau?
26. Was Jacob justified in taking action first, and leaving prayer until afterwards?
27. How can we answer the charge that Jacob's prayer contains no confession of sin?
28. What gift did Jacob send to Esau to conciliate him?
29. How was the arrangement and timing of the gift calculated to impress Esau and win his favor?

#### LESSON 68

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

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

At the end of the last lesson we learned that Jacob, having dispatched his rich gift to Esau, himself "lodged that night in the company" (32:21). Apparently, however, it was only for part of the night. For during the night he took further action. "And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone. . ." (32:22-24).

Obviously it would be foolhardy to allow Esau to meet him while his establishment is involved in the difficult matter of crossing a stream; therefore Jacob undertakes to get this matter over with in advance. Jacob now remains alone on the north side of the Jabbok.

The Jabbok is a stream which flows into the Jordan from the east. In its last few miles before entering the Jordan it flows through a deep gorge. The stream is said to be about thirty feet wide, the depth of the water varying with the season, but clearly not being too deep for fording at the time.

We have now come to the study of one of the strangest, most mysterious incidents recorded in the Bible — Jacob's wrestling with "a man" until the break of day. This incident is so strange and mysterious that some scholars have pronounced it mythical rather than historical. Those who regard it as a myth, however, do

not agree among themselves as to what idea the story is intended to represent. Over against the view that this experience of Jacob is mythical, we hold that it is historical and, moreover, that it was not a merely spiritual or subjective experience, but involved real wrestling with a person who was objectively present and was manifested in a bodily form.

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" (32:24). That this "man" was not really a human being is proved by a reference in the book of the prophet Hosea (12:2-5), which states of Jacob: "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us; even the Lord of Hosts; the Lord is his memorial." Here the "man" is called the "angel," and what follows implies that this "angel" is not an ordinary angel but is a theophany, a manifestation of God Himself.

Jacob has been up against strong opposition for years. Having finally gotten clear of his uncle Laban, he is still concerned and anxious about the coming meeting with his brother Esau. By his own admission, Jacob is afraid of Esau. His previous actions on this might show that the problem of meeting Esau was uppermost in his mind. Jacob regards his relationship to Esau as his great problem. But Jacob needs to learn the lesson that his greatest problem is not his relationship to his brother but his relationship to God. Really that is everyone's greatest problem — it is a problem which, when faced and solved, furnishes the key to the solution of all other problems. Jacob, then, needs to realize that his greatest and deepest concern must be, not about Esau, but about God.

Jacob's conflict with this mysterious stranger on the bank of the Jabbok is marked by distinct stages. The first stage is that mentioned in verse 24, the wrestling through the night until the break of day. The point of this part is that by reason of his heroic persistence Jacob obtained the blessing from the stranger in the end. Jacob persevered and overcame what seemed to be an insurmountable obstacle. Jacob's persistent wrestling with the stranger — really with God — has been compared to Christ's encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman. The woman persisted in the face of apparent rejection by Christ, until she obtained the blessing which she sought.

It should be noted that the record does not merely state that Jacob wrestled with the stranger, but that the stranger wrestled with Jacob. The stranger's wrestling with Jacob is what is primarily important in the incident. "We must, therefore, take into account the element of divine displeasure Jacob had to overcome, always remembering that this entered into the whole transaction from beginning to end. And this fact colored the frame of mind in which the patriarch prayed, and makes his experience an example for us of prayer, not so much in general, but of a specific kind. It is prayer for forgiveness of sin and the removal of divine displeasure on account of sin that we here find illustrated. And in consonance with this the blessing craved and received was the blessing of pardon and a return to normal relations with God. The event taught Jacob that inheritance of the promises can rest on forgiveness of sin and a purified conscience only" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, pp. 113,114).

The second stage of the encounter begins at the point where the mysterious stranger touches the hollow of Jacob's thigh, putting his thigh out of joint. Jacob thus learns that in the real conflict of life, the true victory is that of surrender to the will of God. God seems to be our adversary as we struggle in prayer, but as God prevails in our life and our will is surrendered to the will of God, we gain the real victory. Jacob must always remember this experience, therefore a physical disability is placed upon him as a reminder. In later life Jacob's limp will remind him of the night on the bank of the Jabbok where he wrestled with God and finally by persistence won the victory.

As day is breaking, the stranger asks to be let go. Jacob, however, refuses, saying, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This is a truly heroic faith, a truly heroic persistence in prayer. So far from being presumptuous or improper on Jacob's part, as some have held, it is highly commended and indicates his real victory in the conflict. Jacob holds on to the very last, he does not give up even when there seems to be good reason for giving up. His thigh is out of joint; the day is breaking; yet Jacob keeps on and will not give up until the blessing has been granted.

Before departing, the stranger changes Jacob's name to Israel. "For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (32:28). This verse proves that Jacob's continued struggle was commendable, not blameworthy. He is declared to have won the victory. The change of name indicates a change

of character. Jacob means "Supplanter" — a name well fitted to Jacob's past history and character. Israel means "he who strives with God" — a name suited to Jacob's new life and character. It should be observed that in the Old Testament both names, Jacob and Israel, continue to be used interchangeably. We may say that "Jacob" stands for Jacob's old nature, while "Israel" stands for his new nature. But in his previous life Jacob had real faith in God as his Saviour, and in his later life he was not perfect but was still involved in some evil. Therefore it was fitting that both names should be used, even after his experience by the Jabbok. "As before, side by side with Jacob's perversity, there had been an element of spirituality, so also afterwards, side by side with the now matured spirituality, there remained traces of the old nature. Hence God continued to subject the patriarch to discipline of affliction even to his old age" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 114). That is to say, though Jacob is now in a right relation to God, and can properly be called "Israel," he is not yet completely sanctified, nor has his old "Jacob" nature been completely eradicated; therefore he can also properly be called "Jacob."

"And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there" (32:29). Jacob seems to be still not absolutely sure of the identity of the mysterious stranger who has been wrestling with him. He asks to be told his name, that is, his identity. The reply is a refusal to tell the name. We may wonder about the reason for this refusal. Luther held that the failure to disclose the name left an atmosphere of mystery about the whole transaction, which would lead Jacob to continued reflection upon it. "In spiritual experiences there is and must be the challenge of the mysterious. A spiritual experience so lucid that a man sees through and is able to analyze every part of it must be rather shallow" (Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, II, p. 880). Furthermore, Jacob can really know the identity of the stranger from the statement that he (Jacob) has power with God, and has prevailed. Also, the blessing which is conferred in verse 29 could really come only from God. As a matter of fact, Jacob realized that it was God he had been wrestling with, for in verse 30 he states, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

"And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (32:30). Peniel means "face of God." (Peniel is usually spelled Penuel in the Old Testament; the meaning is the same).

"And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh" (32:31). The injured thigh reminded him of the experience of the previous night — of his hours of struggle with God, ending in spiritual victory. The rising sun, we may suggest, symbolized the new day dawning in Jacob's life — his real and true life, for which his previous life was only a preparation. We are warranted in suggesting this symbolic significance by the mention of the sunrise in the narrative. It seems to be mentioned as significant. The sun rises every day and we take the daily sunrise for granted without special comment. The mention of it here

is exceptional and suggests symbolic meaning. Jacob has crossed the Jabbok, but he has crossed more than the Jabbok. He has entered a new life, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; all things have become new. The matter of meeting Esau can now be viewed in its proper perspective. No longer need it loom high as the supreme problem of his life.

“Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day; because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank” (32:32). “Unto this day” means, of course, unto the time when Moses wrote the Book of Genesis. How much longer this custom was observed the Bible does not state.

This abstinence from eating a specific part of the flesh of animals was not commanded by God. It was rather a mere custom which the Israelites observed spontaneously. In their observance of this custom we see a recognition, on their part, of the importance and significance of Jacob's strange experience that night by the Jabbok.

Obviously Jacob must have told the story himself. He had been alone with God by the Jabbok. The next morning as the sun rose he limped across the stream and rejoined his family on the southern side of the river. His wives, children and servants would of course instantly note that Jacob was limping. Naturally they would inquire as to what had happened. We can only imagine the wonder with which they would hear the story of that strange night as it was told by the patriarch. But from his telling of the story there arose the custom as to eating which is mentioned in verse 32.

#### Questions:

1. Why did Jacob send his household across the Jabbok by night?
2. How large a stream is the Jabbok? Where is it located?
3. What view of Jacob's wrestling with a mysterious stranger is held by some scholars?
4. Why should this incident be regarded as historical fact?
5. What Scripture text proves that the “man” who wrestled with Jacob was not a human being?
6. What was the real identity of the stranger who wrestled with Jacob?
7. What did Jacob regard as his greatest problem at this time?
8. What was really Jacob's greatest problem at this time?

9. What was the first stage of Jacob's conflict on the bank of the Jabbok?

10. To what New Testament incident has Jacob's wrestling been compared?

11. What kind of prayer is represented by Jacob's struggle?

12. At what point did the second stage of Jacob's struggle begin?

13. Why was a physical disability placed upon Jacob?

14. Why was Jacob's refusal to give up until he received the blessing commendable?

15. What victory did Jacob win?

16. What is the meaning of the name “Jacob”? Of “Israel”?

17. What fact concerning Jacob's life was indicated by the change of name?

18. Why was the name “Jacob” used along with “Israel” in the Old Testament from this point onwards?

19. Why did Jacob ask the mysterious stranger for his name?

20. What may have been the reasons for the stranger's refusal to disclose the name?

21. What statement in the record indicates that Jacob realized that his opponent was God?

22. What name did Jacob give to the place where he had this strange experience?

23. How is Peniel usually spelled in the Old Testament?

24. What is the meaning of the name Peniel?

25. What purpose would the injured thigh serve in Jacob's later life?

26. What may be the symbolic significance of the statement that the sun rose as Jacob crossed over Peniel?

27. How could Jacob now regard the problem of meeting Esau?

28. What custom concerning food among the Israelites had its origin in Jacob's experience at Jabbok?

29. How would the Israelites know the story of what had happened to Jacob by the Jabbok?

#### LESSON 69

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

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

We have reached the beginning of chapter 33 in the Book of Genesis. This chapter relates, first, the meeting of Jacob with Esau, and his reconciliation with him; and after that, the settlement of Jacob and his family in the land of Canaan.

Jacob has spent the night wrestling with God on the bank of the Jabbok River. As the sun rose, he has crossed the Jabbok and joined his family, enjoying a new consciousness of the favor and blessing of God as he limps on his injured thigh.

“And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men” (33:1). As we have previously observed, a man does not ordinarily go on a peaceful errand accompanied by a bodyguard of four hundred men. So the sight of this large company would naturally cause Jacob to be on guard against danger. Jacob takes the only precautionary measure that is possible under the circumstances. He divides the company of his people up into separate groups, taking care to place his beloved Rachel and Joseph last so that if Esau actually attacks, possibly Rachel and Joseph can escape. We do not know the exact age of Joseph at this time but it may have been about six years.

In verse 3, the statement that Jacob “passed over before them” does not refer to crossing the river, for that had already been done. Rather, the meaning is that Jacob went forward to the head of the procession, passing the various groups of his establishment as he did so. Coming at last into the presence of his brother Esau, Jacob ceremoniously bows deeply seven times. This is a typically Oriental manifestation of formal courtesy. It does not imply that Jacob recognized Esau as his superior or his master, but only that he wishes to display the greatest respect toward Esau. After the way Jacob had treated Esau twenty years previously, an informal brotherly greeting would have been out of place. Leupold calls attention to the fact that such multiple bowing is mentioned repeatedly in the Tell-el-Amarna tablets.

Esau’s reaction is very different from what Jacob had feared. “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov. 16:7). Jacob’s earnest prayers are now answered. Esau, whom he has feared so greatly, turns out to be friendly rather than hostile. “And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept” (33:4). That this is to be regarded as a special answer to prayer appears from the fact that Esau is accompanied by four hundred men. The guard of 400 men indicates that Esau’s intentions on leaving home were not necessarily peaceful or friendly to Jacob. It might be argued, of course, that Esau was actually afraid of Jacob and is accompanied by 400 men for self-defence. But in that case, why should Esau have left home at all? The narrative seems to indicate that Esau started out with hostile, or at least mixed, intentions, but on actually meeting Jacob, he has become friendly toward him. This, we repeat, can be regarded as nothing but a special answer to prayer. In it we see, too, the grace of God toward the unworthy. Jacob did not deserve good treatment at the hands of Esau, but God graciously brings it about that Esau is friendly to him.

When Jacob had left home twenty years before he was unmarried. Now he is accompanied by four women, eleven children and a company of servants. Naturally Esau inquires as to the identity of these women and children: what is their relation to Jacob? Jacob replies that they are the children which God has graciously given him. Following this, the handmaidens approach, with their children, and bow respectfully to Esau; then Leah and her children, and finally Rachel and Joseph. It is a strange fact that in verse 7 Joseph is mentioned before his mother Rachel; the reason for this is unknown.

The formal introductions and greetings having been attended to, Esau next inquires as to the droves of livestock which he has received from Jacob’s servants. The servants, it will be recalled, were to present these animals saying “It is a present sent unto my lord Esau” from Jacob. Esau inquires as to the meaning or reason for the present. To this Jacob replies: “These are to find grace in the sight of my lord.” “A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom, strong wrath” (Prov. 21:14). Jacob realizes that if he can get Esau to accept a valuable gift, it will prove the reality and permanence of Esau’s reconciliation to him. If Esau accepts the present, he will be bound by the obligation of honor to drop any antagonism against Jacob which he may have been cherishing. A gentleman cannot accept a handsome gift and then turn and attack the giver. To do so would be to violate his code of honor — especially in an Oriental society.

Oriental politeness and “face” require, moreover, that such a gift be accepted only after a great show of reluctance and protest. Accordingly, Esau protests: “I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself” (33:9). No doubt Esau is by this time a rich man. The fact that he can command a guard of 400 men proves this. So Esau protests that he has enough and Jacob should keep the animals.

Jacob, however, earnestly begs Esau to accept the gift. He pleads that acceptance on Esau’s part will be the token or evidence that he, Jacob, has found grace in Esau’s sight. It will demonstrate that Esau is really favorable toward him and not at enmity with him. “For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me” (33:10). Thus Jacob confesses that Esau’s favor is a manifestation of the favor of God to himself. It was God’s gracious working which changed Esau’s hostile attitude to a friendly and favorable one.

Jacob further confesses that all that he has, he owes to the blessing of God: “God hath dealt graciously with me, and I have enough.” Here the word “enough” is really “everything.” And it is true that Jacob, possessing God as his portion, does indeed possess everything. “Nearly the same words are on the tongues of all; but there are few who truly ascribe to God what they possess: the greater part sacrifice to their own industry. Scarcely one in a hundred is convinced, that whatever is good flows from the gratuitous favor of God; and yet by nature this sense is engraved upon our minds, but we obliterate it by our ingratitude. It has appeared already, how laborious was the life of Jacob: never-

theless, though he had suffered the greatest annoyances, he celebrates only the mercy of God" (Calvin).

Following this earnest plea on Jacob's part, Esau finally consents to accept the present.

Next Esau proposes that the two brothers and their companies proceed together: "Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee" (33:12). Jacob declines, stating that "the children are tender" and that the flocks and herds with young will die if overdriven one day. Jacob proposes, instead, that Esau go on ahead, while Jacob with his household follows at a slower pace, as the children and the animals are able to bear.

We must face the question of the sincerity of this proposal on the part of Jacob. Some, including Calvin, have held that Jacob is insincere and that the real reason he does not wish to proceed together with Esau is that he still does not trust him fully. Calvin comments that although Jacob did have just reason for fearing Esau, nevertheless his anxiety was excessive. He adds that the excuses presented by Jacob were true in themselves, yet they were not his real reasons for being unwilling to accept his brother's proposal. Leupold, on the other hand, holds that Jacob was completely sincere and that the reasons alleged were indeed his real reasons. He states that the long, hard trip in escaping from Laban must have involved driving the livestock "to the limit," and that therefore "caution must be used lest they be overdriven." With regard to this question, the present writer believes that Leupold is correct and Calvin mistaken. There seems to be no sufficient ground for questioning the sincerity of Jacob at this point.

Jacob's proposal is that he and his establishment will proceed slowly "until I come unto my lord unto Seir." The fact that the book of Genesis does not record such a journey of Jacob to Mount Seir is held by some to indicate that he never made the journey. This, however, is obviously unsound reasoning. It is perfectly possible that Jacob did go to Mount Seir, even though the Scripture does not record the trip; it is also possible that at the time of speaking with Esau, Jacob sincerely intended to join his brother at Seir, but later was providentially prevented from doing so. The fact that the New Testament does not state that Paul visited Spain, is no proof that the Apostle never did so. The argument from silence is a very precarious one. We believe Jacob should be credited with being honest and sincere, in the absence of proof to the contrary.

Finally, Esau proposes to leave with Jacob part of his 400 men, to serve as a guard for protection, no doubt. That this was a kind and well-intentioned offer we need not doubt. Nevertheless, Jacob declines his brother's offer. Jacob simply says "What needeth it?" without giving any explanations or reasons. We can only guess what his reasons may have been. Perhaps he wished to preserve his own independence and to avoid giving anyone the impression that he was in any way dependent on Esau for his wealth or well-being. With Jacob's refusal of Esau's offer, the matter is dropped.

Some have raised the question of the spiritual state of Esau at this time. Whether Esau when he finally came

to die was a saved man we cannot say; in the nature of the case only God can know the answer to such a question as that. But does Esau at the time we are studying give evidence of being a saved man? Martin Luther held the affirmative. But as Leupold points out, the evidence points the other way. "Had his faith accepted what the Lord had ordained, he would have held to Jacob as the possessor of the divine promise. His failure to do this seems to indicate that the true spiritual values were not grasped nor understood by him. This prevents his being classed as a man of faith, though in the end the spiritual truth communicated by Isaac may have turned his heart to the Lord" (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, II.893).

"So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir" (33:16). Seir is another name for the land of Edom, located south of the Dead Sea. Esau here drops out of the narrative and does not reappear until 35:29 where he joins Jacob in burying the body of their father Isaac.

By gradual stages Jacob and his household proceed to Succoth. This was located in Trans-jordan not far from Peniel. Because of a bend in the river, a second crossing of the Jabbok would be necessary. The word "Succoth" in Hebrew means "booths," and the narrative states that the place was named Succoth because Jacob made booths there, that is, shelters for his livestock. It is also stated that Jacob built a house for himself at Succoth. This implies residence there for a considerable period of time, perhaps some years.

Next, Jacob arrives at Shalem, "a city of Shechem." This was on the west side of the Jordan River, even though that fact is not mentioned in the text. (It is possible that "Shalem" is not to be taken as a proper noun, but as meaning "safely" or "safe and sound." See the American Revised Version (1901) which in the text reads "in peace" but in the margin "Shalem.")

Although he had built a house at Succoth, on arrival at Shechem Jacob is again a tent-dweller, thus holding to the patriarchal pattern, the significance of which is explained in Hebrews 11:9, 10. However, he purchases "a parcel of a field" from the local inhabitants as a place to pitch his tent, for "a hundred pieces of money". The word translated "pieces of money" here is "kesitas," a word which occurs only here in the Old Testament. The value of this unit is not known. It is presumable, however, that what Jacob purchased for 100 kesitas was not a large estate, but only a small field, and that it was done in order to maintain peace with the local inhabitants, and obviate complaints.

On the piece of land which he had purchased, Jacob erects an altar, and names it El-Elohe-Israel, which means "God, the God of Israel." We have previously read of Abraham and Isaac building altars for the worship of God. Calvin states that they were careful to adhere strictly to the divinely prescribed pattern of worship which had been handed down to them from Noah and Shem. "And not only does he (Jacob) worship God in the secret feeling of his mind; but he exercises himself in ceremonies which are useful and commanded by God. For he knew that men want helps, as long as

they are in the flesh, and that sacrifices were not instituted without reason. He had also another purpose; namely, that his whole family should worship God with the same sense of piety. For it behoves a pious father of a family diligently to take care that he has no profane house, but rather that God should reign there as in a sanctuary. Besides, since the inhabitants of that region had fallen into many superstitions, and had corrupted the true worship of God, Jacob wished to make a distinction between himself and them. The Shechemites and other neighboring nations had certainly altars of their own. Therefore Jacob, by establishing a different method of worship for his household, thus declares that he has a God peculiar to himself, and has not degenerated from the holy fathers, from whom the perfect and genuine religion had proceeded. This course could not but subject him to reproach, because the Shechemites and other inhabitants would feel that they were despised: but the holy man deemed anything preferable to mixing himself with idolaters" (Calvin).

Jacob in naming the altar El-Elohe-Israel — "God, the God of Israel" — of course does not mean that a structure of stones and earth is a visible representation of God. Rather, as Calvin points out, this altar is intended as a memorial and pledge of the revelations and promises of God which Jacob has received in times past. When he sees this altar, he will remember God. "Jacob wished to testify that he worshipped no other God than him who had been manifested by certain oracles, in order that he might distinguish Him from all idols . . . . Moreover Jacob had respect to his posterity; for since the Lord had appeared to him, on the express condition, that he would make with him the covenant of salvation, Jacob leaves this monument, from which, after his death, his descendants might ascertain that his religion had not flowed from a dark or obscure well, or from a turbid pool, but from a clear and pure fountain; as if he had engraved the oracles and visions, by which he had been taught, upon the altar" (Calvin).

This single altar, built by Jacob at or near Shechem, was perhaps the only center, in all the world of that day, of the pure worship of the true God. All nations had their shrines and temples, but this altar, doubtless a very simple erection of stones and earth, stood apart and alone as dedicated to the living and true God. However, as Isaac was still living at this time, we must suppose that an altar to the true God was in existence and in use at or near his habitation also.

#### Questions:

1. Where and how did Jacob spend the night before his meeting with Esau?
2. What fact indicates that Esau had started out from home with an unfriendly attitude toward Jacob?
3. What precautionary measure did Jacob adopt just before meeting his brother?
4. What is meant by the statement that Jacob "passed over before them"?
5. How did Jacob honor his brother upon meeting him?
6. What was Esau's attitude when he actually met Jacob?
7. How can the change in Esau's attitude be accounted for?
8. What question did Esau address to Jacob?
9. What was Esau's reluctant to accept Jacob's gift?
11. Why was Jacob insistent that the gift be accepted?
12. What fact in the record proves that Esau was a rich man?
13. To what does Jacob attribute Esau's favorable attitude?
14. To what does Jacob attribute all the good that he possesses?
15. What proposal did Esau make as to the journey from Peniel?
16. On what grounds did Jacob decline Esau's proposal?
17. What was Calvin's opinion as to the sincerity of Jacob in this matter?
18. What view should we take as to Jacob's sincerity in declining to accompany Esau?
19. What can be said about the question of whether Jacob later visited Esau at Mount Seir?
20. What may have been Jacob's reason for declining Esau's offer to provide a guard?
21. What can be said about the spiritual state of Esau at this time?
22. Where was Seir located? What other name was used for the region?
23. Where was Succoth located? Why was it called Succoth?
24. What question exists concerning the meaning of the word Shalem in 33:18?
25. What, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, was the significance of the patriarchs' dwelling in tents instead of houses?
26. What may have been Jacob's reason for purchasing a field near Shechem?
27. How much did Jacob pay for the field? Why is it impossible to know how much this was in terms of present-day money?
28. What is the meaning of the phrase El-Elohe-Israel?

29. What probably were Jacob's reasons for building an altar?

30. What would be the natural attitude of the local

inhabitants to Jacob's altar?

31. In what way was Jacob's altar unique, or nearly unique, in the world of that day?

#### LESSON 70

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

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

Chapter 34, to which we have now come, records the scandalous events which followed upon the act of Dinah, daughter of Jacob and Leah, in venturing away from home "to see the daughters of the land." The birth of Dinah is recorded in 30:21. It is probable that at the time of the events recorded in chapter 34 she was 14 or 15 years old.

Many writers have undertaken to place the blame upon Dinah for occasioning the scandals of this chapter. However, the record does not necessarily imply that she was at fault. As to what her motive may have been, and to what extent she was at fault, we are not informed and can only guess.

The inhabitants of Shechem are called Hivites, but in 48:22 they are referred to as Amorites. This is to be explained by the fact that the term "Amorites," like the term "Canaanites," was sometimes used as a blanket designation of the non-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan.

We shall not dwell on the sordid details of this story, but only note and comment on the main facts. Dinah is seduced and violated by Shechem, a Hivite prince. Following this, Shechem seeks to marry her. From his point of view, under the circumstances, this would be the honorable thing to do.

Negotiations follow between the father of Shechem and the family of Dinah. The sons of Jacob agree to the proposed marriage, but only on one condition, namely, that all the males of the Shechemites be circumcised. This proposal, as it turns out later, is not made in good faith by the sons of Jacob, but with an intention of treachery.

The Shechemites agree to the proposal of the sons of Jacob, reasoning that by complying they will ultimately be able to absorb the family of Jacob and to possess all their property. They are one and all circumcised. Thereupon Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, take advantage of the incapacitated condition of the Shechemites and attack them suddenly, massacring all the males of the city. Taking all the wealth of the city as spoil, and the women and children as captives, they return home. Jacob their father, be it said to his credit, does not approve of this lawless massacre. He accuses his sons: "Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land" (34:30). They in turn reply, "Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?"

The question naturally arises, how did it happen that Jacob allowed his sons to carry on the negotiations

with the Shechemites? Why did not Jacob handle the matter himself? Possibly Jacob placed too much confidence in his sons; probably, too, they concealed from their father what their real intentions were.

We shall give Calvin's comments on the inexcusable conduct of Jacob's sons recorded in this chapter:

"Moses shows that, not content with simple revenge, they fly together to the spoil. . . . Be it, that they were blinded with anger in shedding blood; yet by what right do they sack the city? This certainly cannot be ascribed to anger. But these are the ordinary fruits of human intemperance, that he who gives himself the rein in perpetrating one wickedness, soon breaks out into another. Thus the sons of Jacob, from being murderers, also become robbers, and the guilt of avarice is added to that of cruelty. The more anxious then should be our endeavors to bridle our desires; lest they should mutually fan each other, so that at length, by their combined action, a dreadful conflagration should arise; but especially, we must beware of using force of arms, which brings with it many perverse and brutal assaults. Moses says that the sons of Jacob did this, because the Shechemites had defiled their sister; but the whole city was not guilty. Moses, however, only states in what way the authors of the slaughter are affected: for although they wish to appear just avengers of the injury, yet they pay no respect to what was lawful for them to do, and make no attempt to control their depraved affections, and consequently set no bounds to their wickedness."

Whatever may have been the guilt of the Shechemites, in this chapter the sons of Jacob — the covenant people of God — appear upon an even lower ethical level than the men of Shechem. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can be said to excuse the conduct of Simeon and Levi and that of all the sons of Jacob in this chapter. Moses records the facts objectively, leaving it to the reader to form an ethical judgment upon them.

This scandalous history may serve to bring out two things that are sometimes forgotten in studies of the Old Testament.

In the first place, the very existence of such a narrative is evidence on the face of it that it is historical, not legendary as some critics have claimed. No people would form legends, and preserve them in their sacred writings, which place their own ancestors in such an extremely bad light. Here are the sons of Jacob, the honored ancestors of the tribes of Israel, represented as lawless murderers and robbers. What nation would make up such a story about their founders and national heroes? The only explanation of the existence of such a story in the Hebrew writings is that it is historically true.

In the second place, those who are horrified at the

presence of such stories in the Bible should realize that they are in the Bible just because the Bible is a book of truth. It portrays people as they really were, without idealizing them and without eliminating their bad deeds. A scoffer once said to the present writer that he would not leave a Bible where children or young people could see it, as the immoral stories in the Bible are (he claimed) worse than anything in the writings of the Italian author Boccaccio. This skeptic completely mistook the real point and purport of these so-called "immoral stories" in the Bible. They are not in the Bible as an example for us, or as a pattern for us to copy, but rather to show the real nature of sin and of sinners — to show what man is really like without the grace of God, and to show the judgment of God upon such wickedness.

Just because the Bible is a book of truth, it must tell the real truth about sin and sinners. If the Bible were merely the word of man, it would tone down sin and wickedness or cover it up. But because it is the Word of God, it tells the plain, terrible truth about sin and sinners. So far from such chapters as Genesis 34 being an argument against the divine character of the Bible, they are in fact a strong argument in favor of the truth that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God.

Chapter 35 opens with the command of God to Jacob to go to Bethel: "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make thee there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother" (35:1). The time has come for Jacob to fulfil his vow of 28:22, "And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house. . .". The command of God for Jacob to build an altar at Bethel makes clear to us the meaning Jacob had in mind in making the vow some twenty years before; by "God's house" he clearly meant a religious shrine or sanctuary, of which, of course, the principal feature would be an altar.

The command of God to Jacob to "dwell" at Bethel does not imply a requirement of permanent residence there. The Hebrew verb may be translated "tarry," implying no more than living there long enough to carry out God's instructions concerning the altar.

Jacob at once realizes that for real obedience to the command of God a rededication of himself and all his household to God is needed. Accordingly he says to his household, "and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments. And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went" (35:2,3). The result of this was that the members of the establishment turned their idols and idolatrous paraphernalia over to Jacob, who buried them under the terebinth tree at Shechem. (The word "oak" in the King James version is an incorrect translation). No doubt the idols now buried included the images which Rachel had stolen from her father Laban at the time of departure from Mesopotamia.

If we are surprised that there should be idols in Jacob's company, we should realize that apart from the special grace of God the tendency of religion is always to

deteriorate. From Joshua 24:2 we know that the ancestors of Abraham served false gods in Ur of the Chaldees. Besides Rachel having her father's images, it is highly probable that some of the servants may have been idolaters, at least secretly. Also the women added to the clan at the time of the massacre of the men of Shechem probably brought idolatry with them. With what we know of the moral standards of Jacob's family, we have little reason to suppose that their religious standards — except in the case of Jacob himself — were very high. Therefore we must conclude that Jacob's call for a cleaning out of idols and idolatry was very necessary at the time. (The term "strange gods" is literally "gods of the foreigner"). We note that the clearing out of idolatry was complete — "they gave unto Jacob ALL the strange gods which were in their hand . . ." (35:4).

Idolatry having been cleaned out, the household moves toward Bethel. "And the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob" (35:5). This is God's favorable response to Jacob's act of purifying his clan of idolatry. God's restraining hand prevents the Canaanites from harming the family of Jacob. The text implies a miracle or supernatural act of God in restraining the Canaanites, and this in turn implies that there had been some kind of plan or intention to interfere with or harm the family of Jacob. By His almighty power God terrified the local cities and tribes so that they did not dare to carry out their plan of harming Jacob's clan. Here again we see exemplified the truth that "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Note, too, that this is grace on God's part, for surely Jacob and his family did not really deserve such wonderful divine protection, especially after the scandalous sins recorded in chapter 34.

"So Jacob came to Luz which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him" (35:6). As we have already seen at 28:19, the original (Canaanite) name of this city was Luz, but Jacob named it Bethel, which means "house of God." Jacob, of course, would always remember his wonderful experience at Bethel when God had appeared to him and confirmed to him the great covenant promises originally given to Abraham (28:13-15). Probably Jacob, even after more than twenty years, was able to locate the exact spot where he had slept and received the vision.

At Bethel the altar is built, and the spot is named El-bethel ("God of Bethel"), in commemoration of the revelation of God given to Jacob when he was fleeing from his brother Esau. The town or city was named Bethel, but the spot where the altar was built was named El-bethel. So Jacob's vow of twenty years before is carried out in action.

At this point we are informed that Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and was buried near Bethel under an oak, which came to be called Allonbachuth ("Oak of Weeping"). This is the first time that we are told that Rebekah's nurse was named Deborah. She has appeared previously at 24:59, where, however, her name is not given. But how does it happen that Deborah,

Rebekah's nurse, is a member of the household of Jacob? Certainly she did not accompany him when he fled from Esau, for we are explicitly told that he went alone (32:10). Nor is there any record of her joining Jacob's household at any time after his departure from Laban. In view of the silence of the record we can only guess at the facts. Probably Rebekah died during Jacob's long absence from home. This may explain the fact that he finally left Laban without being sent for by his mother as she had promised (27:45). The record is also silent as to the time and circumstances of the death of Rebekah, though we are told in 49:31 that she was buried in the cave of Machpelah near Hebron. It would seem probable that following the death of Rebekah, when Deborah learned that Jacob had returned to Canaan, she left the establishment of Isaac and joined that of Jacob. We should note that the sacred record regards the death and burial of this humble woman servant as important enough to warrant a place in the narrative. The weeping which is mentioned indicates that Deborah was highly respected and greatly loved.

#### Questions:

1. Why did Dinah venture away from home?
2. By what two tribal names are the inhabitants of Shechem called in Genesis?
3. Which of the sons of Jacob took the lead in attacking the people of Shechem?
4. What should be our judgment as to the conduct of Jacob's sons?
5. What can be said about the bearing of this chapter on the question of whether the history of the patriarchs is legendary or historical?
6. What mistake is made by people who use stories like that of Genesis 34 as an argument against the Bible?
7. What does the presence of such incidents as those of Gen. 34 in the Bible really show as to the origin and character of the Bible?
8. What command of God to Jacob is found at the beginning of chapter 35?
9. What vow of Jacob must now be fulfilled?
10. What does this new command of God show us concerning the original meaning of Jacob's vow?
11. What is meant by the command of God to Jacob to "dwell" at Bethel?
12. How did Jacob prepare his household for worshipping God at Bethel?
13. How can we explain the fact that members of Jacob's household were idolatrous?
14. What was God's response to Jacob's act of cleansing his household of idolatry?
15. What had the local Canaanite cities evidently intended to do to the clan of Jacob?
16. What was the original name of the city of Bethel?
17. What is the meaning of the name Bethel?
18. What is the meaning of the phrase El-bethel?
19. How may the presence of Rebekah's nurse Deborah in Jacob's household perhaps be explained?

#### LESSON 71

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

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

At this point a new theophany (appearance of God) is granted to Jacob. This is stated to have been "when he came out of Padan-Aram" because Jacob is still regarded as enroute home. It is not until 35:27 that he actually returns to his father's residence at Mamre (cf. 28:21, "So that I come again to my father's house in peace. . ."). The change of his name from Jacob to Israel, which had already been revealed at Peniel (32:28) is now repeated and confirmed (35:10).

This is followed by a repetition of some of the great covenant promises originally given to Abraham, especially as concerns numerous posterity and inheritance of the land. "And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him" (35:13). The language here used indicates that this theophany or manifestation of God's presence was not merely in Jacob's mind but was objectively real and visible. As

Leupold states it, "His visible ascent occurred in a plainly visible fashion." It is popular in our day to regard all divine revelation as subjective, or in some sense a product of the consciousness of the human subject. Thus present-day writers tell us that the Old Testament prophets "felt" this, and "discerned" that, they "realized" that something was true and they "recognized the value" of something else — all of which they sold to the public under the label "Thus saith the Lord." Very different is the Bible's own view of divine revelation. God REALLY appeared to men and REALLY spoke to men — not only through men, but to men. The source of revelation was outside of and distinct from the human consciousness. It is folly to try to psychologize the supernatural works of God. What leads men to attempt it is, we believe, a deep antipathy to the supernaturalism of the Bible.

Jacob is deeply impressed by his experience. He repeats his actions of more than twenty years before, setting up a stone for a pillar and pouring oil on it to consecrate it to God. This transaction is not to be identified or confused with that recorded in chapter 28. It is a repetition and yet a distinct act in which a new pillar

is consecrated to God.

Needless to say, there is not the slightest hint of anything idolatrous or superstitious in Jacob's setting up such a pillar and consecrating it to God, as some critics have claimed. These stone pillars were not images nor were they worshipped. Nor was the libation of oil an offering to the dead as some have asserted.

"And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel" (35:15). Though this is a repetition of an act of twenty years before; there is an important difference, for the first time only Jacob alone, a single person, was there; now it is a large family or clan, with many people, who are involved.

Next we are told of the birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel (35:16-20). Rachel dies in giving birth to her second son, and "as her soul was departing" she calls his name Ben-oni "son of my sorrow", but Jacob later called him Benjamin ("son of the right hand"). "And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem." Rachel was, therefore, not buried in the cave of Machpelah where the mortal bodies of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah were laid to rest to await the resurrection day (49:30-32; 50:13).

"And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day" (35:20). "Unto this day" means, of course, unto the time of Moses' writing the book of Genesis. Rachel's tomb was long known. It is mentioned in the time of King Saul, I Sam. 10:2. Davis' Dictionary of the Bible states that in the fourth century of the Christian era it was claimed that the location was known. Davis also gives a drawing of the present-day structure on the reputed site of the tomb; this structure, however, is of Mohammedan origin and not ancient. It is two miles north of Bethlehem.

"And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar" (35:21). Edar is usually spelled Eder in the Old Testament. The exact location of this tower is unknown. The phrase "tower of Edar" means literally "tower of the flock" and it is possible that a lookout tower of shepherds on the southwest hill of Jerusalem may be meant (cf. Micah 4:8).

If this is the correct location of the tower of Edar, it was only a few miles from the place where Rachel died and was buried.

In 35:22 we read of an additional scandal involving one of Jacob's sons — Reuben, his firstborn, who committed adultery with Bilhah, who was originally Rachel's maidservant and who became Jacob's concubine. It is recorded "and Israel heard it." This must have been an additional grief to Jacob.

Next the twelve sons of Jacob are listed (35:22-26) — first the sons of Leah, then those of Rachel; then those of Bilhah, and last those of Zilpah. Although the text gives the general statement that these twelve sons were born to Jacob in Padan-aram, the fact is that the youngest, Benjamin, was born in the land of Canaan.

"And Jacob came unto his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arba, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned" (35:27). We may wonder that Jacob had not hastened to see his aged father as soon as possible after his return to the land of Canaan. We must remember that the scene of this history is not modern America but the ancient Near East; people took life more slowly and deliberately in those days. Leupold calculates that Isaac was 168 years old at the time of Jacob's return to Mamre. Since Isaac died at the age 180, Jacob was still able to be with his father twelve years before the latter's death (cf. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, II. 929).

"Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him" (35:29). The expression "was gathered unto his people" is not a reference to his burial, which is mentioned separately immediately afterwards. Rather, it is an intimation of faith in a personal immortality beyond the death of the body. The same expression is used of Abraham, who was buried hundreds of miles from the graves of his ancestors. This expression, "was gathered unto his people", while it is not yet the clear daylight of the New Testament revelation concerning the future life, nevertheless expresses a real faith in a personal immortality beyond the grave.

"And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him." Possibly this was the first meeting of Esau and Jacob after their separation by the banks of the Jabbok; possibly not. The record does not say. We may consider it probable, on general grounds, that the two men may have met several times during the interval, but we cannot be sure.

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

"Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom" (36:1). As we have already noted, this formula — "these are the generations of. . ." — is the standard way, in the Book of Genesis, of introducing a new subject or a new division of a subject. The new subject taken up in chapter 36 is the descendants of Esau. The history of Isaac having been completed by the recording of his death, the book follows its usual pattern in first disposing of the less important history of the descendants of Esau, before proceeding to the more important history of the descendants of Jacob. The data given in this chapter, while not of primary importance for the history of God's plan of redemption, are nevertheless of importance for the history and descent of the Edomites, one of Israel's near neighbors and a kindred nation.

The chapter may be divided into several sections. The first section includes 1-8 and deals with Esau's wives and children, and their settlement in the land of Edom or Seir.

A difficulty appears in the fact that the names of Esau's wives as given in chapter 36 differ from those given in 26:34 and 28:9. 26:34 speaks of two wives, Judith and Bashemath, both of them being Hittites; 28:9 adds Mahalath, who is an Ishmaelite. In 36:1-3 the Ishmaelite wife is called Bashemath, and the two Hittite wives are

called Adah and Aholibamah. Moreover 36:2 speaks of the father of one of these women as a Hivite, not a Hittite. While we are not able fully to resolve this complex of problems, we should not regard the facts as proving that the Bible contradicts itself. The New Bible Commentary (Davidson, Stibbs & Kevan) states concerning these problems: "The discrepancies are not real, but arise out of the fluid use of names in oriental custom." Leupold says: "Such changes of names need surprise no one, for Orientals commonly go under several names, especially the women, who frequently receive a new name at marriage" (Exposition of Genesis, II. 934). With regard to the problem of the father of one of Esau's wives being called both a Hittite and a Hivite, this is probably to be explained by the well known fact that "Hittites," like "Canaanites" and "Amorites," was sometimes used as an inclusive general term for the non-Israelite inhabitants of the land of Canaan, and at other times in the stricter sense designating the Hittites specifically in distinction from other tribes. Thus the man in question could be a Hivite in the strict sense, and still could be called a Hittite in the more general sense.

"And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob. For their riches were more than that they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle. Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom" (36:6-8). The question which confronts us here is whether this separation of Esau from the land of Canaan took place before Jacob's return from Padan-aram or after that return. Prior to Jacob's return, the flocks and herds of Isaac consisted partly of those which would eventually belong to Jacob and partly of those which would eventually belong to Esau. As the possessor of the birthright Jacob would be heir to the larger portion. It is possible that Esau, with his household and possessions remained at home with his father Isaac until Jacob's return from Mesopotamia added such a large amount of livestock that a prompt separation became inevitable. On this view, Esau's removal to Edom took place after Jacob's arrival home. On the other hand, the narrative (32:3; 33:14,16) seems to imply that Esau was already living in Mount Seir, or Edom, prior to Jacob's return. This, however, need not be regarded as an insoluble problem. Prior to Jacob's homecoming, Esau may have been living south of the Dead Sea (Edom) from time to time, and he may have pastured part of his flocks and herds there while the rest were kept in southern Canaan where Isaac lived. The statement of 36:8, "Thus Esau dwelt in Mount Seir" may mean no more than that from that point of time he made Edom his sole and permanent dwelling place.

As to how the clan of Esau occupied the country of Edom, we cannot say definitely. It may be that the land was taken from the former inhabitants by military conquest; on the other hand it is possible that the occupation was more peaceful and merely involved moving in among the previous inhabitants, followed by intermarriage with them. Statements in chapter 36 suggest that there was considerable intermarriage between the descendants of Esau and the previous inhabitants of the land of Edom.

Verses 9-14 concern the sons of Esau and his grandsons. Among these we note the name of Amalek, a son of Esau and a concubine named Timna. Amalek is the ancestor of the Amalekites, a nomadic people of importance in the later history of the Israelites.

Verses 15-19 list the chiefs of the Edomites. These are called "dukes" in the King James Version. This is obviously an improper translation, for the word "duke" has associations with the feudal system of medieval Europe which are quite foreign to these ancient nomadic Semitic tribes. The Hebrew word may mean "ruler of a thousand", though of course "thousand" may be taken as a round number and need not be understood literally. On these verses Leupold comments that they show "how at a comparatively early date Esau's descendants advance to positions of prominence and honor" (Exposition of Genesis, II. 940-1).

Verses 20-30 present the Horite chiefs. These Horites formed the other main component of the Edomite stock. The historical Edomites were a combination of Horites and descendants of Esau. Archaeological evidence seems to indicate that the Biblical Horites were identical with an ancient people known as the Hurrians. The discoveries of Ugarit (Ras Shamra) in Syria and Nuzi (east of the Tigris River) and elsewhere have revealed the existence of the Hurrians and many facts about them. They were important in the fifteenth century B. C. — about the time of Moses. The word "Horites" means "cave-dwellers." It is possible that the Horites were identical with, or closely related to, the Hivites.

We note that in 36:28 a man named Uz is mentioned. This calls to mind the opening verse of the Book of Job, where we are told that Job lived in the land of Uz. Whether there was a real connection between the two, and if so just where "the land of Uz" was located, we do not know.

The chiefs of the Horites enumerated in verses 20-30 may have ruled successively, but it seems more probable that part of them, at least, were simultaneous. The passage affords no information on this point.

Verses 31-39 present "the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel" (36:31). Some critics have held that Moses could not have written verse 31 because (they say) it must have been written after there was a king in Israel, i.e., in the time of Saul or later. We do not agree with this claim of the critics. Moses definitely looked forward to the time when Israel would have a king (Deut. 17:14-20), so it would be quite natural for him to speak of the Edomites having kings before there was any king in Israel. Of course the same critics also reject the genuineness of Deuteronomy, holding that it is a forgery produced in the time of Josiah about 800 years after the time of Moses. We believe there are very good reasons for siding with Moses against the modern critics.

Eight Edomite kings are listed, and of three of them it is said that they had cities, which are named. The others are not stated to have had cities. It is evident that the kingship in Edom was not hereditary, for none of

these Edomite kings is said to be the son of any other of them.

In verses 40-43 we have another list of Edomite chiefs. Some of these have already been mentioned in verses 15-19. The important thing to note in verses 40-43 is the phrase “after their places” in verse 40. This is a listing by geographical location. The word “duke” is of course improper and misleading here as in 15-19. The word “chief” is a preferable translation. Some of the names in verses 40-43 may be geographical rather than personal names. Thus Leupold translates: “. . . the chief of Timna, the chief of Alvah”, etc. If these are names of places, some of them can be identified today, others not.

#### Questions:

1. What is meant by the term “theophany”?
2. Why is this theophany, which occurred in Canaan, declared to have been “when he came out of Padan-Aram”?
3. What promises were confirmed to Jacob at this time?
4. What statement in the record shows that God was really and visibly present to Jacob?
5. What action of twenty years before was repeated by Jacob on this occasion?
6. What is the meaning of the name Ben-oni? Of the name Benjamin?
7. Where was Rachel buried?
8. How long was the location of Rachel’s tomb certainly known?
9. What may have been the location of the tower of Edar?
10. Which of Jacob’s sons was involved in a new scandal at this point?
11. How many years did Jacob probably live with his father Isaac before the latter’s death?
12. What is meant by the expression “was gathered unto his people”?
13. What is the meaning of the formula “these are the generations of . . .”?
14. What difficulty exists concerning the names of Esau’s wives?
15. What may be the solution of this problem?
16. How can we explain the fact that the father of one of Esau’s wives is called both a Hivite and a Hittite?
17. Whither did Esau move from Canaan?
18. What can be said on the question of when Esau made this move?
19. What may have been the method of Esau’s clan occupying Edom?
20. What son of Esau gave his name to a nomadic people which were important in later Old Testament history?
21. What may be the literal meaning of the Hebrew word translated “dukes” in the King James Version?
22. Why are the Horite chiefs listed in this chapter?
23. What does modern archaeological evidence indicate concerning the Horites?
24. What is the literal meaning of the name “Horites”?
25. Why do some critics claim that Moses could not have written 36:31?
26. How can this claim of the critics be answered?
27. How can it be shown that kingship among the Edomites was not hereditary?

## LESSON 72

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

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

The descendants of Isaac through Esau having been discussed, the narrative now turns to the main subject, the descendants of Isaac through Jacob. The history of Joseph is told in great detail and occupies the greater part of thirteen chapters. In other words the history of this one man’s life is given more space in the book of Genesis than the entire history of the world prior to the time of Abraham (11 chapters). As the Book of Genesis approaches closer to the time of Moses, its human author, it naturally deals with its subject matter in greater detail.

Verse 1 calls us back from Edom to the land of Canaan. In contrast with Esau and his descendants, Jacob dwelt in Canaan. We should realize that although Isaac’s death is given in the record at the end of chapter 35, the evidence indicates that he lived twelve years after Jacob’s return to Mamre, and therefore that Isaac was still living when Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers.

The chapter opens with Joseph at the age of 17, helping to pasture his father’s flocks, along with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. “And Joseph brought unto his father their evil report” (37:2). From what we know of Jacob’s sons from chapter 34, there was probably plenty of bad conduct on the part of his brothers for Joseph to report to his father. Some have held that Joseph was a

“tattle-tale” with a self-righteous attitude in reporting the bad deeds of his brothers to his father. It is not necessary to regard the matter thus. If their actions were to any degree similar to what is recorded in chapter 34, then it was Joseph’s duty to report the matters to his father.

However, Joseph’s acting the part of an informer naturally would not increase his popularity with his brothers. Regardless of the right or wrong involved, they would naturally tend to hate the one who reported their evil deeds. This is the first root of the brothers’ opposition to Joseph.

The second root of the brothers’ hatred of Joseph lay in Jacob’s partiality toward him. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children, “because he was the son of his old age” (37:3). It is easy to discern other reasons for Jacob’s partiality. Joseph was the son of Rachel, the wife whom he loved best. Also Joseph seems to have been the only one of the brothers — during this period, at least — who had any real spiritual sensitivity and religious kinship with his father.

We cannot blame Jacob for his feeling of partiality toward Joseph, but we should blame him for a most unwise way of manifesting his affection — by bestowing upon Joseph a special “coat of many colors.” Leupold points out that the Hebrew means “he used to make,” implying that when one such coat was worn out Jacob provided another to replace it. He also suggests that the coat was a symbolic token of a position of leadership. Naturally, Joseph’s being distinguished in this way fills the brothers with jealousy. They cannot help noticing their father’s attitude to Joseph. The result is that “they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him” (37:4).

We have noted two sources of the brothers’ antipathy to Joseph. A third arose from Joseph’s dreams. Though the dreams certainly came from God, as shown by the remarkable manner in which they were fulfilled in later years, this did not warrant Joseph’s telling them to his brothers as he did. The brothers hated him “for his dreams, and for his words” (37:8). The dream of the sheaves was so obvious in meaning that the brothers could not miss the point. Naturally enough, they are indignant and express their indignation forcefully.

Joseph’s second dream was that of the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to him. This one he tells not only to his brothers, but also to his father. Jacob, the father, of course instantly recognizes the import of the dream. He rebukes Joseph, evidently for his pride in telling the dream. In the dream, the moon, of course, refers to Joseph’s mother. Rachel, however, was already dead; therefore the reference may be to Leah who no doubt took the place of Rachel as Joseph’s mother after his real mother’s death.

“And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying” (37:11). The attitude of the brothers was a jealous hatred, that of the father, thoughtful wonder concerning the future.

The brothers have gone to pasture their father’s

flock in Shechem. We may wonder that they would venture back there after their outrageous conduct there in chapter 34. The explanation may be that the brothers were bold men with no fear of danger. At any rate, Jacob sends Joseph to Shechem to find out how his brothers are getting along, and bring word back to his father again. Joseph accordingly sets out from “the vale of Hebron” and reaches Shechem. This would be a journey of about 45 miles “as the crow flies,” but of course somewhat longer than that by any road or path. We note that there is no indication in the record that either Jacob or Joseph suspected that the brothers might harm Joseph. As Joseph was only 17 years old we can readily see how he could fail to realize the full wickedness of his brothers; but we can hardly fail to be a little surprised that Jacob seems so trustful and unsuspecting, especially in view of the known past conduct of his sons.

Joseph has reached Shechem, but is unable to find his brothers. A stranger who sees him wandering in a field provides the information that the brothers have gone to Dothan. On going there, Joseph locates them. Dothan was about 12 miles north of Shechem.

Seeing and recognizing Joseph while he is yet at a distance — no doubt by his coat of many colors — the brothers conspire together to murder him. They propose to dispose of his body by dropping it into a pit, and to report to their father that some wild animal has killed him. But Reuben, the oldest of the brothers, who apparently had no part in the plan to kill Joseph succeeds in rescuing the lad from their hands, proposing to drop him into a pit and leave him there to die. The idea was that this would avoid the guilt of bloodshed, although of course a murder is a murder regardless of the precise method employed. But Reuben’s secret intention is to get Joseph back home safely to Jacob again. As the oldest brother, Reuben seems to have some feeling of moral responsibility which the others lack. Yet we know that Reuben was not truly a godly man, as is shown by his committing adultery as recorded in 35:22. Of course it is possible that in the interval Reuben has repented but there is nothing in the record to indicate this.

“And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him; and they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it” (37:23, 24). Calvin comments on the hypocrisy of the brothers in supposing that they would be less guilty of their brother’s death if they dropped him into a pit and left him to starve than if they killed him with a knife or sword: “As if, indeed, it made any difference, whether they ran their brother through with a sword, or put him to death by suffocation. . . . It was a barbarous thought, that they should not touch his life, if they did not embroil their hands in his blood; since it was a kind of death, not less violent, which they wished to inflict by hunger.”

The brothers, having cast Joseph into the pit, sit down to eat their meal. How hardhearted these men were is shown by the fact that they were able to eat food immediately after such a wicked deed as they had done. It has been observed by some writers that very likely Simeon was the one who actually manhandled Joseph.

What suggests this is not only Simeon's wickedness shown in chapter 34 but especially Joseph's treatment of Simeon years later in Egypt (42:24).

Next a caravan of merchants is seen on the horizon. These are called Ishmaelites in verse 25 but in verse 28 they are called Midianites. This involves the problem of how the same group of people could be called both Ishmaelites and Midianites. One possible explanation is that there were members of both tribes in the caravan. We know from other places in the Bible that the Midianites and the Ishmaelites were closely connected. Both Ishmael and Midian were sons of Abraham, the former being born of Hagar and the latter of Keturah (16:15; 25:2). In Judges 8:24 the Midianites which were defeated by Gideon are called Ishmaelites. In view of the close connection between the two tribes we need not wonder that the caravan in Gen. 37 is called by both names.

This caravan of traders is coming from Gilead, that is the country east of the Jordan and opposite the northern part of Canaan. With their camels they are carrying spices, balm and myrrh to Egypt for sale. These products were various kinds of aromatic gums for which the region of Gilead was famous, and which were greatly in demand in Egypt, where they were used both for medicine and for embalming the dead.

At this point Judah makes a proposal. (It is evident from verse 29 that Reuben, the oldest brother, was not present at this time). Judah proposes that instead of leaving Joseph to die in the pit, they sell him to the passing merchants. "What profit is it that we slay our brother, and conceal his blood" (37:26). We should note that this question asked by Judah involves an admission that leaving Joseph to die in the pit is morally equivalent to shedding his blood.

Though some have praised Judah's proposal as a noble effort to save Joseph's life, it seems that he does not deserve such praise. He appeals to their desire for profit — "What profit is it?" — rather than to their conscience. And certainly a proposal to sell one's own brother to a foreign country to be a slave is a brutal and hardhearted proposal. If Judah really wanted to do what was right he should have come out boldly and insisted that Joseph be set free.

The brothers agree to Judah's proposal. Joseph is drawn out of the pit and sold to the merchants for twenty pieces of silver. Note that the word "pieces" is in italics in the King James Version, indicating that it is not found in the Hebrew but was supplied by the translators. Coined money was not used at this period; the money was weighed. In Leviticus 27:5 we find 20 pieces of silver as the valuation of a boy from 15 to 20 years of age. The Law of Moses fixed compensation for the death of a full-grown slave at 30 pieces of silver (Ex. 21:32).

From a later chapter in Genesis we know that Joseph did not submit to this treatment without protest, but on the contrary implored his brothers not to do it. This is seen in 42:21 where the brothers are in the presence of Joseph in Egypt, but are not aware that it is Joseph nor that he can understand the language they are

speaking. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

Later Reuben returns to the pit, expecting to find Joseph in it, and on finding the pit empty, he rends his clothes, the sign of extreme emotional stress. Reuben returns to the other brothers and says: "The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?" (37:30). Perhaps the others did not even answer Reuben; at any rate, no answer is recorded. But inevitably Reuben must soon have learned the truth about that which had happened to Joseph.

The wicked hardheartedness of the brothers is further seen in their plan to lie to their father. After making Joseph's coat bloody with goat's blood, they present it to Jacob with the lie: "This have we found" followed by the suggestion: "Know now whether it be thy son's coat or no" (37:32). Not one of the brothers is willing to tell Jacob the truth. Jacob of course recognizes the garment as Joseph's and at once concludes that a wild beast has killed and devoured Joseph.

Perhaps the brothers did not realize that Jacob would take the loss of Joseph so hard. For he proves inconsolable. Rending his clothes, he puts on sackcloth and mourns for his son many days. The brothers and their sisters become alarmed. This is worse than they had expected. So a concerted effort is made to comfort him, "but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him." They rose up to comfort him — but what hypocritical comfort, based as it was on a conspiracy of lies! Not one has enough love and pity to tell Jacob the truth. If they had only told him the truth, it might have been possible to send someone to Egypt to buy Joseph back. If a slave can be sold, he can also be bought. But the brothers are more concerned about concealing their own guilt than about consoling their grief-stricken father or getting their brother back home safely.

"And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard" (37:36). This preliminary information about Joseph's situation in Egypt prepares the way for the more detailed story which follows in chapter 39.

#### Questions:

1. How many chapters of Genesis are devoted mainly to the life of Joseph? How does this compare with the number of chapters devoted to the entire period of world history prior to Abraham?
2. How should we regard Joseph's bringing his father the evil report of his brothers?
3. What were the three main roots of the brothers' antagonism to Joseph?
4. What reasons can be assigned for Jacob's partiality toward Joseph? What reason does the Scripture give for it?

5. What may have been the symbolic meaning of Joseph's coat of many colors?

6. What fact shows that Joseph's dreams were of God?

7. Why was it unwise for Joseph to tell his dreams to his brothers and his father?

8. What was the reaction of the brothers on hearing the dreams?

9. What was Jacob's attitude to Joseph's dreams?

10. Where did Jacob send Joseph to find out about his brothers? How far away was this place?

11. How old was Joseph at this time?

12. Where did Joseph finally locate his brothers?

13. What plot to murder Joseph did the brothers form?

14. Which of the brothers prevented the murder?

15. Why would this brother feel a greater responsibility than the others?

16. What secret intention did this brother have?

17. What hypocrisy was involved in the brothers' decision to drop Joseph into the pit?

18. What action after they dropped Joseph into the pit shows the callousness of the brothers?

19. On what ground has it been supposed that Simeon was the one who actually dropped Joseph into the pit?

20. How can we explain the fact that the merchants are called both Ishmaelites and also Midianites?

21. Where was Gilead? For what kind of products was it renowned?

22. What proposal was made by Judah?

23. Is Judah's proposal praiseworthy or not? Why?

24. At what price was Joseph sold?

25. How do we know that Joseph did not submit to being sold without protest?

26. What was Reuben's reaction upon finding the pit empty?

27. What did Jacob conclude upon seeing the bloody coat?

28. What was the effect of this shock upon Jacob?

29. Why was the effort of his sons and daughters to comfort him hypocritical?

### LESSON 73

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

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

This chapter records the lamentable decline of part of the family or clan of Jacob to the low moral standards of the Canaanites. Some of the deeds recorded in this chapter are so morally offensive and so shocking to modesty and good taste that the present writer would hesitate to use the chapter as material for class discussion. At the same time it must be realized that this chapter belongs in the Bible and is there for a good purpose. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16). The devout Bible student can gain very worth-while lessons from this chapter. Without taking up the details of the chapter we may suggest the following implications of its contents:

1. Apart from the special grace of God even the covenant children of godly parents may fall very deeply into heinous sin.

2. There is need for constant watchfulness lest the moral standards of God's people be lowered to the level of the world.

3. God is a God of grace who forgives even great sin. He does not save people because they are good, but in order that they may become good.

4. All the actions and relationships of men are subject to the moral judgment of God.

5. Practices which are not considered sin at all by the world may be grievous sins when viewed in the light of the will of God.

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

Joseph has been taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard. The record specifically states that Potiphar was "an Egyptian" (39:1). It is highly probable that this was during the period of Hyksos domination of Egypt. The Hyksos were Semitic invaders who gained control of Egypt and held it for some hundreds of years. Being Semites from southwestern Asia, the Hyksos were distantly related to the Hebrews and distinct from the genuine Egyptians, who were descended from Ham rather than from Shem. The fact of the Hyksos reign in Egypt at this period may be the reason for the specific mention of the fact that Potiphar was "an Egyptian."

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master

the Egyptian" (39:2). What a contrast Joseph forms to his brothers, especially Reuben and Judah! They fell deeply into sin even while at home under the favorable influence of their father; Joseph maintains his uprightness even when away from home, unjustly treated and in a wholly unfavorable environment. All through the history of Joseph we see the blessing of God resting upon a man who chooses to suffer wrong rather than to commit wrong. All that Joseph knew of the true God and His way of salvation he learned before he reached the age of 17 when he was sold into Egypt. His religion and his moral code stood him in good stead and proved sufficient for building a life upon — one of the greatest lives of all history. Joseph was not like a hot-house plant but like a sturdy oak, by the grace of God. Certainly he was not like some church members of the present day who have to be constantly encouraged and exhorted and catered to in order to get them to maintain even a passable outward show of a Christian profession.

We are told that Joseph was in the house of his master the Egyptian. This implies that he was not living in the (doubtless much poorer) servants' quarters but actually in the building occupied by Potiphar and his family. This must have been in marked contrast to the rather humble tent dwellings he had been accustomed to in Canaan, even though we must remember that his father was a rich man.

Even Potiphar, though not himself a worshipper of the true God, saw that Joseph's success and prosperity in all he undertook must be attributed to the Lord being with him (39:3). As time passes Potiphar is more impressed by Jacob's character and attainments; Joseph "found grace in his sight" and is promoted to be business manager or steward of the entire household establishment. The record indicates that Potiphar became increasingly aware by degrees or stages, of the fact that the blessing of the Lord was upon Joseph and upon all that he did, both "in the house and in the field." "The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake" (39:5). This exemplifies a truth taught by the Bible and often observed in history, namely that blessings come to the world and worldly people because of their connection with the people of God, or the presence of the people of God among them. God would have spared Sodom for the sake of ten righteous persons among the inhabitants. In this sense Christians are the salt of the earth.

So complete is Potiphar's confidence in Joseph that he fully entrusts all his possessions to him. Joseph takes full charge of everything. Apart from eating his meals, Potiphar does not need to pay any attention to anything that belongs to him. As Potiphar was a high officer of the Egyptian government, very likely he was more than busy with his official duties and was glad to be relieved of all responsibilities for the management of his household.

Verse 6 adds the information that "Joseph was a goodly person, and well favored." This is stated at this point, perhaps, to prepare the way for what comes next, the infatuation of Potiphar's wife with Joseph. Incidentally, it has been observed that Scripture speaks of very few men as handsomely or good looking. We may call to mind Saul, David and Absalom.

"And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me" (39:7). No doubt Joseph was not only good looking, but also handsomely dressed, as befitted his rank in Potiphar's household. She makes a shameless and lawless proposal to Joseph, which he, however, instantly and completely refuses, on the two grounds that to comply with her wishes would be (1) a breach of the trust his master has placed in him, and (2) a wicked sin against God (39:8,9). Presumably Potiphar's wife was a believer in the common idolatrous religion of Egypt; yet even so, Joseph's mention of a sin against God could not be misunderstood. For adultery is recognized and condemned as sin even by corrupt and pagan faiths.

Joseph's refusal however did not end the evil desires of Potiphar's wife. We are given to understand that the temptation was continued over a considerable period of time ("day by day", verse 10). Joseph consistently refuses to pay attention to her advances.

Finally Potiphar's wife wickedly attempts to trap Joseph in such a way that even if not guilty he is sure to appear guilty to others. Taking advantage of a time when none of the servants are present, and when Joseph is in the house attending to his necessary business, she takes hold of his garment and repeats her lawless solicitation. Joseph, realizing that the situation is serious, leaves the coat in her hands and flees. The Hebrew indicates that he fled not merely into another part of the house, but actually out of doors or into the street.

Now Potiphar's wife is angry with Joseph because he has spurned her advances. To remove suspicion from herself and pin it on Joseph she immediately makes a great outcry, summoning the men of the house and accusing Joseph of attempting to attack her. We may doubt that all the servants believed Potiphar's wife. Surely some of them, at least, must have realized something of her true character and also must have sensed Joseph's moral integrity.

Possibly Potiphar's wife indulges in an appeal to racial prejudice when she says, "See, he hath brought in a Hebrew unto us to mock us" and again refers to Joseph, not by name, but as "the Hebrew servant." At any rate, with a great show of injured innocence Potiphar's wife displays Joseph's coat. On the face of it, this would seem to be evidence of Joseph's guilt, however different the real facts might be. It is not recorded that the men of the house made any reply. As Leupold comments, "They may not have been unduly impressed by her protestations of innocence" (Exposition of Genesis, II. 1000).

Evidently Potiphar was away from home at the time of the alleged assault upon Potiphar's wife, for "She laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home" (39:16). Perhaps Potiphar's official duties required him to be away from home a good deal of the time, and his wife may have felt lonely and neglected. However the Scripture record pictures her as a brazen and shameless woman. At any rate, when Potiphar returns home his wife triumphantly displays Joseph's

coat and repeats her false accusation of Joseph.

Naturally, Potiphar's wrath was kindled (39:19). It should be noted that the record does not say that Potiphar was angry with Joseph, though of course he may have been. As Leupold suggests, it is possible, at least, that Potiphar was angry principally because the whole incident was a vexation to him. He may well have doubted his wife's word, but naturally he had to take his wife's word against that of a servant, when it was a choice between the two. However, if Potiphar knew anything of his wife's real character he may well have doubted the truth of her accusation. At any rate, he adopts the easy and obvious remedy and removes Joseph from his household, putting him in prison. In view of the fact that the usual penalty for adultery in ancient times was death, it would appear that Joseph was treated rather leniently. This may reflect doubt in Potiphar's mind as to his real guilt, or provocation that he had been deprived of the services of a highly competent steward.

The prison in which Joseph is confined is described as "a place where the king's prisoners were bound" (39:20). Whether "the king's prisoners" means political offenders or merely persons imprisoned — for whatever reason — on the king's orders, we do not know. At any rate, "the king's prisoners" must have been people of some importance, as is shown by the fact that the chief butler and chief baker of the royal palace were later placed in the same prison. This was, therefore, not a common jail for petty thieves and the like. Prominent people were committed to it.

"And he was there in the prison" (39:20). This seems to imply the passing of a considerable period of time. From 41:1 we know that Joseph was in prison over two years.

Yet even in prison God has not forsaken Joseph, nor has Joseph's faith in God weakened. "But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison" (39:21). Just as Potiphar had noted Joseph's remarkable combination of ability and reliability, so the warden of the prison notes that this man is different from other prisoners. Soon tasks and duties are assigned to Joseph by the warden, and he is entrusted with more and more responsibilities until he is business manager of the prison as he had been business manager of Potiphar's household. "And whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper" (39:22, 23). In all but name, Joseph has become the real warden of the prison. The official warden has an easy, carefree life because everything is being properly attended to by Joseph. If the warden had placed such complete confidence in anyone except Joseph, the results might have been disastrous; but in Joseph's hands everything is done honestly, efficiently and safely.

During all this time the aged Jacob is grieving and mourning the loss of his son Joseph, and the brothers are brazenly facing it out, none of them being willing to tell their father the truth about Joseph because that would

involve an admission of their own guilt. Years pass, and Jacob is still left to believe that Joseph was killed and eaten by a wild beast somewhere between Mamre and Shechem. Yet God has not forgotten either Jacob or Joseph. The providence of God seems to us to work slowly, but it is working all the time.

"And it came to pass after these things" — how long after we do not know — "that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt" (40:1). What the offence of these men was we do not know. As chief butler and chief baker (cf. verse 2) they held very responsible positions. Having control over the king's food and drink, his health and even his life depended on their integrity and watchfulness. There is a Jewish account to the effect that the chief butler and the chief baker had been involved in a plot to poison the king. This is very improbable, as the penalty for such an offence would have been immediate death rather than imprisonment. Much more likely is the supposition that these two men, being prominent persons at the king's court, had been involved in some political plot or intrigue which had been discovered, on account of which they were put in prison.

"And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound" (40:3). From 39:1 we know that "the captain of the guard" was none other than Potiphar himself. It would seem, therefore, that Joseph is still in Potiphar's service, even though it is in his prison rather than in his household.

"And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; and they continued a season in ward" (40:4). It is evident from this verse that the king's butler and baker were considered important people, and even in prison they are "served" or waited on in accordance with their rank and position. The expression "a season" is quite indefinite, but may even mean a period of years.

#### Questions:

1. Why are matters such as those found in chapter 38 included in the Bible?
2. What is the universal tendency of all moral standards apart from the grace of God?
3. What is the probable reason why the record specifically states that Potiphar was an Egyptian?
4. Who were the rulers of Egypt at this time?
5. How is Joseph's life in contrast to that of Reuben and Judah?
6. How old was Joseph when he was sold into Egypt?
7. What is implied by the statement that Joseph was in the house of his master the Egyptian?
8. What was Potiphar's attitude to Joseph?

9. What benefits came to Potiphar because of Joseph's presence?

10. What is meant by the statement that the people of God are the salt of the earth?

11. To what extent did Potiphar entrust his household and property to Joseph?

12. What information does the Bible give about the personal appearance of Joseph?

13. On what two grounds did Joseph refuse the proposal of Potiphar's wife?

14. By what evidence did Potiphar's wife attempt to prove Joseph guilty?

15. What fact indicates that Potiphar was away from home at the time of Joseph's alleged assault upon Potiphar's wife?

16. What may have been the cause of Potiphar's wrath?

17. Why would Potiphar believe his wife rather than Joseph?

18. In view of the laws and customs of those times, how severe was Potiphar's punishment of Joseph?

19. What may have been the reason or reasons for Potiphar's comparatively lenient treatment of Joseph?

20. To what prison was Joseph committed?

21. How long was Joseph in prison?

22. What was the attitude of the warden to Joseph?

23. What change came in Joseph's life in the prison?

24. Why would the king's chief butler and chief baker be regarded as important persons?

25. What may have been the offence of the chief butler and chief baker?

26. Who, apparently, was the "captain of the guard" mentioned in 40:3,4?

27. What new responsibility was committed to Joseph after the chief butler and chief baker were committed to prison?

#### LESSON 74

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

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

From chapter 40 verse 5 we have the account of the dreams of the chief butler and chief baker, and Joseph's interpretation of the dreams. In times before the completion of the Bible, one of God's ways of revealing Himself and His will was by dreams. As a general rule — though there may be some exceptions — revelation in dream form came to persons in a relatively low spiritual state. When persons were in a higher spiritual state, and living in close fellowship with God, more direct modes of revelation were ordinarily employed.

The two prisoners — the chief butler and the chief baker — both have dreams in the same night. Moreover these were not common dreams, but dreams with a meaning, for it is said that they dreamed "each man according to the interpretation of his dream" (40:5). Ordinary dreams may be the product of something in the subconscious mind of the person and may be explained by psychology, but these dreams were different. They were a vehicle of divine revelation.

In the morning Joseph notes that both men look sad, and inquires as to the reason for their sadness. They in turn reply that they have dreamed, but lack an interpreter. Joseph then says, "Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you" (40:8). Joseph does not promise to interpret the dreams, but quite evidently he feels that it is possible that God may enable him to interpret them, therefore he does not hesitate to ask that the dreams be told him. In speaking of "God,"

Joseph of course meant the Lord, the true God, even though inevitably the two Egyptians would have a distorted idea of his meaning.

The chief butler tells his dream first (40:9-11). In his dream he stood by a grape vine with three branches; as he stood there the vine budded, blossomed, and produced ripe grapes; he pressed the juice into Pharaoh's cup and handed the cup to Pharaoh to drink. All these things could not happen so rapidly in real life, of course, but in dreams the sense of time is often distorted and what in real life would take weeks or months seems to happen in a few moments.

"And Joseph said unto him . . ." (40:12). The record does not state that Joseph gave the interpretation of the dream immediately. Certainly it is possible and even probable that Luther is correct in his supposition that at this point Joseph retired to seek the Lord in prayer. In any case, Joseph is infallibly guided by God in interpreting the dream. He brings out clearly the meaning of its main features. The three branches stand for three days. The handing the cup to Pharaoh signifies a restoration to the butler's former functions and duties. Therefore the dream means that within three days the chief butler will be released from prison and restored to his former position.

Joseph adds a personal plea to the chief butler: "But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon" (40:15). Joseph is telling the truth to the chief butler, who will be even more convinced of

Joseph's truthfulness after three days when the interpretation of the dream will be fulfilled. The simplicity and lack of elaboration of Joseph's statement has the ring of truth.

Next the chief baker tells his dream, hoping for as favorable an interpretation as the chief butler received. It is not surprising that the chief baker expected a good interpretation, for his dream was in some respects quite similar to the chief butler's. In his dream he stood with three baskets of baked goods stacked on his head, containing many kinds of bread and cakes for Pharaoh to eat. Then the birds swooped down and ate the food out of the baskets that were on his head. As Leupold points out, the chief baker himself failed to note the most important thing in this dream, namely the fact that in the dream, when the birds swooped down to eat the baked foods, the chief baker was helpless to drive them off; they ate without interference.

No doubt Joseph would have liked to give the chief baker as favorable an interpretation as he had given the chief butler. But as he had himself said, interpretations belong to God. Joseph is only a servant of God; it is not in his power to decide what the interpretation shall be; his function is only to declare it. So it occurs that honesty and faithfulness require Joseph to impart bad news to the chief baker. He informs him that the three baskets stand for three days, after which Pharaoh will punish the chief baker by having him beheaded; following that, his body will be hanged on a tree, and the birds will eat the flesh from his bones. Though this was an unpleasant interpretation, it was the truth, and Joseph did not shrink from disclosing it.

Calvin comments on this passage by stating that the majority of religious teachers and preachers, "in desiring to yield to the corrupt wishes of the world, adulterate the word of God. Wherefore, no one is a sincere minister of God's word, but he, who despising reproach, and being ready, as often as it may be necessary, to attack various offences, will frame his method of teaching according to the command of God. Joseph would, indeed, have preferred to augur well concerning both; but since it is not in his power to give a prosperous fortune to any one, nothing remains for him but frankly to pronounce whatever he has received from the Lord. So, formerly, although the people chose for themselves prophets who would promise them abundance of wine and oil and corn, while they exclaimed loudly against the holy prophets, because they let fall nothing but threatenings . . . yet it was the duty of the servants of the Lord, who had been sent to denounce vengeance, to proceed with severity, although they brought upon themselves hatred and danger." (Calvin). We can readily realize the application of this truth to our own day, when many people want only preachers who will proclaim a "popular" type of message — a message that makes people feel comfortable and peaceful while they are still in their sins and unreconciled to God.

"And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. And he restored the chief butler to his butlership again; and he gave the

cup into Pharaoh's hand: but he hanged the chief baker; as Joseph had interpreted to them" (40:20-22). Thus Joseph's interpretations are verified by coming to pass. It is well known that in ancient times kings frequently celebrated their birthdays not only by banquets (Mark 6:21) but also by pardoning selected offenders. The history recorded here is therefore very true to life.

"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him" (40:23). No doubt Joseph hoped to be released from prison soon. Very likely he thought that the chief butler would be so happy about being released from prison and restored to his position that he would be only too glad to intercede with Pharaoh for Joseph. But it did not happen. The chief butler ungratefully forgets Joseph, who is left to languish in prison. As a matter of fact, two full years pass, and Joseph remains in prison. "Therefore, we are all taught, in his person, that nothing is more improper than to prescribe the time in which God shall help us; since He purposely, for a long season, keeps His own people in anxious suspense, that, by this very experiment, they may truly know what it is to trust in Him" (Calvin). We believe that there was a special purpose of God involved in the chief butler's forgetting Joseph. It was for the further development of Joseph's faith and patience. On the other hand, this does not at all excuse the chief butler, who was guilty of ingratitude in forgetting Joseph. Moreover it is hard to believe that the chief butler could have forgotten Joseph accidentally or unintentionally. From time to time, at least he must have remembered Joseph and recalled the interpretation of the dream which had been so wonderfully fulfilled. But either because he thought the time was not opportune, or for some other reason, he neglected to carry out Joseph's request. Possibly he just preferred to "let well enough alone" rather than become involved in the case of another prisoner which might have had results for himself.

As chapter 41 opens, two full years have passed, and Joseph is still in prison. Again dreams enter into the history of Joseph. This time it is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who dreams. As in the previous instances, the dreams are not ordinary dreams but are revelations of the purpose of God. As in Joseph's own boyhood experience, there are two dreams with the same meaning. The first is the dream of the seven fat and seven lean cows; the second is the dream of the seven full and seven thin ears of grain. Following each dream, it is recorded, Pharaoh awoke. The fact that divine revelation came to Pharaoh in the form of dreams, rather than by a more direct method, confirms the observation made in a previous lesson that dreams were the mode of revelation to those not living in close contact with God. Pharaoh, as an Egyptian, was of course a pagan and an idolater. His idea of God would inevitably be distorted by the false religion of Egypt.

Pharaoh's dreams are a strange combination of features that are entirely natural and appropriate in Egypt, with things that could never happen at all in real life, whether in Egypt or anywhere else. The river, the meadow by the riverside, the cattle grazing in the meadow — all this fits the Egyptian scene perfectly. Doubtless Pharaoh and every Egyptian had gazed on just such a scene many a time. Moreover there would be

nothing out of the ordinary in both fat and lean cattle being seen, for Egypt might have either kind, according to the season and the abundance of pasture. But the thin cattle eating up the fat cattle is something that could only happen in a dream. No doubt it was this very strange feature that caused Pharaoh to awake and ponder the dream.

Again, the seven well-filled ears of grain on a single stalk would be no uncommon sight in Egypt, which was renowned as the granary of the Mediterranean world. With the Nile River continually restoring fertility to the fields in its flood plain and supplying water, it is no wonder that Egypt produced immense crops of wheat and other grain. Nor would the seven thin ears, blasted by the hot east wind, be a strange sight in Egypt. The hot, dry east wind blowing from the desert is said to wilt and blast vegetation at the present day in Egypt. But contrary to what could happen in real life, the seven thin ears eat up the seven fat ones. Again Pharaoh awakes and realizes that he has been dreaming.

In the morning Pharaoh, being convinced that these strange dreams must have a special meaning, summons his experts, including, perhaps, professional dream analysts, and relates the dreams to them. But they are unable to interpret the dreams. It is remarkable that Pharaoh's wise men and magicians did not attempt to make up an interpretation of the dreams, for it would not have been difficult to arrive at a plausible meaning by guess-work. As everyone knew, the Nile River was (and is) Egypt's source of fertility, and the cow was worshipped as a symbol of the productive power of nature. The dreams, then, were framed in terms of ideas familiar to every Egyptian, and we are almost surprised that the wise men of Egypt were unable to discern the meaning. "Apparently, the hand of God was upon the interpreters, making their own devices of no effect, in order that the revelation might come by His own chosen instrument" (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, II. 1023). Something can be said, too, for the honesty of the Egyptian wise men. Though devotees of a false religion and no doubt largely involved in the study of pseudo-science, they do not consciously and deliberately attempt to satisfy the king by the use of falsehood.

The wise men and magicians having failed to interpret the king's dreams, the chief butler speaks up: "I do remember my faults this day" (41:9). Well he may remember his faults — he has basely "forgotten" Joseph for two full years, while Joseph remains unjustly imprisoned. The chief butler relates his experience and that of the chief baker, and tells how the interpretations given by Joseph in each case came true. The result of this is that Pharaoh summons Joseph to the royal palace.

The record states that Joseph was brought "hastily" out of the prison. But first he must be shaved and properly attired. This does not imply that in the prison Joseph has been living in a dirty or unkempt condition, but merely that there were special requirements for a person to be presented before the ruler of Egypt. After these matters have been attended to, Joseph is brought into the presence of Pharaoh in order to interpret the king's dreams. Joseph humbly

replies, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. Here Joseph displays the mark of every true servant of God, in that he gives all the credit to God and takes none to himself.

#### Questions:

1. To what class of people did God usually reveal Himself by dreams in Bible times?
2. How do we know that the dreams of the chief butler and baker were not caused by their own subconscious mind?
3. Why did Joseph ask the chief butler and baker to tell their dreams to him?
4. What was the meaning of the chief butler's dream?
5. What personal request did Joseph make of the chief butler?
6. What argument did Joseph use in making his request of the chief butler?
7. What important point in the chief baker's dream was unnoticed by the dreamer?
8. Why did Joseph interpret the chief baker's dream as bad news for the chief baker?
9. What is the bearing of Joseph's interpretation of the chief baker's dream on the duty of ministers of God's Word today?
10. How did kings in ancient times often celebrate their birthdays?
11. What purpose of God was involved in the chief butler's forgetting Joseph?
12. Could the chief butler have forgotten Joseph accidentally?
13. What may have been the chief butler's reasons for failing to carry out Joseph's request?
14. How much time passed while Joseph remained in prison?
15. What were the two dreams of Pharaoh?
16. What is implied by the fact that God's revelation came to Pharaoh in the form of dreams rather than some other form?
17. What features of Pharaoh's dreams were things natural and common in the land of Egypt?
18. What features of the king's dreams were things that could not happen in real life?
19. What was Pharaoh's first attempt to learn the meaning of his dreams?

20. Why is it surprising that the Egyptian wise men were not able to interpret the dreams?

21. How can we explain the wise men's failure to interpret the king's dreams?

22. What confession did the chief butler make?

23. What preparation was necessary before Joseph could be presented at the court of Pharaoh?

24. What statement of Joseph indicates that he was a humble and true servant of God?

## LESSON 75

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

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

Pharaoh repeats his dreams to Joseph (41:17-24), adding the statement "I told this unto the magicians, but there was none that could declare it to me." Joseph at once proceeds to give the interpretation of the dreams. In Joseph's speech, we note the emphasis placed on God as the revealer of truth and the controller of events. Whatever may be Pharaoh's original idea of God or gods, he cannot fail to note in what Joseph says the idea of one God who holds absolute control over all things, including the forces of nature and the events of the future.

First of all Joseph lays down the proposition that "the dream is one," that is, Pharaoh's two dreams have but a single meaning. Later he adds (verse 32) that the reason for Pharaoh having two dreams rather than just one, is for emphasis on the absolute certainty of the thing coming to pass, and that soon.

The interpretation is that there shall be a succession of seven specially good years in Egypt, in which there shall be plentiful harvests, followed by a succession of seven years of famine. The years of famine will be so severe that the plenty of the seven good years will be forgotten.

So much for the meaning of the dreams. We may note in the fact of these dreams a double purpose of God. First, Pharaoh's dreams are God's way of getting His servant Joseph out of prison. Secondly, Pharaoh's dreams proceed from the compassion of God on the people of Egypt and neighboring countries. There are to be seven years of famine, but in the mercy of God these will be preceded by seven good years; and in the mercy of God this is revealed to the king of Egypt in advance so that wise preparations can be made and the suffering of the seven bad years somewhat mitigated.

Thus in the affairs of Egypt and the dreams of Pharaoh, as these proceed from the providence of God, we see both God's general compassion on His creatures, and His special favor to His elect. Both God's compassion on human suffering and His special redemptive purpose connected with the seed of Abraham are seen at work in this history. The immediate purpose is to prevent or mitigate suffering in Egypt; the long-range (redemptive) purpose is to preserve alive that portion of the human race from which the Messiah, the Seed of the woman, must finally come.

Having declared the meaning of the dreams to Pharaoh, Joseph adds some wise counsel (41:33-36). He proposes that a "discreet and wise" man be found and appointed as food administrator of the land of Egypt, to have supervision over officers who shall collect and store one-fifth of the crops of grain during the seven good years, so that this surplus can be rationed out to the people during the seven years of famine which are sure to follow, "that the land perish not through the famine."

"And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh" (41:37). Apparently neither Pharaoh nor his advisors thought of questioning the truth of Joseph's interpretation of the dreams, nor the divine source of the dreams themselves. In connection with this, no doubt the testimony of the chief butler to the reliability of Joseph's interpretation of dreams carried much weight. Yet beyond this, we may see a special operation of God. Did no Egyptian official become jealous of the honor and prominence about to be bestowed upon a foreigner just removed from prison? Did none of the Egyptian magicians and wise men become irritated by their own lowered prestige in comparison with that of this newcomer? Apparently not. We can see in this the special working of God, who brings His purposes to pass without fail. It is truly astonishing that a foreign slave, just out of prison where he had been put for alleged crime, should suddenly be entrusted with the highest and most responsible position in the kingdom, subordinate only to Pharaoh himself. And that this should occur, as it seems to have, without delay or opposition, is an even stronger proof of the wondrous working of God. We would naturally expect the Egyptian magicians, wise men and politicians to be intensely jealous. Yet there is no indication of the slightest opposition to Joseph. We can only wonder what Potiphar's wife may have thought of the turn of events!

The proposal is not only good in the eyes of Pharaoh, but also "in the eyes of all his servants" (41:37). Pharaoh decides that no person can be found better qualified than Joseph himself to be the food administrator of Egypt, clothed with almost unlimited powers to carry out his program of conserving grain during the good years and rationing it out during the years of famine.

"Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. . . See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt" (41:40,41). This grant of authority is symbolized by the transfer of Pharaoh's ring from his own hand to Joseph's hand. This would be a signet ring used for authenticating documents — a sort of "power of attorney" granted to Joseph, so that his acts and decrees

will be of the same authority as those of Pharaoh himself. To the ring are added clothing of fine linen, and a gold chain about his neck. Moreover Joseph is made to ride in the second chariot of Egypt, while runners ahead of him cry "Bow the knee!" Pharaoh adds that without Joseph shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt, implying that absolute powers have been conferred upon him. What a change in the circumstances of Joseph from the day when his brothers stripped him of his coat of many colors and dropped him into a pit to starve to death, and later sold him to a caravan of merchants for twenty pieces of silver!

For Egyptian social standing it was also necessary that Joseph be a married man. Accordingly, Pharaoh provides for this too. Joseph is given an Egyptian name, Zaphnath-Paaneah. The meaning of this name is uncertain. It may mean "abundance of life" or some related idea. For his wife Joseph is given a lady of high rank, Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. On was the city where the worship of the sun-god was centered. Both the names, Asepath and Potiphera, seem to have idolatrous connotations. But we may certainly suppose that following her marriage to Joseph Asenath was converted from the errors and superstitions of Egyptian paganism to faith in the one true God, the Lord, whom Joseph worshipped. Leupold suggests that Joseph's marriage to the daughter of such an important and prominent Egyptian was calculated to neutralize whatever prejudice may have existed against him as a foreigner.

In our study of the Book of Genesis we have reached chapter 41 verse 46. The last incident considered was the marriage of Joseph to Asenath. In verse 46 we are informed that Joseph was 30 years of age when he was released from prison and stood before Pharaoh the king of Egypt. Thirteen years have passed since Joseph, at the age of seventeen, took care of his father's sheep (37:2). As Joseph lived to the age of 110 years (50:26), more than two-thirds of his life was still before him.

In 41:45 we read "And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt," and then in the next verse we read "And Joseph went . . . throughout all the land of Egypt." It might seem at first sight that the second statement is a mere repetition of the first, and therefore superfluous. However, there is a difference. Note that in verse 45 in the English Bible the word "all" is printed in italics, indicating that it is not in the Hebrew, but was added by the translators, whereas in verse 46 the word "all" is not printed in italics, therefore it is in the Hebrew text. Both this fact and the word "throughout" in verse 46 indicate that the second statement covers a larger field than the first.

Joseph is not an armchair official who merely sits at a desk and issues directives. He travels throughout all the land of Egypt and personally inspects the operation of the food conservation program. The statement of verse 46 that Joseph went throughout all the land of Egypt doubtless implies much more than a single trip of inspection. No doubt Joseph repeatedly travelled through Egypt supervising the program. As we know from earlier incidents in the life of Joseph, he was a careful and thorough person, possessing that "almost infinite capacity for taking pains" that is necessary for

true success in a complex and difficult undertaking.

During the seven years of plenty which ensued, the soil of Egypt produced abundant crops of grain. The surplus was stored in cities in all parts of Egypt, each city serving as a storage center for the grain produced in its area. The supply stored eventually reached such an enormous quantity that the officials gave up keeping a record of the amount in storage. Leupold suggests that in Joseph's day the knowledge of arithmetic was not sufficiently advanced to handle such large quantities. This suggestion seems far-fetched, for the people that built the great pyramid of Khufu at Gizeh more than a thousand years before Joseph's time must have known a good deal of mathematics beyond simple addition.

The next fact reported is the birth of Joseph's two sons (41:50) who of course were half Hebrew and half Egyptian. It is recorded that these two sons of Joseph were born "before the years of famine came." The record also specifically states that these sons were born to Joseph of Asenath, thus reminding us that Joseph adhered to God's ordinance of monogamous marriage.

The naming of Joseph's sons is significant. Joseph named the first son Manasseh, "For God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house" (41:51). The name Manasseh means "making to forget." The basic idea is that of forgetting.

Ephraim, Joseph's second son, was named Ephraim, "For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction" (verse 52). The name Ephraim means literally "double fruit." Egypt was the land of Joseph's affliction, not only because it was a land of exile from his true country and from his father and brethren, but also because of the bitter experiences of slavery and imprisonment which had come to him in Egypt.

Next we learn of the coming of the seven years of famine (41:53,54). This famine affected not only Egypt but the surrounding countries also. The cause of the famine is not stated, but presumably it was caused by drought. Canaan, a land with marginal rainfall, often suffered drought and resulting famine. Egypt, with even less rainfall than Canaan — so little, indeed, as to be practically negligible — ordinarily did not suffer famine because the Nile river afforded an abundant water supply. But sometimes the water in the Nile is too low to be used effectively for the irrigation of Egypt's fields. The cause of this occasional occurrence of low water in the Nile is said to be a stoppage of the White Nile (one of the rivers which form the sources of the Nile) in central Africa by the thick growth of vegetation which impounds the waters in vast stretches of marshland until the river finally clears a new channel for itself. Leupold mentions a similar case about 900 years ago (A.D. 1064-1071) when famine was so severe in Egypt that "the people ate corpses and animals that died of themselves" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 1039).

When the record states that the famine was "in all lands" this does not necessarily imply that it was world-wide. Rather, the plain meaning would seem to be that there was famine in all the lands surrounding Egypt. It is not necessary to suppose that at this time there was famine in Scandinavia, North America, New Zealand or

other remote parts of the world. When the record states (41:57) that "all countries came into Egypt" to purchase grain (41:57) this again must be regarded as limited by the context to countries in that part of the world where Egypt is located; it would be quite absurd to suppose that grain was imported from Egypt to Britain, China or other distant countries at this time.

The story as it is narrated in Genesis obviously reports only the essential facts, and these in a very simple manner. Certainly there must have been many details about this grain program and its administration which are not reported.

The record states that the people of Egypt were "famished", whereupon they cried to Pharaoh for help, and in reply were told to apply to Joseph and follow his instructions. Joseph opened all the storehouses and issued grain to the Egyptians, for which they paid money.

Not only Egyptians, but people from other lands, applied to Joseph for grain (41:57). It seems noteworthy that Joseph did not attempt to limit the grain to Egyptians, but was willing for others also to share in the benefit.

We should note, too, that Joseph did not begin to ration out the grain until after the people had become "famished." Vast as the stored-up supply was, it was not unlimited; it must be issued carefully, for it had to last through seven years of famine. Joseph's great ability as a wise administrator appears in this matter. Nor was the grain issued in unlimited quantities, for we are told that even after the issuing of grain had been commenced, still "the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt" (41:56b).

#### Questions:

1. What special emphasis is found in Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams?
2. Why did God reveal the future to Pharaoh by two dreams rather than by just one?
3. What was the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams?
4. What two purposes of God can be discerned in Pharaoh's dreams?
5. What counsel did Joseph give to Pharaoh after interpreting the dreams?
6. How can we explain the fact that there seemed to be no prejudice against Joseph or opposition to his ap-

pointment?

7. What powers did Pharaoh confer upon Joseph?
8. What symbols of authority were given to Joseph?
9. What Egyptian name was given to Joseph? What may its meaning be?
10. Why was it necessary, from the Egyptian point of view, for Joseph to be a married man?
11. Who became Joseph's wife?
12. What may we suppose as to her religion before and after her marriage to Joseph?
13. How old was Joseph when he was released from prison and stood before Pharaoh?
14. How old was Joseph at the time of his death? How much of his life was still before him when he stood before Pharaoh?
15. How can it be shown that the statement about Joseph's travels through Egypt in verse 46 is not a mere repetition of the somewhat similar statement in verse 45?
16. What does Joseph's travelling through Egypt show concerning his competence as an administrator?
17. Why was the attempt to keep a record of the amount of grain in storage abandoned?
18. When were Joseph's two sons born?
19. What were the names of Joseph's two sons? What is the meaning of each name?
20. What is the significance of the statement that Joseph's sons were born of Asenath?
21. Why did Egypt very seldom suffer famine?
22. What possible explanation has been suggested as to the cause of the seven years of famine in Egypt?
23. When did a similar famine of several years' duration take place in Egypt?
24. What is meant by the statement that the famine was "in all lands"?
25. What statements of the record indicate that the grain was not issued too soon nor in unlimited quantities?

#### LESSON 76

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

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

Chapter 42 opens with Jacob sending his sons to Egypt to purchase grain. We may wonder why Joseph has done nothing to get in contact with his father during the time that has passed. For about nine years have passed since Joseph became the ruler of Egypt — seven

years of plenty and two years of famine (45:6). We can only speculate as to the reason why Joseph (as far as we know) made no effort even to inform his father that he was still alive. Perhaps he felt it would be better to wait for developments in the providence of God rather than to take such a matter into his own hands.

Jacob asks his sons why they are looking one upon another. Evidently they all realize that the food problem has become acute, yet each expects some one of the others to be the first to propose a remedy. At length the initiative is taken by Jacob himself: "Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence, that we may live, and not die" (42:2).

In accordance with Jacob's instructions, Joseph's ten older brothers go to Egypt to get food. Benjamin, the youngest, who like Joseph was a son of Rachel, is kept at home with his father, "lest peradventure mischief befall him."

Verse 6 tells us that it was Joseph that sold to all the people of the land. This can hardly mean that all applicants for grain from all parts of Egypt were required to interview Joseph personally. Presumably in ordinary cases Egyptian applicants obtained the grain from local administrators near where they lived, the entire nationwide program being under Joseph's control and supervision. Apparently, however, special cases required a clearance from the head administrator himself, and it evidently was the practice to require applicants from foreign lands to appear at headquarters for approval by Joseph himself.

Thus Joseph's ten brothers arrive and appear before Joseph, prostrating themselves respectfully before him. "And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him" (42:8). As they were all considerably older than Joseph, their appearance would have changed but little in the intervening years. Joseph, on the other hand, has grown up from a lad of seventeen to a man of thirty. Moreover, Joseph was naturally wearing the dress of an Egyptian and speaking the Egyptian language. It would hardly even occur to the brothers that this powerful Egyptian official could be their own brother. While Joseph has not forgotten his native Hebrew, by this time he has doubtless learned to speak the Egyptian language fluently. If he had a trace of foreign accent in speaking Egyptian, this would not be noticed by his brothers who knew no Egyptian at all.

The record states that Joseph "made himself strange unto them," that is, he deliberately sought to prevent their immediate recognition of him as their brother. He "spake roughly unto them", not because of anger, but rather because he proposes to test his brothers' attitude toward himself in preparation for a full reconciliation with them. Leupold states that any anger toward his brothers which Joseph may have had at the time when he was sold into Egypt, would have vanished by this time through his tribulations in prison in Egypt. And there is no indication anywhere in the narrative that Joseph was acting in anger; rather, we get the impression that he maintained a most remarkable self-control and even-tempered calm

through everything until he finally broke down and revealed his identity to his brothers.

It is reported by ancient writers that the Egyptians were regularly suspicious of foreigners entering their country from the northeast, the direction from which hostile invaders usually came. In harmony with this quite natural pattern Joseph asks the men whence they are and they reply that they are from Canaan, and wish to buy food. Verse 9 says that "Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them" — the dreams of their bowing down before him. Now they are prostrated before him with their faces to the ground. Part of the dreams, at least, has already come true! This would lead Joseph to conclude that their coming into Egypt was part of a special providence of God.

Harshly Joseph accuses his brothers of being spies: "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come" (42:9). No country looks with favor on espionage carried out by a possible invader; at this particular time Egypt, weakened by the famine, could not tolerate anything that might lead to foreign invasion. So Joseph's charge that the men are spies would sound natural enough not only to the Egyptians but even to the brothers themselves.

Very likely, too, Joseph wonders why there are only ten brothers before him. Where is the eleventh? Have they done something to Benjamin too as they did to Joseph? Have they possibly murdered Benjamin, or sold him also as a slave?

In reply to Joseph's charge, the brothers insist on their innocence. They have come only to buy food; they are not spies; they are all the sons of one father. Perhaps their appearance would confirm the truth of this claim. If they could get Joseph to believe that they were all sons of one father, this would help to clear them of the charge of being spies. A father might easily send ten sons to purchase grain; the king of an enemy country would not be likely to pick ten brothers to send out as spies.

As the interview proceeds the brothers volunteer the information that originally there were twelve brothers, of which the youngest is still with their father in Canaan, while "one is not." This last statement seems rather vague, though of course the brothers have heard nothing about Joseph during all the years that have passed since he was sold to the Ishmaelites. Their vagueness in speaking about the one brother who "is not" may have led Joseph to doubt the truth of their statement that the youngest was at home with his father.

At any rate, Joseph resolves to test them as to their truthfulness. Repeating the accusation "Ye are spies" (42:14), he swears an Egyptian oath, "By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither." Was it right for Joseph to swear by the life of Pharaoh? Calvin says not; Leupold, following Luther, feels that the oath by the life of Pharaoh was legitimate. He holds that while using the name of Pharaoh, Joseph was really thinking of the God who punishes perjurers. There is no doubt that the use of a common Egyptian oath would give a very realistic Egyptian touch to Joseph's words in the minds of his

brothers. As to the morality of his using this form of oath, the present writer agrees with Calvin in holding that it cannot be justified. This is one of the compromises of good men which the Bible faithfully records. Similarly, it records Abraham's untruthfulness, Noah's drunkenness and David's adultery. These things are recorded as matters of fact, without any implication of divine approval. Incidentally, it is one of the evidences of the truth of the Old Testament that it faithfully records the compromises and lapses of good men. If these stories were largely the product of the imaginations of later Jewish writers, all discreditable features would have been left out. People do not invent stories which show their national heroes in a bad light.

The fact that Joseph is portrayed as a pious and godly man does not imply that he was perfect. Nor is this Egyptian oath the only point at which Joseph seems to have compromised with moral evil. Later in the story he falsely represents himself as having powers of divination by the use of a silver cup (44:4,5). It is futile to attempt to justify this use of deceit. It is always wrong to do evil that good may come.

Next Joseph announces that one of the brothers is to be sent back to Canaan to bring the youngest brother as proof that the men are not spies. Upon announcing this, he puts all ten of his brothers in prison for three days. This would certainly have a strong psychological effect on the brothers. They would not be told, of course, that the imprisonment was to be limited to three days. Naturally they would tend to think that it might continue much longer, or indefinitely. No doubt they would suffer some pangs of conscience, remembering what they had done to Joseph years before.

We may wonder why this imprisonment was precisely three days. It is possible, but not certain, that Joseph had spent three days in the pit; the record in chapter 37 does not necessarily imply that the dropping of Joseph into the pit and the selling of him to the Ishmaelites all happened on the same day, though it is possible that it did.

After three days the brothers are brought before Joseph again. Explaining that he is a man that fears God, Joseph now modifies his original decree. Only one of the brothers is to be kept in prison in Egypt; the rest may purchase grain and return to Canaan. When they bring back their youngest brother, they will be cleared of the charge of espionage and the brother left in prison will be released.

At this point the brothers engage in a conversation among themselves, not realizing that Joseph can understand them (42:21-23). We learn here that they feel guilty concerning their treatment of Joseph. It has been observed that this is the only acknowledgement of sin in the entire book of Genesis. "Therefore is this distress come upon us." Reuben, the eldest of the brothers, adds that he had been opposed to the mistreatment of Joseph, "and ye would not hear". "Behold, also, his blood is required" — that is, Reuben asserts that what is happening to the brothers is divine retribution for the crime against Joseph. The mention of "blood" may indicate that Reuben, at least, supposed Joseph to be already dead.

At this point Joseph's emotions get beyond his control. He turns away from them, presumably into another room, and weeps, then returns to them. Selecting Simeon from among the ten, Joseph has him bound before their eyes (42:24). We may ask why Simeon was selected. It is possible that Simeon was the one who actually manhandled Joseph when he was dropped into the pit and later sold to the Ishmaelites. We know that Simeon had a reputation for cruelty (34:25; 49:5-7). If it was indeed Simeon that manhandled Joseph, this singling out of Simeon to be bound and imprisoned would make a deep impression on the brothers. However, this is only a possibility, as the record does not state why Simeon was selected to be kept in prison.

The nine brothers are now sold grain and sent back to Canaan. At Joseph's command they are given provisions for use on the trip home. In addition to this Joseph secretly orders that their money be placed in their sacks. Thereupon they depart to return to Canaan.

Stopping in an inn on the way home, one of the sacks is opened and the money is found lying on top of the grain in the mouth of the sack. As they were given special provisions for the trip home, this probably was late in the journey after the special provisions had been used up, and they found it necessary to use some of the grain they had purchased to feed their animals. There is no basis in the narrative for the notion that this discovery occurred the first night after their departure from the presence of Joseph. Nor does the record imply what some have inferred from it, that each brother had only a single sack of grain. As Leupold comments, for the trip to Egypt to be worth while, each brother would have to bring back several sacks of grain. Each man's money was placed in one of his sacks, but none was discovered till the incident in the inn mentioned in verse 27.

This strange discovery fills the brothers with wonder. They cannot understand the strange things that have been happening to them on this remarkable trip to Egypt and back. The very obscurity and uncertainty of the matter would cause them to be filled with apprehensions. The record states that "their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, 'What is this that God hath done unto us'" (42:28). From this we note that the brothers not only believe in God, but they believe that He is the moral Ruler of men and administers retribution to men according to their desert. Though there is no evidence that they had personal devotion to God at this time of their life, it is clear that they hold to the theology of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, recognizing that what happens comes to pass by the hand of God. To this extent Joseph's ten brothers have a better and truer faith than many modern people who attribute what happens to chance.

Arriving home in Canaan, the brothers tell their story to their aged father Jacob. They do not, of course, tell of their own guilty feelings and consciousness of suffering the just retribution of God, for that would involve disclosing the truth about their crime against Joseph years before. Nor do they immediately inform their father about Simeon being left in prison in Egypt, though Jacob would of course soon notice the absence of

Simeon from the group. Also they do not tell their father about their humiliating experience of being put in prison for three days. They do, however, tell of the charge that they were spies and of the demand that Benjamin be sent to Egypt to appear before the great food administrator there. Jacob's own feelings at this stage of the affair are not reported. We can only imagine the indignation and grief that he must have felt on hearing the report of his sons.

Next we are told that on emptying the sacks, each man's money was found in one of his sacks, and the "bundles of money" were seen both by them and by Jacob, with the result that "they were afraid" (42:35). Jacob, seeing money in the sacks, would naturally conclude that his sons had stolen the grain in Egypt, instead of honestly purchasing and paying for it; how else could they come home with both the grain and the money? Moreover, the brothers could offer no explanation of the presence of the money in the sacks. Anything they might say would only tend to incriminate themselves.

Jacob is filled with fears and grief: "Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me" (42:36). Does Jacob suspect that his sons had something to do with the mysterious disappearance of Joseph? He accuses them of bereaving him of his children. Perhaps he had a strong suspicion that Joseph had met with foul play at their hands.

At this point Reuben, the eldest son, steps forward saying: "Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again" (42:37). This proposal is a personal pledge or guarantee. Reuben offers to bear full responsibility for the safe return of Benjamin. Of course Jacob would not think of killing Reuben's two sons in the event that Benjamin does not return. Grief over the loss of a son is not remedied by the murder of grandsons. But Reuben perhaps hopes by the very extravagance of his offer to move his father to give consent for Benjamin to go to Egypt.

Jacob, however, remains adamant in his refusal. "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave" (42:38). Jacob has already suffered much; he feels that another deep sorrow would be too much for him to bear.

#### Questions:

1. What may have been the reason why Joseph did not make any effort, during the years of plenty in Egypt, to get in touch with his father?

2. Who took the initiative, in Jacob's household as to the purchase of grain from Egypt?

3. Why was Benjamin kept at home by his father?

4. What is meant by the statement of verse 6 that it was Joseph that sold to all the people of the land?

5. Why would Joseph recognize his brothers, and why would they not recognize him?

6. What caused Joseph to remember his dreams when his brothers appeared before him?

7. What was Joseph's reason for treating his brothers roughly?

8. Why were the Egyptians usually suspicious of foreigners entering their country from the northeast?

9. Why did the brothers tell Joseph that they were all sons of one father?

10. In what way did the brothers mention Joseph?

11. What should we think of Joseph's use of an Egyptian oath?

12. What is implied by the fact that the Bible faithfully records the wrongdoing of good men?

13. On what later occasion did Joseph compromise with evil?

14. What did Joseph do to start the consciences of his brothers to working?

15. What may possibly be the reason why the imprisonment of the ten brothers was for three days?

16. What statement of the brothers after their release from prison indicates their feeling of guilt?

17. Which brother was finally selected to be kept in prison until the arrival of Benjamin?

18. What may possibly be the reason why Simeon was selected?

19. In addition to the grain which they purchased, what was given to the brothers before their departure from Egypt to return to Canaan?

20. What happened when the brothers stopped at an inn enroute home?

21. At what stage of their homeward journey did this probably take place?

22. What was the effect on the brothers of the discovery of the money?

23. What does this incident show concerning the religious faith of the brothers at this stage of their life?

24. What did the brothers tell their father, and what did they not tell him, on their arrival at home?

25. What further discovery caused added dismay?

26. What would Jacob naturally conclude from the presence of the money in the sacks?

27. Of what does Jacob accuse his sons in verse 36?

28. What suspicion may have been in Jacob's mind?

29. What proposition is made by Reuben?

30. On what ground does Jacob flatly refuse to allow Benjamin to go to Egypt?

#### LESSON 77

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

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

At the beginning of chapter 43 the famine still exists in Canaan and the food brought from Egypt has been eaten up. Jacob therefore urges his sons to make a second trip to Egypt to buy food. They reply that this can be done on one condition only, namely, that Benjamin accompany them to Egypt (43:1-5). Jacob asks them why they ever told the man in Egypt that they had a brother, and they reply that they could not avoid answering his pointed questions. This reply does not seem to fit what is recorded in chapter 42 exactly, for it appears there (42:13) that the brothers volunteered the information that they had a younger brother. However, the statement in 43:7 that the man in Egypt had asked them whether they had another brother is not necessarily a lie. It is quite possible that much more was said between Joseph and the brothers than is recorded in chapter 42, and that what we have in chapter 42 is merely a very condensed summary of the main items of the conversation.

At this point Judah offers to assume entire responsibility for the safe return of Benjamin. He enforces his plea by the consideration that it is a life and death matter for the entire family: "that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones" (43:8). Even Benjamin would suffer if food is not speedily obtained from some source. Judah offers to bear the blame for ever if he does not bring Benjamin safely back to his father. He adds that they could already have completed the second trip if they had not been delayed (by Jacob's unwillingness to allow Benjamin to accompany them).

Finally Jacob's extreme reluctance is broken down by the force of sheer necessity. A suitable gift of the choice products of Canaan is to be taken along to placate this great Egyptian official who has Simeon in prison in Egypt. Considering the fact that Canaan was in the grip of a dire famine, the gift could not have been very lavish. The money is also to be taken back, along with new money for the purchase of more grain; Jacob suggests that it might have been an oversight that the money was returned in the sacks the first time (43:12). Leopold comments that the language used indicates that the money found in the sacks on the return from the first trip had been kept intact "in its original bundles, a kind of unlucky coin which no one dared to use" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 1066).

"Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved" (43:14). Thus the aged Jacob makes the

decision and sends his sons off on the second journey to Egypt.

Note the faith of Jacob as shown at this point in his life. He has done what he could; now it is beyond human power and the issue is committed to the hands of God Almighty, the God of Abraham and Isaac. Those who think that the Hebrew patriarchs believed in a local or tribal God are mistaken. Jacob believes in a God of unlimited power who controls what happens everywhere. The acts of a great Egyptian official are not regarded as beyond the control of the God Jacob believes in. He is also a God of mercy to those who deserve no mercy. Modern liberal scholars tend to rate the religious conceptions of the early Hebrews much too low. They do this largely because of their artificial theory of the evolution or development of Israel's religion from early belief in a local or tribal God to the ethical monotheism of the great prophets such as Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah. It is true, of course, that there was development in Israel's religion, just because there was progress in God's revelation of Himself and His will. But there is no reason to hold that Abraham, Isaac or Jacob ever believed in a limited, local or tribal God.

Jacob's plaintive statement, "If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved" is not to be regarded as a grumbling complaint nor as an expression of doubt, but rather as an act of humble submission to the will of God in true faith. The thought expressed is: "If it is God's will for me to lose my children, then let God's will be done."

Accordingly, the nine brothers and Benjamin return to Egypt and appear before Joseph (43:15). On seeing that they have their younger brother with them, Joseph issues an order for these men to dine with him the same day at noon. So they are conducted to Joseph's private residence, which no doubt was grand and spacious in a manner befitting his high office in the land of Egypt.

Joseph, of course, is greatly relieved to see Benjamin among the brothers. This proves, not only that they had done nothing evil to Benjamin, but also that their statements on other matters are true. This is a great day of rejoicing for Joseph after his long years of waiting in Egypt. He will have a feast suited to such a day of rejoicing. He orders the steward of his household to "slay," that is, to butcher an animal for the dinner.

As they enter Joseph's house, the brothers feel very apprehensive. After all, it was a very strange thing that ten men from Canaan who had come on a purely commercial transaction should be invited to be dinner guests of the highest official in Egypt next to the king. Their experiences in Egypt all seemed to have something strange and mysterious about them. What could this unexpected social invitation mean? Is this Egyptian official going to make an issue about the money in the sacks and use that as an excuse for imprisoning them

all, making them slaves or possibly even condemning them to death? Verse 18 describes the thoughts of the brothers as they consider the possibilities together. They decide that there is possible danger and they consider it wise to forestall the peril if possible. Accordingly they address the steward of Joseph's household explaining that they have brought back the money which was mysteriously found in the sacks (43:20-22). The steward sets them at ease by replying that he had their money all the time; the money found in the sacks must have been placed there by the power of God. Though this statement of the steward may appear to be an untruth, it need not be regarded as such. The statement "I had your money" means "Your money came into my hands" (Leupold), which was strictly true. With regard to the statement that God had given them treasure in their sacks, this was true also, if it be rightly understood. Whatever benefits men enjoy, really come to them from God, who alone is the Giver of every good and perfect gift. If they found money in their sacks, this good fortune is to be attributed to the blessing of God. "The sum of his answer, however, amounts to this, that there was no reason for fear, because their affairs were in a prosperous state. And since, after the manner of men, it was not possible that they should have paid the money for the corn which was found in their sacks, he ascribes this to the favor of God" (Calvin).

But how does it come that this steward, an Egyptian, speaks of the true God? A possible explanation is that he is speaking as Joseph was accustomed to speak. More probable is the explanation suggested by Calvin, who says: "I, therefore, do not doubt that Joseph, though not permitted openly to correct anything in the received superstitions, endeavored, at least in his own house, to establish the true worship of the one God, and always held fast the covenant, concerning which, as a boy, he had heard his father speak" (Commentary on Genesis, II, 359).

Calvin is also of the opinion that Joseph had probably taken this steward into his confidence, so that the steward knew that the men were Joseph's brothers. While this cannot be proved, it seems quite likely.

Water is provided to wash the guests' feet; the asses are given fodder. The gift from Canaan is prepared for presentation to Joseph at noon.

On Joseph's arrival at his residence at noon, the brothers first of all present their gift. The record does not state what Joseph's response to this gift was. No doubt Joseph felt that he must keep strict control over his emotions at such a time. In presenting the gift the brothers bow deeply, showing the highest honor and respect. Joseph, on his part, courteously inquires as to whether the lad whom he sees with them is their youngest brother, and addresses Benjamin with a blessing: "God be gracious unto thee, my son" (43:29). His calling Benjamin "son" implies merely the marked difference in age between himself and Benjamin.

At this point Joseph's long-restrained emotions get the better of him and he feels that he must weep. Hastening into his private room he weeps there, washes his face, returns to the company and orders the dinner to be served.

Here we note a striking reference to Egyptian customs. Three tables are set: one for Joseph alone; one for his brothers; one for the Egyptian guests who were present. It is known that Egyptians were extremely strict about such matters, a taboo which is reflected by the statement of verse 32 that to eat a meal along with Hebrews would be "an abomination unto the Egyptians."

The brothers, to their own amazement, are seated according to their relative ages. This would be easy for Joseph to arrange, knowing as he did the ages of all his brothers, but it must have mystified the brothers, who "marveled one at another" as they wondered how this Egyptian official could possibly know their ages from oldest to youngest.

Joseph now carries out an additional test of his brothers. He bestows favoritism deliberately on Benjamin. If they have concealed resentment against Benjamin similar to what they once had against Joseph, it may show in their faces or actions when Benjamin is served five times as much food as the other ten brothers. Of course Benjamin could not possibly have eaten five complete dinners at one sitting, or at any rate we may be sure that he would not attempt to do so! Nor was it Joseph's intention that he eat all this food. Rather, the oversized portions were intended as a mark of distinction and honor. The portions must have been very large, so as to be outstandingly conspicuous, to achieve the intended effect. The brothers could not help noticing what was happening. It could not be attributed to accident but must be the result of design. But Joseph's brothers meet this test satisfactorily; no resentment is betrayed by their words or looks. Thus far, Joseph has reason to feel confident that his brothers have a right attitude.

Chapter 44 opens with the dinner over. Joseph and his brothers separate and go their ways. Joseph secretly commands his steward, in filling the men's sacks with grain, to restore their money in the mouths of the sacks, and also to place Joseph's special silver drinking cup in the sack of the youngest, with his money. The brothers remain overnight, and depart on their homeward trip at daybreak the next morning.

Joseph had commanded the steward to fill the men's sacks to their full capacity. This involved generosity beyond a mere business transaction. The men would of course notice this generous treatment and be pleased by it. The money placed in the sacks was intended, as on the former occasion, to arouse a sense of mystery in the brothers' minds and so to lead them to think of the hand of God behind what was going on. This, in turn, should lead them to some qualms of conscience concerning their own past life. The special silver cup is "planted" in Benjamin's sack, of course, in order to make it appear that Benjamin is guilty of theft. This will afford a good opportunity to test the brothers as to how they will treat Benjamin in a crisis.

The brothers have not gone very far when they are overtaken by Joseph's steward on Joseph's orders. The steward is to charge them with ungrateful wrongdoing in stealing his master's silver cup and to inform them that

this cup is used by Joseph in the practice of divination. It is known that cups or bowls were used in ancient times for divination, in various ways.

At this point we must face a real difficulty. How can Joseph, a believer in the true God, allow himself to practice divination? To do so is certainly heathenish and sinful. On the other hand, if Joseph did not really practice divination, but only claims to have that power, then how can he be cleared of the guilt of untruthfulness? Leupold suggests a third possibility, namely that God actually used some such means as this silver cup for granting special revelations to Joseph. This however is merely speculative and there is no evidence in its support. Calvin holds that Joseph only pretended to be a practitioner of divination, for the sake of making an impression on his brothers. He states that two sins were involved in Joseph's conduct on this occasion: the sin of professing divination, and the sin of untruthfulness. His judgment is that Joseph's conduct in this matter cannot be defended: "By boasting that he is a magician rather than proclaiming himself a prophet of God, he impiously profanes the gift of the Holy Spirit. Doubtless, in this dissimulation, it is not to be denied, that he sinned grievously" (Commentary on Genesis, II, 369). Calvin adds, however, the fact that Joseph was acting the part of an Egyptian official to his brothers and the time had not yet come to disclose his real identity to them. Had he declared himself a prophet of the true God, the secret would have been let out prematurely. The brothers would expect an Egyptian official to hold the beliefs and superstitions of Egypt. Thus, comments Calvin, when Joseph once started out on a course of pretending not to recognize his brothers, thus allowing them to continue to think of him as an Egyptian official, he was acting a lie and really committing himself to a whole series of untruths. "Whence, we gather, that when any one swerves from the right line, he is prone to fall into various sins. Wherefore, being warned by this example, let us learn to allow ourselves in nothing except what we know is approved of God. But especially we must avoid all dissimulation, which either produces or confirms mischievous impostures. Besides, we are warned, that it is not sufficient for any one to oppose a prevailing vice for a time; unless he add constancy of resistance, even though the evil may become excessive. For he discharges his duty very defectively, who, having once testified that he is displeased with what is evil, afterwards, by his silence or connivance, gives it a kind of assent" (Commentary on Genesis, II, 369).

#### Questions:

1. Which brother assumed responsibility for the safety of Benjamin on the second trip to Egypt?
2. By what act did Jacob hope to placate the great Egyptian food administrator?
3. What was finally done about the money found in the sacks?
4. How does Jacob's religious faith appear in his sending his sons to Egypt the second time?
5. How does it appear that Jacob believed that God's power is universal?

6. What is the modern liberal theory about the religion of Israel?

7. Why is the modern liberal theory of the development of Israel's religion false and misleading?

8. How should we interpret Jacob's statement, "If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved"?

9. What order was issued by Joseph when he saw Benjamin with the other brothers?

10. What preparations were to be made for rejoicing?

11. What fear troubled the brothers as they entered Joseph's house?

12. What attempt did they make to avoid possible danger?

13. What was the reply of Joseph's steward to them?

14. How can we explain the fact that Joseph's Egyptian steward spoke about the true God?

15. What last minute preparation did the brothers make before Joseph's arrival at noon?

16. How did the brothers show their respect for Joseph in presenting their gift to him?

17. What words did Joseph use in greeting Benjamin?

18. What did Joseph do when he could no longer restrain his tears?

19. How did the seating at the dinner illustrate Egyptian customs or prejudices?

20. What fact about the seating arrangement caused the brothers to marvel?

21. In what way did Joseph show favoritism toward Benjamin at the dinner?

22. What may have been Joseph's intention in showing this favoritism?

23. How long did the brothers remain as Joseph's guests?

24. What commands did Joseph give to his steward before the departure of the brothers?

25. What was the purpose of "planting" the silver cup in Benjamin's sack?

26. What did the steward say to the brothers on overtaking them?

27. What is meant by the term "divination" or "divining"?

28. What possibilities exist as to the explanation of

Joseph's claim to be a diviner?

29. What is Calvin's opinion as to the legitimacy of

Joseph's claim to practice divination?

30. What ethical lesson may we learn from Joseph's conduct?

#### LESSON 78

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

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

The brothers, of course, are utterly baffled by the steward's speech on his overtaking them. Note that everything is very mysterious. The steward has not actually mentioned the cup by name; he calls it only "this" and adds that his lord drinks in it and divines by it. The brothers repel the mysterious charge of wrongdoing, adding in support of their claim to innocence the fact that they had brought again the money found in their sacks on their return from their first trip to Egypt. They add that there is no motive why they should steal silver or gold out of the great official's house. Finally, they rather rashly state that if the cup is found in any of their sacks, the one in whose sack it is found, being guilty of theft, shall die, and the rest will be "my lord's bondmen." So confident are the brothers that the cup will not be found in any of their sacks.

The search is conducted, from the oldest brother to the youngest. The steward, of course, knows perfectly well that the cup will not be found until he reaches Benjamin's sack; but he builds up the suspense in the minds of the brothers by methodically conducting the search from sack to sack just as if he had no idea in whose sack it might be found — as if, in other words, he was acting on mere suspicion rather than on actual knowledge.

The cup is found, of course, in Benjamin's sack. What can the brothers say? They are speechless, only rending their clothes in their frustration and grief. There is no way out. They must return to the city and face a most serious charge.

What, if anything, did Benjamin say to the brothers as they made their way back to the city? Did he protest his innocence? Did the brothers really believe him guilty of having stolen the cup? Or did they perhaps suspect that this was one more mysterious fact in this wholly mysterious affair? Did they suspect that the cup had actually been "planted" in the sack with deliberate intent? And did they think of what the reaction of their aged father back in Canaan would be on learning that Benjamin had been put to death in Egypt as a thief? Certainly terrible thoughts must have raced through their minds. Yet all this the narrative passes over in silence, reporting to us only the facts in a very objective manner.

They arrive at Joseph's residence. He is still there. They prostrate themselves to the ground humbly before him. He flatly charges them with wrongdoing, adding the question, "Didn't you know that such a man as I can certainly divine?"

Judah acts as spokesman for the group. "What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found" (44:16).

Does the statement "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants" refer to the theft of the cup, or is it a reference to the old guilt of the brothers in selling Joseph as a slave? Leupold's opinion is that the reference is to their guilt in selling Joseph. Calvin, however, is inclined rather to the view that they are referring to the guilt of stealing the cup, as if to say "It is no use to deny a thing which is manifest in itself," adding that even though they probably suspected fraud, yet they "choose rather to trace the cause of their punishment to the secret judgment of God" (Commentary on Genesis, II, 370).

They cannot, however, tolerate the idea of Benjamin alone remaining a slave or prisoner in the land of Egypt; rather than that, they will all remain as "my lord's servants." Leupold comments that this indicates a good sense of solidarity among the brothers; if one must suffer, they will all suffer with him. Perhaps it would be too painful to face Jacob with such bad news; they would prefer to remain in Egypt and leave Jacob to wonder what had happened to them.

Joseph, however, dismisses such an idea as that all the brothers should be punished. Only the one guilty of the theft must suffer the penalty. As for the rest, "get you up in peace unto your father." Joseph of course realized that there would be no "peace" connected with a return to Canaan without Benjamin. But he is here deeply testing the brothers' attitude toward Jacob and toward Benjamin.

At this point Judah speaks again. Using the most respectful and conciliatory language, he attempts to explain the situation. The great age of their father, his deep attachment to Benjamin, the fact that Benjamin's only full brother was "dead", are presented in a most moving plea. Judah explains that the aged father will die if Benjamin does not return to him in safety. The whole history of the matter is presented in accurate and orderly fashion. Judah also explains that he has personally assumed full responsibility for the safe return of Benjamin. Finally, he pleads that he be allowed to remain as a slave in Egypt in place of Benjamin, and that the lad be allowed to return home with his brothers to his aged father. "For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father" (44:34).

Leupold says: "This is one of the manliest, most straightforward speeches ever delivered by any man. For depth of feeling and sincerity of purpose it stands unexcelled. What makes it most remarkable, however,

is the fact that it comes from the lips of one who once upon a time was so calloused that he cared nothing about the grief he had caused his father" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 1086). Leupold's estimate of Judah's speech seems fully justified. It would be hard to find a more transparently sincere and moving plea anywhere in the field of literature. No wonder this speech of Judah broke Joseph down completely, as we learn at the beginning of the next chapter, so that he could not refrain himself, but burst out and "wept aloud."

Judah's earnest and eloquent plea that Benjamin be spared and that Judah be allowed to become a slave in his stead brought us to the end of chapter 44. Chapter 45 opens with Joseph overcome with intense emotion. No longer able to refrain himself, Joseph orders all except his brethren to leave the room. This means, of course, all the Egyptian guests and servants who may have been present during the dinner which preceded this scene. What is to follow is a private matter between Joseph and his brothers; the Egyptians had no right to know about it, and could not have understood it. Accordingly, the Egyptians one and all withdraw.

'And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard" (45:2). Leupold translates this: "Joseph raised his voice so loudly in weeping, that the Egyptians heard it, and even the house of Pharaoh heard it" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 1090). This does not mean that Joseph wept so loud that the sound of his voice carried all the way to Pharaoh's palace — however near or distant that may have been — but rather the Egyptians who had just left Joseph's presence heard the loud weeping, and carried the report of this to Pharaoh's palace.

"I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" (45:3). This marks the first time Joseph addresses his brothers in Egypt in the Hebrew language, without the aid of an interpreter. The inquiry as to whether his father is still alive may seem superfluous, inasmuch as the brothers have been speaking of their father all along and he was prominently mentioned in Judah's earnest speech. But all that time the brothers thought they were dealing with an Egyptian, and now he discloses himself as their own brother. The solicitous inquiry about his father would serve to moderate somewhat the sudden shock of the announcement "I am Joseph."

The brothers, however, are paralyzed by the sudden shock and the wave of fear that overwhelmed them an instant later. "And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence." It is not surprising that they feel thus. In addition to their own guilty conscience concerning the crime perpetrated against Joseph years before, this man who now says he is Joseph has been treating them with rigorous justice. They could even consider him cruel and unfeeling.

Joseph, however, harbors no resentment. "Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near." Then Joseph tells them not to be grieved, nor angry with themselves that they had sold him into Egypt, "for God did send me before you to preserve life" (45:5; compare 50:19,20). This is one of the classic passages of Scripture to illustrate the truth that even the sinful acts of men are

foreordained by God and in God's wise plan work out in the end for the true benefit of His people. The purpose of the brothers in selling Joseph into Egypt was to give vent to their spite and hatred against him, which of course was deeply sinful. But a deeper purpose of God was at work in the same series of events, a purpose of grace toward His elect. We can even say that the brothers' wicked deed of selling Joseph into Egypt formed a necessary link in the historical development of God's plan of salvation. It had been promised by God that through the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all the families of the earth would be blessed. This was a Messianic promise ultimately fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. The fulfilment of this promise depended absolutely on the covenant seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob surviving the dire famine in the seven years of scarcity. If they had perished in the famine, the Messianic promise would have been frustrated. They were saved from perishing in the famine, however, by going to Egypt where there was food. There was food in Egypt because Joseph had been enabled by God to predict the seven years of famine and to store up grain for use in those years. Joseph's being food administrator of Egypt, in turn, depended on his being in Egypt, which in turn depended on his brothers having sold him into that country. Thus the wicked deed of the brothers formed an essential link in the chain of God's redemptive purpose. Those who irreverently speak of God's mysterious foreordination as if it were a mere abstract doctrine held by a few queer people called "Calvinists" should ponder the history of Joseph. Divine foreordination of all that comes to pass is no merely incidental feature in the Bible; it is deeply imbedded in the Scriptures, Old Testament and New, and cannot be removed from them without violently tearing many a historical narrative apart. God makes the wrath of man to praise Him, as the Psalmist said (Psalm 76:10). The present writer has often been impressed by the fact that those who vehemently object to the doctrine of divine foreordination almost never attempt to deny that it is taught in Scripture. Instead of trying to prove that the Bible does not teach it, they almost invariably bring up rationalistic objections to it. The usual attitude is something like this: "If I cannot reconcile God's foreordination with my own freedom in a way that satisfies my reason, then I refuse to believe that God has foreordained what comes to pass." We have even heard of a church officer who was quoted as saying that it made no difference to him whether the Bible teaches foreordination or not; even if taught in Scripture he would not believe it. Needless to say, such an attitude proceeds not from a humble, reverent faith in God but from a proud, man-pleasing rationalistic bias. Those who speak so should realize that their real quarrel is not with John Calvin but with the God of the Bible. They are not willing for God to be really God.

Joseph continues, telling his brothers that the famine is to continue for five more years, during which no crops will be harvested. "And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt" (45:7,8).

Joseph is not boasting here; he is simply telling the

facts to his brothers; facts moreover which they had to know to understand what had really happened. He gives all the credit to God, taking none at all for himself. He is trying to lead his brothers to see what has happened in its true light, that is, in relation to the sovereign purpose of God. The fact that God's purpose was involved in all that had happened of course did not in any way cancel or lessen the brothers' guilt in selling Joseph. Joseph is not telling them that it was an act of God (verse 8) in order to minimize the evil of their deed, but rather to get them to see the entire series of events in its true perspective. For nothing is truly understood until it is understood in relation to God. It is only in God's light that man can really see light (Psalm 36:9).

**Questions:**

1. How did the steward address the brothers on overtaking them?
2. How did they attempt to reply to the steward's charge?
3. What proposal did the brothers make in their confidence of their innocence?
4. Why did the steward start searching at the oldest brother's sacks?
5. What action did the brothers perform when the cup was discovered?
6. What may have been the thoughts of the brothers on their way back to the city?
7. Which brother acted as spokesman for the group as they appeared before Joseph?
8. What are the possibilities as to the meaning of the statement "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants"?
9. Why could the brothers not tolerate the idea of leaving Benjamin alone in Egypt?
10. What was Joseph's response to the proposal that all the brothers remain in Egypt as slaves?
11. Give an outline of Judah's plea for Benjamin's release.
12. How does Leupold rate Judah's speech?
13. What was the effect of Judah's speech on Joseph?
14. What effect was produced on Joseph by the speech of Judah in the last part of chapter 44?
15. Why did Joseph order the Egyptians to leave the room?
16. What may have been the reason why Joseph asked "Doth my father yet live?"
17. What attitude was displayed by the brothers on learning that they were in Joseph's presence?
18. What reasons can be assigned for the attitude of the brothers?
19. How did Joseph show that he harbored no resentment?
20. On what ground did Joseph tell his brothers not to be grieved or angry with themselves?
21. How does the history of Joseph illustrate the truth of God's foreordination?
22. What was the relation between the brothers' crime and God's plan of redemption?
23. What is the real reason why many people oppose the doctrine of divine foreordination?
24. How can it be shown that Joseph was not boasting in what he said to his brothers in 45:4-8?
25. What was Joseph trying to get his brothers to see in 45:4-8?

(To be continued)

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## *The Corporate Nature Of The Church Of Christ*

By the Rev. Robert A. Milliken

The purpose of this article is to explore briefly the Biblical doctrine of the Church with respect to its corporate nature. The thesis maintained will be that the Church of the Living God, as unfolded in the Scriptures, is a body of people having very clearly a corporate existence and corporate responsibilities.

The Bible sets forth the corporate nature of the church by calling it a body. The basic text for this article is I Corinthians 10:17: "Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread." \* Charles Hodge in his commentary on this

verse writes, "Literally rendered this verse reads: 'Since it is one bread, we the many are one body; for we are all partakers of one bread.' We are not said to be one bread; but we are one body because we partake of one bread. The design of the apostle is to show that everyone who comes to the Lord's Supper enters into communion with all other communicants. They form one body in virtue of their joint participation of Christ." The text shows us that when a number of individuals are each united to Christ, a relationship is established, not only between each of them and Christ, but also a relationship among themselves is created. Being united to Christ.

they also become united to one another. This relationship may be spoken of as a corporate relationship.

The doctrine taught in this text and defended here is as follows: **THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IS A BODY, IT IS NOT MERELY A COLLECTION OF INDIVIDUALS BUT AN ORGANISM WITH CORPORATE EXISTENCE: IT EXISTS AS A CORPORATE PERSON. THE SUM OF THE CHURCH IS EQUAL TO MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS: IT IS CORPORATE IN NATURE RATHER THAN ATOMISTIC.** This principle of corporate relationship, which the text declares to be true of the church, has been stated in a simple and practical way by Professor John Murray in the following words: "Do you belong to a family? Are you a member of a church? Are you a citizen of the United States of America? If you can answer yes to any of these questions, then you have a relationship to that family or Church or to this commonwealth, as the case may be. And this is just saying that you have a corporate relationship. We are not independent units. We do not exist of ourselves nor are we sufficient to ourselves."

Both the Old Testament concept of the Church and the New Testament concept corroborate the principle set forth in the text. We shall try to illustrate this in two steps:

**I. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE CHURCH'S CORPORATE NATURE IS SEEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH.** Our procedure here will be to survey four areas of Old Testament revelation in which this corporate concept of the church is seen. First: **IT IS SEEN IN THE METAPHORS USED IN SPEAKING OF THE CHURCH.** The church is spoken of as a wife. For example, the Lord declares (Isa. 54:4-6) to His people, "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame; . . . For thy Maker is thy husband: Jehovah of hosts is his name: and the Holy one of Israel is thy Redeemer; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For Jehovah hath called thee as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even a wife of youth, when she is cast off, saith thy God." This certainly is a picture of a corporate person.

The church is also spoken of as a house. God declares in Exodus 19:3 to Moses, "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel. . ." The church, though composed of many stones ("the children of Israel"), is one house ("the house of Jacob"), it is one corporate whole, and many other passages could be cited. Further, the church is spoken of as a vine. The 80th Psalm celebrates the mercies of God to his church by singing, "Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt: Thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it." (v. 8). Elsewhere in the same Psalm and in other passages in the prophets, this same imagery is used. It certainly presents a picture of living, corporate oneness and unity. Finally, the church is spoken of in Hosea 11:1 as a child; here again, a picture of corporate, living unity and essential oneness. Thus, in the metaphors used in the Old Testament, we see a vivid picture of corporate being. We see, not just a group of individuals with one thing in common, namely a covenantal relationship to Jehovah, but we see this group of individuals, by virtue of their relationship to God also profoundly united to

each other in covenantal relationship. They, though many, are yet one body. God is never said to have many wives, numerous houses, or an abundance of vines; it is always singular. God's people were many in number, individually considered, but they are also viewed as one corporate whole; they are His wife; they are His house; they are His vine; they are His child. While it is true that individuality is not lost, it is also true that God regarded his people together as being a corporate person. Israel was His beloved wife.

Second: **IN ADDITION TO THESE METAPHORS THE CORPORATE CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH IS SEEN IN THE IDEA OF CORPORATE GUILT AND RIGHTEOUSNESS USED WITH REGARD TO THE CHURCH.** The Old Testament presents a concept of corporate guilt and punishment (and not only individual). The story of Achan in the 7th chapter of Joshua is an outstanding case in point. We note there that although only one man committed the evil deed, yet (in v. 1) it is said that "the children of Israel committed a trespass." Not only the one individual but the church as a whole was regarded as sinning and was thus as a whole held guilty. The consequent defeat at Ai — a punishment of the church as a whole — was because the church as a whole was regarded as having sinned. Jehovah's words to Joshua were, "Israel hath sinned; yea, they have even transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: yea, they have even taken of the devoted thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also; and they have even put it among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. . ." (11-12). Corporate guilt brought corporate punishment. Also, we note, not Achan alone, but also his family and possessions were destroyed (24-26). How vividly this chapter reflects the principle of corporate existence and responsibility!

The Old Testament also presents a concept of corporate righteousness and reward. In Numbers 25:10-13 for example, it can be seen that one man's act of justice (Phinehas') brought deliverance to the church as a whole. Though but one man's act, yet it is treated as though it were the act of the whole body; not only did Phinehas individually reap the reward of this righteous act, but so did his family and the whole church as well. Here then is corporate existence and responsibility seen in the area of righteousness and reward.

If the atomistic concept of the church were valid, such phenomena as we have just described could never have taken place. They presuppose a concept of corporate oneness, that the church is not only persons, but a person.

Third: **STILL FURTHER THIS CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH IS ALSO SEEN IN THE IDEA OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED IN THE CHURCH BY GOD.** This principle was established in Numbers 11:16-17, 24-25. D. Douglas Bannerman's comment on that passage, and the idea of representative government in the Old Testament church in general, are worth noting. He writes:

"In connection especially with the eldership, but appearing also in many other ways in the life and action of Israel as a people under the special guidance of God's Word and Providence, we find the principle of representation, and the sense of unity to which practical

expression is given by means of it. . . . What is done by the elders is described as done by the people or 'the congregation' whom they represent. . . . I would simply draw attention to the fact that in this whole field we meet with constant illustrations of the sense of unity pervading the fellowship of the children of Abraham, and of the way in which that feeling was strengthened, and found practical expression through the application of the principle of representation. Under the guidance of the great Shepherd of Israel, His people were led to learn more and more how common rights and interests should be dealt with by common counsel and action of the wisest and most godly of their brethren; how what concerns all should be done, as far as may be, with the knowledge and consent of all; and how in the assembly of Israel, which was also the assembly of the Lord, all Israel were to be represented, and the voice of Israel as well as the voice of God heard there."

This principle was, of course, developed and carried on throughout the Old Testament era and into the New. The elders ruled over and represented the whole body. If the atomistic concept were legitimate, there could be no such thing as representative acting for the whole body. There would have to be a strict, thorough-going democracy, that is, government carried out by every single individual. The idea of one or a few being able to act for all, implies a concept of corporate oneness and responsibility.

**Fourth: THIS CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH IS ALSO SEEN IN VARIOUS OTHER EXPRESSIONS USED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.** Just one example will be cited here, but it is a remarkable one, to say the least. In Deuteronomy 5, Moses addresses the generation standing before him as though God had literally addressed it at Mt. Sinai 40 years before, when actually it was the generation preceding it whom He addressed there. God literally announced His Covenant to generation No. 1; yet so real is the corporate principle that Moses says to generation No. 2, "Jehovah made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us alive here today." This example shows us that the corporate being of the church not only embraces the whole church militant in any given generation, but it also extends from one generation to another! Not only does the church as it stands today exist as a corporate person, but this corporate person continues in tact even as one generation passes away and is replaced by succeeding ones. No matter how many generations come and go, the Lord God still has one wife, and one only.

**II THE PRINCIPLE OF THE CHURCH'S CORPORATE NATURE IS ALSO SEEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH.** The procedure here, similarly, will be to survey four areas of New Testament revelation in which this corporate concept of the church is seen.

**First: IT IS SEEN IN THE METAPHORS USED IN SPEAKING OF THE CHURCH.** Since these have the same significance for our thesis as the metaphors found in the Old Testament, further comment will not be added here. We simply note that in the New Testament, the church is spoken of as a bride, a house or temple, a vine or tree, a flock, a body, a person. If such metaphors as

these do not portray a concept of corporate existence, then it is impossible to do so. These figures of speech convey a corporate concept of the church that completely demolishes an atomistic concept.

**Second: IT IS ALSO SEEN IN THE IDEA OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IN THE CHURCH.** This point too has already been discussed under the Old Testament concept and requires no further comment here. That the New Testament teaches the same principle of representative government of the church through elders is evident in such passages as Acts 15:1-16:4; 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-2.

**Third: THIS CORPORATE CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH IS SEEN FURTHER IN THE FACT THAT THE NEW TESTAMENT CARRIES OVER THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH AS THE HOUSE OF GOD.** To cite just one example, we refer to Hebrews 3:5-6: "Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are . . ." It is very significant that this familiar Old Testament picture of corporate oneness is assumed and carried over into the New Testament dispensation with Divine approval, rather than being changed and replaced by new Divine revelation. And this particular passage, being in the book of Hebrews, carries special force when we recall that the very purpose of that book is to carefully and thoroughly define the differences and similarities between the Old Testament worship and the New.

**Fourth: FINALLY, THIS CORPORATE CONCEPT IS SEEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF THE WORD, CHURCH.** This is especially evident in Acts 9:31 (according to the better Greek manuscripts) where many congregations are called in the singular, "the church". If not only many individual persons, but even numerous congregations of these persons can be denoted as one church, then there must be in the minds of the Scripture writers a concept of corporate existence. And this becomes even more forceful when we recall that these men were Jews, reared with and steeped in the Old Testament concept of ecclesiastical corporate unity. But this is also evident in every use of the term church in the singular, in that it always of necessity embraces a number of persons, greater or smaller, in the idea of a single body.

Thus it is evident that both Old Testament and New Testament assume and teach the truth we see set forth in the text, viz: that the church is an organism with corporate existence and not a mere organization of individuals according to the atomistic concept. "Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread." The significance of this truth has been well stated by Professor Murray, and with it we now summarize and close:

"This principle of corporate responsibility becomes particularly important for members of the church of Christ. That the church is a corporate entity lies on the face of the New Testament: the church is the body of Christ. Christ is the head of this body and believers are members. No word advertizes the closely-knit solidarity more clearly than that of Paul: 'And whether one

member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular' (1 Cor. 12:26-27). If the fallacy of individualism and independentism appears anywhere it is in connection with the church of Christ; at no point does the gravity of the abnormality and offense of individualism become more conspicuous than when it takes the form of ignoring the unity and solidarity of Christ's body. We cannot abstract ourselves from the corporate relationship which inheres in the very notion of the

church as the body of Christ. We cannot abstract ourselves from the corporate responsibility which belongs to the church as a corporate entity. 'The corporate witness of the church is our witness and the corporate default of the church is our default.'

\* Quoted from the New American Standard Bible (1960); all New Testament quotes in this article will be from this version, all Old Testament quotes will be from the American Standard Version (1901)

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## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

Harmless mirth is recommended to us as that which contributes to the health of the body, making men more lively and fit for business, and to the acceptableness of the conversation, making the face to shine and rendering us pleasant to one another. A cheerful spirit, under the government of wisdom and grace, is a great lustre upon the beauty of holiness, and makes men the more capable of doing good.

—Matthew Henry

The day of the Lord is likely to be a dreadful day to them that despise the Lord's Day.

—George Swinnoek

If the Lord's plough make furrows in my soul, it is because He purposeth a crop.

—Samuel Rutherford

Trample on thine own credit and reputation, and sacrifice it, if need be, to God's honor.

—Thomas Boston

No philosopher has ever been able to solve the riddle of the universe, nor has any been able to find a remedy for sin.

—Lorraine Boettner

What a solemn thought it is — that every child born into this world is a spiritual being who will go on living forever either in heaven or in hell!

—Lorraine Boettner

Ordinary politics sometimes has its sordid side; politics in church affairs always has.

—Herman Bavinck

Though proud people think well of themselves, they would not be thought to do so, and therefore affect nothing more than a show of humility.

—Matthew Henry

They know not what they ask, who ask for the end, but overlook the means, and so put asunder what God has joined together.

—Matthew Henry

The lowest seat in heaven is an abundant recompense for the greatest sufferings on earth.

—Matthew Henry

The ghost of every buried heresy doth squeak and gibber in our streets.

—James Russell Lowell

Many choose their opinions, as Samson did his wife, just because they please them.

—William Gurnall

The specious name of unity may be a cloak for tyranny.

—John Owen

It is commonly the man imbued with the greatest desire for fruit who most plentifully reaps it.

—George Smeaton

Paganism is optimistic with regard to unaided human nature, whereas Christianity is the religion of the broken heart.

—J. Gresham Machen

## *Religious Terms Defined*

**EASTER.** Originally the festival of the Saxon goddess of springtime, Eostre. The name was taken over by the Church for a day to commemorate Christ's resurrection. Easter observance is not even mentioned in the Bible, and must be regarded as a corruption of the appointed worship of God. The word "Easter" occurs once in the King James Version (Acts 12:4), but it is incorrect, and should be translated "passover" (see American Revised and Revised Standard versions).

**EFFECTUAL CALLING.** "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel." (Shorter Catechism, 31). Note: **Effectual calling** is a broader term than **regeneration**; it includes the Spirit's use of the Word to produce conviction, plus regeneration itself, plus **conversion**, or the sinner's response to regeneration.

**ELDER.** An officer of a Christian congregation ordained to participate in the government of the Church. All elders share in governing the Church, but some, called "ministers" or "pastors", also preach the Gospel. I Tim. 5:17. In the New Testament the word "bishop" is used interchangeably with "elder"; every elder is a bishop, and every bishop is an elder.

**ELECTION.** God's sovereign choice of particular angels and men to eternal life and glory.

**ELEMENTS OF PRAYER.** The various kinds of addresses to God which together make up Christian prayer, such as invocation, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, petition and intercession.

**EPISCOPACY.** An unscriptural form of church government in which bishops are regarded as a distinct office having jurisdiction over a number of congregations and their officers. The New Testament knows nothing of bishops as officers distinct from, and superior to, ministers and elders.

**ERASTIAN TOLERATION.** An act or policy of a government which claims a totalitarian supremacy over the Church, by which a limited freedom of worship or other activity is allowed to religious bodies which are willing to recognize the State's supremacy in principle, and to comply with the State's rules and regulations concerning religious matters. Erastian toleration is a base counterfeit of religious liberty, proceeding from the false notion that the State is supreme in matters of

religion. Named after Thomas Erastus, a Swiss scholar of the Reformation period.

**ERASTIANISM.** The doctrine, named after Thomas Erastus, a Swiss physician of the 16th century, which teaches that the State should be supreme over the Church and should support, manage and legislate for the Church.

**ESCHATOLOGY.** The doctrine of the Last Things. (From the Greek word *eschatos*, meaning "last"). Eschatology includes the state of man after death, the second coming of Christ and related matters, the resurrection, the judgment, heaven, hell and eternity.

**ETERNAL DEATH.** Everlasting separation from the favorable presence of God, and condemnation to the endless sin and suffering of hell. Also called the second death.

**ETERNITY.** The final fulfilment of human history, in which all that is now partial and incomplete shall have reached its full development, whether of righteousness and blessedness or of sin and woe, when the elect and the reprobate shall have been permanently separated, and the redeemed shall enjoy that endless Sabbath rest for which the entire sweep of world history was a brief moment of preparation. Rom. 8:19-25, Heb. 4:9,10.

**ETERNITY OF GOD.** God's mode of existence without beginning, without end, and independent of all limitations of time, so that all events in the history of the created universe are equally present to Him at once.

**ETHICS.** The science which deals with the motive, standard and purpose of human action.

**EUCCHARIST.** A name for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; literally, "giving thanks."

**EVANGELISM.** Proclamation of the Gospel of Christ with the specific aim of the conversion of sinners, by a minister of the Gospel, or a private Christian, publicly or privately, formally or informally.

**EVOLUTION.** The false biological theory that all forms of life have developed, by inherent natural forces, from earlier and simpler forms, implying that one species may develop into another, and that the human race is descended from a sub-human or non-human ancestry.

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

Prepared by Dr. James A. Hughes

(Continued from last issue)

### Chapter XIX Of the Law of God

I. God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of

works, by which He put him and all his posterity under obligation to personal, entire, exact and perpetual

obedience; He promised life upon the fulfilling of the law and threatened death upon the breaking of it; and He endued Adam with power and ability to keep it.

II. This law, after Adam's fall, continued to be a perfect standard for righteousness and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai in ten commandments, and was written on two tablets of stone — the first four commandments containing our duty to God and the other six our duty to man.

III. Besides this law, commonly called the moral law, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws containing several ordinances as types — some with reference to worship (prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings and benefits) and others prescribing various instructions relating to moral duties. All these ceremonial laws have been done away under the New Testament.

IV. To the Israelites also, as a nation, He gave various judicial laws, which ceased along with the national character of the people of Israel and which are not binding upon any other people now beyond what the general equitableness of the people may require.

V. The moral law forever puts an obligation upon all — upon justified persons as well as others — to obey it, and not only with reference to its content but also with respect to the authority of God, the Creator, who gave it. And Christ in the gospel does not in any way absolve this obligation but rather greatly strengthens it.

VI. Although true believers are not under the law as a covenant of works to be justified or condemned by it, yet it is of great use to them as well as to others, because, as a standard for conduct making known to them the will of God and their duty, it directs and obligates them to walk in agreement with it; also it discloses the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts and lives, so that, examining themselves by it, they may come to greater conviction of, humility because of and hatred against sin, together with a clearer view of their need of Christ and His perfect obedience. The law is likewise of use to the regenerate to restrain their corruptions because it forbids sin, and its threatenings serve to show what even their sins deserve and what afflictions in this life they may expect because of them, although they have been freed from the curse of sin threatened in the law. The promises of the law, in like manner, show believers God's approbation of obedience and what blessings they may expect by obedience, although the blessings are not debts paid to them by the law as a covenant of works; so that a man's doing good and refraining from evil, because the law incites to good and deters from evil, is no evidence of his being under the law and not under grace.

VII. Neither are the above-mentioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the gospel, but agreeably comply with it — the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do freely and cheerfully what the will of God revealed in the law requires to be done.

(To be continued)

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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 DEAD SEA ISAIAS SCROLL**, by J. R. Rosenbloom. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49502. 1970, pp. 88. \$4.50.

Rosenbloom's study is a comparison of the text of Isaiah in the Hebrew Bible with the text of Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scroll. It is a very technical study. Rosenbloom notes the variations in the DSS, and accounts for them as an attempt to make the O.T. Hebrew more understandable. He concludes that the text in our Hebrew Bible is more faithful to the original text of Isaiah than the DSS.

His bibliography is substantial, but is weighted along lines of thought which see two, three, or more Isaiahs as authors or compilers of the prophecy of Isaiah.

—Edward A. Robson

**THE FOUR GOSPELS**, by David Brown. Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern Street, London, W1M 1PS, England. 1969, pp. 486, 35 s.

**The Four Gospels** is part of the commentary by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown on the whole Bible. It is an old book, but it is a very good commentary. Brown once said, "The battle of Christianity, and with it of all Revealed Religion, must be fought on the field of the Fourfold Gospel." I am persuaded that Brown's comment is correct. The commentary is recommended.

—Edward A. Robson

**THE EPISTLES OF JOHN**, by W. E. Vine. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1970, paperback, pp. 128. \$1.95.

This commentary is sound in its theology, but unattractive in its presentation. The Tyndale Commentary on John's Epistles is more for the money, theology, and format.

—Edward A. Robson

**ROMANS: NEW TESTAMENT HELPS**, by Ed-

ward Fudge. C. E. I. Publishing Co., Athens, Alabama, 35612. 1970, paperback, pp. 79 (no price).

This book follows the text of the King James Version and makes comments to help the reader in the better understanding of it. For the most part it appears to be evangelical. However, the author denies (1) That creedal statements, written or unwritten, have any legitimate part in the Church (p. 64); (2) That the Scriptures teach the eternal security of all believers (pp. 16,17); (3) That Baptism is the N. T. counterpart for circumcision as the sign of entrance into the Covenant Community (p. 29). Therefore, the reviewer would not recommend this book.

—Donald Weilersbacher

**MAN IN GOD'S MILIEU**, by Bastian Kruitof. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. Paperback, pp. 144. \$1.95.

Man cannot understand himself until he knows God. Nor can he truly appreciate the world around him until he sees it in terms of an environment (milieu) created by God. The present day cultural concepts involved in the secular interpretation of history, science, the arts, philosophy, and theology must be traced back to man's basic refusal to recognize God as Creator, Provider, and Redeemer. From this refusal to acknowledge God comes all our contemporary problems. This is an excellent approach by a Reformed writer to the subject of Christian Apologetics.

—Donald Weilersbacher

**THE REIGN OF GRACE: FROM ITS RISE TO ITS CONSUMATION**, by Abraham Booth. Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, Pa., 17880. Paperback, pp. 291. \$1.95.

This is a reprint of a classic by the Calvinistic Baptist Abraham Booth. Herein, he traces the Scriptural doctrine of grace from election through effectual calling, justification, adoption, etc. This book would be an excellent basis for devotional meditation. The only drawback is his very long and involved sentence structure, but that does not seriously effect the value of this work.

—Donald Weilersbacher

**FASTING, A NEGLECTED DISCIPLINE** by David R. Smith. Christian Literature Crusade, Fort Washington, Pa., 19034. 1969, pp. 96, paperback, \$1.00.

The writer of this book has done his work well and his judgments are based on Scripture. How and when we are to fast is indicated by this writer. Many books have been written on fasting, as a method to restore or maintain good health. This book shows us how to fast for sanctification. This is a much neglected discipline and the lack of it in church circles, since we have so many examples of it in Scripture, should be deeply pondered by Christians. The reviewer believes fasting is good for the body as well as the soul; but of course by reason of ill

health, some cannot fast. The writer of this book must not be misunderstood. He points out that there are times and reasons when and why we should fast, and he quotes the Word of God to affirm his assertion.

The author has provided a scriptural index, which in a book of this kind is most helpful. We are grateful to Mr. Smith for his valuable work which we should be of service to many. We suggest the next edition should be a large book.

—Wallace Nicholson

**PERSPECTIVE**, Devotional Thoughts for Men, by Richard Halverson. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1970, pp. 120, paperback \$ .95.

This is a reprint of a popular devotional guide (the eighth). It is not hard to see why: it presents something for everyone. There are many good and true statements. There are also those pleasant sounding distortions that too often pass for truth. "As men admire the star athlete — so men admire holiness!" "If He (our Lord) should appear — in the flesh — in the average office or private club, men would be drawn to Him like bees to honey." But still worse is the Arminian emphasis. "God is constantly — quietly — lovingly waiting for us to give in . . . there's only one condition man must meet . . . He blesses when we let Him . . . etc. etc." Not recommended.

—G. I. Williamson

**CONTEMPORARY WRITERS IN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE** — William Faulkner, A Critical Essay by Martin Jarrett-Kerr. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49502. 1970, pp. 48, paperback, \$ .95.

The idea behind this series of essays is to provide a critical — and Christian — analysis of modern writers. Since writers too are necessarily 'religious' and must therefore write from an ultimate faith commitment, we welcome this series. This essay is interesting. It does not, however, rise to the level that we hoped. Is this because the writer is working from a Roman Catholic perspective? Is it because, in Romish thought, the distinctively Christian enters into the restricted realm of grace only? We hope that Reformed writers will be able to fulfill the purpose suggested by the series title.

—G. I. Williamson

**EVANGELISM EXPLOSION**, by D. James Kennedy. Tyndale House Publishers, Box 80, Wheaton, Illinois, 60187. 1970, pp. 187, \$6.50.

This book presents the program used by Mr. Kennedy in the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It is known as the fastest growing Presbyterian Church in the U. S. Who then will question that this must be the right method? Can anyone argue

with success in this age of the pragmatic Church? Here is how it is done. The gospel is simplified and reduced to a few basic points. Regeneration is presented as if it were conversion. Repentance is superficially described. The assurance of salvation is offered in a simplistic manner. In short: Reformed theology is treated as unnecessary refinement. Church members are highly organized to approach others with mere fundamentalist theology.

While we can appreciate very much the fact that certain fundamental gospel truth is here stressed, we find this book very disappointing. No doubt there is something to learn from this emphasis upon what 'laymen' can do. But we can only hope that no one will imagine that there is any genuine prospect for reformation and revival in the Church on any basis so doctrinally inadequate as this. Method is still no substitute for message — and the message, the whole counsel of God, simply is not here.

—G. I. Williamson

**THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT**, by C. H. Spurgeon. Vol. 32, *The Banner of Truth Trust*, 78b Chiltern Street, London W.1, England. 1969, pp. 708. \$3.00.

These are sermons preached and revised in 1886 by C. H. Spurgeon. He was a Reformed Baptist whose preaching was true to God's written Word and practical for everyday walking with Jesus Christ. He is often called the "Father of Soul Winners". After reading his sermons I was convinced that the sovereignty of God in predestining those who will believe could be preached effectively and honestly and that God honors biblical preaching on this subject.

Any of the numerous volumes of Spurgeon's sermons are warmly recommended especially to those who either find themselves unable to attend church due to illness or age or simply because one is not near a God-honoring church. These sermons are relevant and powerful. Everyone ought to be acquainted to some extent with this great "prophet" of God's written Word.

—Bruce R. Backensto

**THE INNER SANCTUARY**, by Charles Ross. *The Banner of Truth Trust*, 78b Chiltern Street London W.1, England. 1967, pp. 247, paperback. 6 shillings.

The author belongs to the same last century Free Church school as Robert M'Cheyne and Hugh Martin which dates him in the last half of the nineteenth century. To be more definitive of the time of the author, Ross records as an opening sentence to his foreword "this volume contains the substance of several discourses preached to my congregation, in the spring and summer months of 1887." The author's own stated purpose is "to suggest thought rather than to exhaust any one subject." He has done just that in this exposition of John 13-17, Jesus' last hours with His disciples, under this title, *The Inner Sanctuary*.

This is one of a few books which I have sat down to read and just could not put it down until I reached the back cover! Ross made these five chapters of John come alive! One feels as though he is present with Jesus during His last hours on earth. Ross also suggests helpful interpretations of Jesus' promising of the Comforter and His work which are helpful and relevant today in dealing with Pentecostalism.

This book is heartily recommended for light yet encouraging reading to all. It has left a marked impact on my Christian life and I trust in God's grace it will do the same for any who read it.

—Bruce R. Backensto

**INSTRUCTION IN CHRISTIANITY**, by J. P. Wiles. *Sovereign Grace Union*, 6-8 Linkfield Corner, Redhill, Surrey, England. 1920, pp. 195, paperback. \$1.50.

This is an abbreviated edition of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin translated from the Latin into "simple modern" English. Wiles has limited himself to the first three books of Calvin's "Institutes"; and, "its aim is to isolate the central flow of Calvin's argument from the mass of historical, exegetical, and polemical detail which surrounds it in the complete work. In this aim Mr. Wiles succeeds well." (J. I. Packer, Introduction, p. 2) Of course there are places where Wiles paraphrases almost too freely yet these places are not such that the flow of Calvin is lost.

I would recommend this abridgement only if one has determined he cannot wade through the two volume translations of either Beveridge printed by Eerdmans or Battles in the series by Westminster Press, "Library of Christian Classics". Any serious student of Calvinism or the Reformed tradition ought to at least get his "feet wet" in the *Institutes* proper before switching to the abbreviated edition.

—Bruce R. Backensto

**THE INFALLIBLE WORD: A SYMPOSIUM**, by Members of the Westminster Theological Seminary Faculty. *Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company*, Box 185, Nutley, New Jersey 07110. 1967, pp. 308, paperback, \$3.95.

We live in a time in which so many "camps of study" are denying any authority to the written Word of God that this symposium is a refreshing treatise seeking to set forth biblical reasons why God's written Word is authoritative, and just what it means to have such a written Word of God today. The titles of the chapters clearly reveal what the authors' burdens are: "The Attestation of Scripture" (John Murray), "The Authority of the O. T." (E. J. Young), "The Authority of the N. T." (John H. Skilton), "The Relevancy of Scripture" (Paul Woolley), "Scriptural Preaching" (R. B. Kuiper), "Nature and Scripture" (Cornelius Van Til). This present copy is of the 1967 third printing so the authors who were living then rewrote their sections to update them from the original work in 1946.

The writers are widely read in their respective fields of study and therefore present a cogent case for the "infallibility" of the written Word. Although they present such a case, we must remember the words of the Westminster Confession of Faith that the belief of the "infallibility" of the Scripture" is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts" (Ch. 1, Sec. 5) and therefore we need not convince one of the "inerrancy" of the Scripture before we can witness to him of the saving work of Christ recorded on the pages of the Bible. Therefore, although it would not hurt to give this book to a non-Christian inquirer about the authority of the Bible, it is not the primary intent of this publication to be arguing down a skeptic non-Christian but it is for "all who are anxious to stand steadfastly against the alarming drift even among evangelicals to read it and study it with diligence. It will inform their (Christian) minds, warm their hearts, and strengthen their resolution." (D. M. Lloyd-Jones, forward xi)

Let it also be said and encouraged that this is not the final testimony to be penned supporting the historical Christian view of the Bible; it is only the basic one up to its day. We need to continue to testify to each new era the relevancy and truth of an authoritatively written Word of God. We need to become even more definitive than this work today to meet the cries and questions of modern theological and philosophical research.

I thank God for this book and recommend all to read it yet we must accept the challenge to seek to be more definitive in a new work possibly from our own denomination in this new decade.

—Bruce R. Backensto

**THE WORLD ON TRIAL, STUDIES IN ROMANS**, by Richard W. DeHaan. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1970, pp. 192, \$4.00.

Mr. DeHaan, who is a Radio Bible Class speaker, has produced a worthwhile commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans. It is both an expository and devotional commentary, and is in part exegetical. *The World on Trial* is probably one of the simplest and clearest commentaries on Romans, and is solidly based on the Word of God.

Most commentaries are technical and exegetical and so alarm ordinary readers simply because they are above the level of their understanding. Mr. DeHaan has produced a commentary that seems to us easy to understand; and one does not hesitate to say that the ordinary reader who reads it with care and prayer will derive much spiritual profit. One should like to see this book in every minister's library along with the commentaries of Calvin, Shedd, Murray and Geoffrey Williams.

—Wallace Nicholson

**WITNESS AND REVELATION IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**, by James Montgomery Boice. Zondervan

Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1970, pp. 192, paperback. \$2.95.

Dr. Boice, who is pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, is a theologian of a high order; and in this volume he has made a valuable contribution to the study of divine revelation. The index and notes give us some idea of the researches carried out by this author.

This is not a book that will appeal to the ordinary reader unless he is determined to master the subject of witness and revelation.

The key to this book is set forth in the preface: "John's references to witness are concerned with revelation, the revelation of God to man in the historical Jesus, and in the Scriptures, and with the verification of Christ's religious claims." Again the author says, "Revelation has its beginning in the Old Testament Scriptures, mediated by the pre-incarnate Logos, comes to full expression in the life, death and resurrection of the historical Jesus Christ."

Chapter six on the witness of the Holy Spirit is especially valuable and should be studied carefully by the devout reader. Mr. Boice in this chapter quotes Calvin as saying that "the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit." Anyone who wishes to study or preach from John should have this volume on his book shelf.

—Wallace Nicholson

**THE STRATEGIC GRASP OF THE BIBLE**, by Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1970, pp. 405. \$6.95.

Dr. Baxter is a foremost Bible preacher and he has published several books expository and devotional.

We agree that the author, who commands much influence, stands up for the plenary inspiration of the Bible, the Virgin Birth, and other great truths which of late have been assailed by liberal scholars. They will find that Dr. Baxter is a match for them in these subjects.

Dr. Baxter does not deal kindly with the a-millennium position, but curiously enough he has not condemned the post-millennium position which many of our Presbyterians follow.

The author comments on the infallibility and permanence of the Bible makes excellent reading, and his references to Hitler, Lenin, and Stalin, with Churchill's comments shows us the difference between the influence of the Bible and that of those who have no Bible and no God.

Dr. Baxter's partiality for Scofield and his disagreement with the Westminster Confession will not endear him to Presbyterians. One must, however, be prepared to read the other side and appreciate the labor

and honesty of others who try to explain the Word according to their lights. This we are prepared to do and we thank Dr. Baxter for his book.

—Wallace Nicholson

**AT LEAST WE WERE MARRIED**, by Terry C. Thomas. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1970, pp. 156. \$3.95.

This has been called a non-fiction novel about a romance between two young people, one of whom was killed in a car crash, and her husband seriously injured the day after their marriage.

The title of the book may mislead one. These two young people were dedicated to their work and were doing their best to live truly Christian lives.

A good deal of emphasis is laid on their courtship and marriage with all the details connected with these joyous events; but perhaps we should recognize the realism of such circumstances.

"I've been lying in bed thinking about you and praying that God will make me the kind of wife you need, and that He will make me more willing to please than be pleased." If every young person prayed as this one did there would be fewer unhappy marriages.

—Wallace Nicholson

**THE ESCHATOLOGICAL EXPECTATION OF ISAIAH 40-66** by Dirk H. Odendaal. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Box 185, Nutley, N.J., 07110. 1970, pp. 202, paperback. \$4.95.

This is a scholarly production, and its language and scope is likely to repel the ordinary reader. The explanation is that Isaiah 40-66 was part of the requirements for a doctorate of theology and will only interest those of a philosophical as well as theological bend of mind, and who have already given some time to the study of this subject.

The author makes it clear that his treatment of Isaiah 40-66 does not indicate that he does not accept the orthodox view of the unity of Isaiah.

The purpose of the author is to seek the meaning of these chapters and the true nature of the comfort so graciously offered to the people of God. The main thrust of these prophecies according to the author is the absolute coming of the kingdom of God. The coming of God's kingdom with its triumph over all the enemies of the people of God is looked at from various points of view and many reformers are quoted. Mr. Odendaal has laboured in his researches and has made a worthy contribution to this subject. The massive index of references in which Hodge, Alexander, Vos and many others are quoted shows the studious mind of the author, while allowing for the scope of the subject.

The reviewer is disappointed that the great evangelical chapters of Isaiah such as Isaiah 51, 52, 53,

54, and 55 have received such scant treatment; and especially chapter 53 which so evidently points to the sufferings and triumph of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of His people. The omission is like the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out. We are not, however, to think that this arose from an ignoring of the character of the Servant and his Work. As Mr. Odendaal Himself says, "A fuller treatment of these passages would require a study by itself. Enough has been said to underscore our conviction that Ebed Yahweh (the Servant of Jehovah) is a royal, individual eschatological figure who is instrumental in bringing about the royal eschatological dominion of Yahweh. It is as the covenant representative that his vicarious suffering and death ('asam) could bring healing and peace to this people" (page 135, Psalm 128 and 129).

We think if the author had devoted more time to the Messianic chapters we mentioned, he could have devoted more space to the Christos Asarkos.

We recommend this scholarly production to those having some acquaintance with the scope of Isaiah 40-66. They will find their minds stimulated by the profound thoughts met with in this book.

—Wallace Nicholson

**THE REVIVAL IN INDONESIA**, by Kurt Koch. Kregel Publications, 525 Eastern Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49503. 1970, pp. 310, paper cover. \$2.95.

Originally published in German, this book traces the history of Christianity in Indonesia and the amazing revival there. There is also a section on the revival at Asbury College, Kentucky, and some material about South America. The author places considerable emphasis on remarkable events some of which seem to border on magic — an element of the book which we hesitate to endorse. On page 304 the author seems to strike an anti-intellectual note, when he states in connection with the Asbury revival that "Questions of doctrine and theological disputes and liturgical differences no longer mattered." This may be true enough of the people he is writing about, but it is high time that the false antithesis between revival and sound doctrine be put away.

—J. G. Vos

**MAMA WAS A MISSIONARY**, by Charles Ludwig. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 192, paperback. 95 cents.

The life story of a missionary couple in Kenya, East Africa. The book, which is illustrated with a number of photographs, tells of many problems, hardships and heartbreaks which were overcome by faith in the Lord. It is interesting and easy to read, and should help the reader to gain a realistic idea of missionary work in Africa.

—J. G. Vos

SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY, by Elisabeth Elliot. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1970, reprint of 1958, pp. 256, paperback. \$1.95.

This is a paperback reprint of the original hard-bound edition of which 85,000 copies were sold. The subtitle is "The Life and Testament of Jim Elliot". Jim Elliot was one of the missionaries killed by Auca Indians in Ecuador, South America. The heroic story of his life and death is told by his widow, who herself was instrumental in the conversion of the Aucas to Christ. The book is well illustrated by photographs. It presents a moving and truly challenging story.

—J. G. Vos

THE MARK OF THE CHRISTIAN, by Francis A. Schaeffer. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1970, pp. 35. \$95.

This book appears as appendix ii in Schaeffer's book *The Church At The End Of The 20th Century* which sells retail for \$3.95. One would do best to buy the larger work and read it along with this "appendix". This is a must for all Christians who realize that the church is in trouble and especially for those who don't! Schaeffer is a relevant writer with important insights into the needs of our culture and church. One ought to be familiar with the author's works. *The Mark of the Christian* is a basic work for all church members to read prayerfully and with the idea that by the grace of God this work will affect me markedly!

—Bruce R. Backensto

THE REFORMATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF FAMILY AND MARRIAGE, by E. L. Hebden Taylor. The Craig Press, P. O. Box 13, Nutley, N. J., 07110. 1970, pp. 85. \$1.50.

This book is one which I wish was in print when my wife and I were receiving our pre-marital counseling. The author certainly has a reformed view of the written Word of God and how to apply it to this important issue. Certainly in this new decade this topic will continue to be a burning one as so many laws seem to be being changed and challenged. We Christians need to know what the Word of God written has to say and how we are to apply this to today's situation! Taylor gives us this type of insight into this issue. He also seeks to be reformational and is in many places thus making the book more relevant and necessary.

It is this reviewer's opinion that at least the first five chapters and the eighth, ninth, eleventh, and conclusion ought to be read by all who are considering marriage and by those who are married. This book is also highly recommended to all pastors. A helpful chart of Dooyeweerd's modals is included.

—Bruce R. Backensto

A CHRISTIAN INTRODUCTION TO THE

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY, by Francis Nigel Lee. The Craig Press, P. O. Box 13, Nutley, N.J., 07110. 1969, pp. 249. \$4.50.

Certainly Lee has sought to present a complete survey of the history of philosophy. He covers the subject under eight main divisions; Prolegomena, Pre-Babelic, Ancient Eastern, Ancient Greek, Early Christian, Mediaeval Western, Western in Decline, and The Rebirth of True Philosophy. One can see that there is no room for any great depths to be explored in the history of philosophy, however, this work therefore is one which "laymen" or people new to philosophy would appreciate. "Accordingly, all true philosophy will necessarily be trinitarian — will emphasize the recognition of the Triune God as its most important Principle and as its ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King." (page 4) From this quote one can see the writer's attempt to give a valid outlook to the source of philosophy.

Lee, in his last chapter, deals with the leading philosophers who cause him to believe there is hope for a "true philosophy". He then has an informative appendix entitled, "Christian Philosophy in Twentieth Century North America", which is an address delivered at the 12th National Congress of South African Philosophers, 1970. In this appendix he critiques the leading Christian "philosophers" in the United States giving the most favorable critique to Van Til of Westminster Seminary. This book is recommended to anyone interested in philosophy.

—Bruce R. Backensto

THE GREAT DEBATE TODAY, by Cornelius Van Til. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., P.O. Box 185, Nutley, N.J., 07110. 1970, pp. 232, paperback. \$4.50.

"Who is Jesus Christ?" and "What does it matter anyway?" These are the questions in debate today. "The Great Debate today is over the question: Who and what is the Christ? Jesus asked his disciples: 'Whom (Who) do men say that I, the Son of man, am?'" (p. 52) By covering no less than 25 men's answers to this question Dr. Van Til gives the reader a thorough understanding of both the biblical answer to this question and those who teach it and the teaching and position of the "Prophetic voices in contemporary theology". (a quote of the title of a book by Alvin C. Porteous) With such an insight into the "modern" trends in theology one is able to begin to understand why biblical theology is strongly needed today.

Because this is one of the clearest works by Dr. Van Til and a supreme critique of theology today and its answer to the all important question: Who and what is the Christ? this book is strongly recommended to all pastors and concerned church members.

—Bruce R. Backensto

SPLINTERS FROM MY GAVEL, by Allen W. Harrell. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1970, paperback, pp. 93. 95 cents.

The author is a judge. In this book he relates incidents from his practice and from his home life which serve to illustrate various passages of Scripture. He is evangelical, has a good sense of humor, and is not afraid to expose his own weaknesses. Nevertheless, the book suffers from a lack of doctrinal depth and a waste of paper (approximately one-fifth of the total pages are blank).

—Donald Weilersbacher

**CAN YOU TELL ME?**, by Dena Korfker. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1970, paperback, pp. 96. \$1.95.

This is the eleventh edition of a very popular handbook which parents may use in answering the questions of their young children. Such items as: "Where did I come from?", "Why can't I see God?", and "When is Jesus coming back?" are discussed. The book is well illustrated with drawings of children, animals, etc. It is evangelical, with a simple vocabulary, and although sometimes evasive — usually quite helpful!

—Donald Weilersbacher

**THE TESTS OF FAITH**, by J. A. Motyer. InterVarsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill., 60515. 1970, paperback, pp. 126. \$1.50

Here is an excellent Reformed study guide and brief commentary on the Book of James. The author's style is clear, forceful, and succinct. He relates the epistle to other parts of the Bible and has appropriate quotation for support and clarification from other Reformed writers. I highly recommend this book!

—Donald Weilersbacher

**RE-ENTRY**, by John Westley White. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1970, pp. 164. \$3.95.

Herein the author presents rather striking parallels between today's news events and the second coming of Christ. Dr. White is an associate of Billy Graham and writes from an evangelical and pre-millennial emphasis. He refers to practically everyone: from John Calvin to Herbert Marcuse (the Marxist philosopher at San Diego State). The book is very easy to read and quite captivating in style. Although I do not agree with his pre-millennial position, I do strongly endorse his emphasis on the possible imminent return of Christ. Again, it would seem better to reduce the price by having a paperback edition.

—Donald Weilersbacher

**EXPOSITORY OUTLINES ON EPHESIANS**, by Edward W. Fudge. The C.E.I. Publishing Co., Athens, Alabama. 1969, paperback, pp. 89. \$1.25.

For the most part this is a fair study guide. However, it suffers from an Arminian and Sacramental emphasis. Fudge teaches that divine election is based upon the faith of the individual. Eph. 5:25,26 declares ". . . Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. . ." Concerning this passage Fudge says, "(It is) . . . evidently speaking of baptism, wherein God spiritually washes away sins (Acts 22:16; I Pet. 3:21) by the power of the blood of Christ." (p. 83). However Christian baptism is only a symbol of the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit through the word of God. Baptism, by itself, can never take away sin. I do not recommend this book.

—Donald Weilersbacher

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## *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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J. G. Vos, Editor and Manager  
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**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.

**Why Psalms?** Article by Rev. G. I. Williamson from January-March 1971 issue. Order from Timely Tracts, 6321 Ulysses, Wichita, Kansas 67219. \$3.00 per 100, postpaid.

**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.

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## PSALM 31:9-16

Llanglofan. 7,6,7,6 D  
Welsh hymn melody

1. O LORD, have mer - cy on me, For an - guish fills my life;  
2. To all my foes a by - word, A dread to clos - est friends,  
3. When foes con - spired a - gainst me, When they my mur - der schemed,

My eye, my soul, my bod - y Are all con - sumed with grief.  
A scorn to all my neigh - bors, The sight of me of - fends.  
In You, O LORD, I trust - ed; As my God You're es - teemed.

My life is drained by sor - row, My years with sigh - ing spent;  
Like dead men I'm for - got - ten, A bro - ken jar thrown out,  
My times are all in YOUR hand; Free me from foes who chase.

I've lost my strength by sin - ning; My bones are weak and bent.  
I've heard the man - y slan - der And ter - ror spread a - bout.  
Your face shine on YOUR serv - ant; O save me in Your grace.

(Reprinted from *Adventures in Psalm Singing*. Copyright 1970 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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## *Is Jesus Really God?*

By J. G. Vos

A "liberal" clergyman was asked whether he believed in the divinity of Christ. "Of course," he replied; "for if I didn't believe in the divinity of Christ I could not believe in my own divinity either!" A prominent writer of religious education materials said "Jesus was the first man who ever dared to be divine." Someone else says that there is a spark of divinity in every human being, but Jesus has more divinity in him than anyone else has. Still another person goes even further and says "God" is another name for the totality of the universe, or all that exists, therefore in a sense everything is divine, so Jesus must be divine too. Along this line, the poet Swinburne wrote about "the dust that is God."

None of these people really believes in the divinity (more properly, the deity) of Jesus Christ. They are all using the term without accepting the real meaning of the term. Probably none of them really believes in God in the Christian sense. They believe that "God" is just a name for the universe, or for the sense of moral values in the human personality, or for the totality of human hopes and longings. Because they have such a poor idea of God, they can speak of the "divinity" of Jesus without really saying very much.

When the Bible speaks of Jesus Christ as "God" or "the Son of God", we must realize that the background of this is the Biblical idea of God — the idea expressed in the Shorter Catechism (No. 4) which affirms that "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth," adding that "there is but one only, the living and true God." In the Bible the teaching that Christ is divine means that Jesus is none other than the being defined in these absolute terms.

That Jesus Christ is human goes without saying. But the most important truth about Jesus is that He is God. He is the infinite Being who created the universe and who holds it in existence from moment to moment. This is wondrously brought out in the opening verses of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" — John 1:1-3; note the capitalized "W" on "Word" — this "Word" is a Person, not a thing — THE Person who created everything, and controls everything.

The Andromeda Galaxy (formerly called a nebula) is the nearest of the great spiral galaxies in outer space. It is the only one that can ever be seen with the naked eye, without a telescope. You have to know exactly where and when to look, and the conditions have to be

exactly right, and then you can see a little hazy whiteness in the sky. That is the Andromeda Galaxy. It is two million (yes, two million) light years away from this earth, and getting farther all the time. Light travels, you know, at 186,000 miles a second, and a light year is the distance it travels, at that speed, in a year. You would have to travel at the speed of light for over two million years to reach this galaxy. It contains billions of suns as large as our sun. It is so vast that it takes light, at 186,000 miles a second, about 100,000 years to get from one end of the galaxy to the other. And this is the nearest of the spiral galaxies. Beyond it there are vaster ones, so distant that they can only be observed with great reflecting telescopes like that on Mount Palomar, California.

Now come back to John 1:1-3. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Do you begin to grasp how great Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, really is? This is the Being who, wonder of wonders, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). This is the Being who was born of the Virgin Mary, and laid in a manger in Bethlehem — the Person who only had to speak a word, and the vast spiral galaxies of space came into being. This is the real truth of the divinity or deity of Jesus Christ.

Did you ever stand on the shore of the ocean and look out toward the horizon? The water stretches as far as you can see. It seems to be endless. Yet you know that thousands of miles across that water, there is the continent of Europe, or the continent of Asia. But you can only see the shore you are standing on and the water stretching out to the horizon that marks the limit of your vision. Jesus Christ is like that, only even vaster. For the ocean, after all, has a limit. It has its dimensions; it is not infinite. But Jesus Christ is the shoreless ocean of deity. We have seen one side of this mysterious Being — we have seen the divine Being manifested in human flesh in history. But He is without limits. No human being has ever really seen the other side. Jesus Christ is so great and vast that only God the Father and the Holy Spirit have ever really seen the other side. This is taught by Jesus in His wonderful words in Matthew 11:27, where He says, "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father."

Does someone say it is hard to believe in this kind of Jesus? Yes, it may be hard, but this Christ is the real Christ — He is the Christ of the Scriptures, and He is our real Saviour for eternity. The toned-down ideas of Christ cited in the opening paragraph of this article are not only unreal — they are not worth believing in. The real Christ is eternally worth believing in.

—The Goal Post

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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

Prepared by Dr. James A. Hughes

(Continued from last issue)

Chapter XX Of Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience

I. The liberty which Christ has purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God and the curse of the moral law, and in their being set free from the present evil world, bondage to Satan and domination of sin, from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave and everlasting condemnation; also this liberty consists in their free access to God and their yielding obedience to Him, not from slavish fear but with a child-like love and willing mind. All this was common also to believers under the law; but under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians is further increased in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law to which the Jewish Church was subjected, in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace and in partaking of the free Spirit of God in greater fullness than was ordinarily the case with reference to believers under the law.

II. God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from the teachings and commandments of men which are in any way contrary to His Word, or are in addition to it, in matters of doctrine or worship. Therefore to believe such teachings or to obey such commandments, conscientiously, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith and an absolute and blind obedience is to destroy

liberty of conscience, and reason also.

III. Those who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, practice any sin or cherish any lust destroy the purpose of Christian liberty, which is this: that, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear (in holiness and righteousness before Him) all the days of our life.

IV. And because the authorities which God has appointed and the liberty which Christ has purchased are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve, each other, those who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful authority or the lawful exercise of it, whether the authority be civil or ecclesiastical, resist that which is appointed by God. And for their propagating such opinions or maintaining such practices as are contrary to the light of nature or to the known principles of Christianity (whether concerning doctrine, worship or conduct) or to the power of godliness; or for propagating or maintaining such erroneous opinions or practices as are by nature, or in the way they are propagated or maintained, destructive to the external peace and order which Christ has established in the church, they may lawfully be called to account and action may be taken against them by the church's exercising discipline and by the civil magistrate's exerting his authority.

(To be continued)

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## *Studies in the Book of Genesis*

(Continued from last issue)

### LESSON 79

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

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

Having reassured his brothers and sought to lead

them to think of the situation and its background in the light of God's foreordination and providence, Joseph next instructs them to return to Canaan to bring their father Jacob and their households down to Egypt. They are to explain to their father the high position which Joseph occupies in the land of Egypt. He and his kindred are invited to dwell in the land of Goshen. Goshen was in

the region of the Nile delta in the northeastern part of Egypt. The entire group is to move to Egypt, with their families and possessions. Joseph adds that there remain five years of famine. Joseph undertakes to provide whatever is necessary for the entire establishment for the five years of remaining famine. Finally, they are to "haste" and bring Joseph's father to him in Egypt (45:9-13).

In this section we see Joseph's wisdom and his ability as a planner and administrator. Everything is considered and provided for. The plan is a wise one and had everything in its favor. Of course Joseph's great authority in the land of Egypt placed him in a position to make such lavish promises and also to carry them out.

Following this commission, Joseph falls upon Benjamin's neck and weeps, and Benjamin weeps on Joseph's neck. Formalities are dispensed with and brotherly affection is freely expressed. Only in the case of Benjamin is mutual weeping on necks mentioned. With regard to the other brothers, the record merely states that Joseph "kissed" them and "wept upon" them. Still, as Leupold points out, this was "all a truly oriental display of emotion" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 1097). Finally the brothers really feel at ease and talk with Joseph freely and naturally (45:15).

Such news as the arrival of Joseph's brothers and his identification of himself to them naturally could not be kept secret very long. Even though not officially published in any manner, the information would travel rapidly by the "grapevine" method. So we are informed in verse 16 that the news reached Pharaoh's palace, and that this "pleased Pharaoh well." Leupold remarks that the arrival of the brothers removed a kind of social stigma from the figure of Joseph, inasmuch as Joseph had been regarded as an ex-slave. "Now proof is offered that Joseph comes of an honorable family of free nomads, who are generally held in high regard in those days" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 1098.)

Pharaoh himself proposes a plan which is identical with that previously formulated by Joseph, although Pharaoh does not mention Goshen. Rather, he states "I will give you the good of the land of Egypt . . . the good of all the land of Egypt is yours" (45:18, 20). Pharaoh also orders that Egyptian wagons be provided for moving Jacob's household to Egypt. These were not chariots, which were used only in war; rather they were carts, with either two or four wheels, used for any persons too old or weak to walk or mount a donkey. Such carts, it seems certain, were used only in Egypt.

We should note that Joseph is not merely offered the privilege of accommodating his father, his brothers and their families in Egypt, but is actually ordered by Pharaoh to do so. "Thou art commanded" is the language used. Possibly Pharaoh felt that Joseph might hesitate to use his office and authority so freely for the benefit of his own relatives, therefore he commands him to do these things, thus removing any objection or scruple on Joseph's part.

"Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours" (45:20). Jacob's family need not

bother to pack and bring every last item of household goods. It was urgent that they get to Egypt without needless delay. Their needs would be amply provided for after their arrival there.

In accordance with Pharaoh's orders, Joseph issues wagons and travel provisions to his brothers. Each brother also receives "changes of raiment" — at least two extra garments. Benjamin, however, is given 300 pieces of silver and five "changes of raiment." Besides all this, a special gift is sent to his father Jacob: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten donkeys loaded with food for his father on the trip to Egypt. Considering the fact that Egypt was in the grip of a dire famine, this was extremely liberal provision for Joseph's kindred. Yet who shall say, in view of the tremendous debt that Egypt as a nation owed to Joseph, that the liberality was unwarranted?

We get a further intimation of Joseph's real wisdom in his parting counsel to the brothers: "See that ye fall not out by the way" (45:24). Knowing his brothers and being a shrewd judge of human nature, Joseph realizes that once they are out of his presence and on their way home, they may begin to argue and quarrel — possibly as to who was most to blame for the crime committed against Joseph years before, possibly as to whether it was fair for Benjamin to have 300 pieces of silver and five changes of raiment when they themselves received less raiment and no silver. Joseph therefore cautions them against disputing and disunity while they are enroute home. And apparently Joseph's wise counsel was duly heeded, for verse 25 informs us that they arrived at the home of Jacob in Canaan. It is implied that they arrived there without untoward incidents.

"Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt!" Thus the brothers announce the glad news to their aged father who probably has long suspected that his ten older sons had something to do with the mysterious disappearance of Joseph years before. The news is almost too much for Jacob. "And Jacob's heart fainted" — Leupold translates, "his heart grew numb". Knowing well the character of his sons, Jacob not unnaturally suspects them of lying. The sons, however, continue to tell their story, repeating "all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them." We may wonder whether this "all" means strictly all that Joseph had said to his brothers. Did the brothers now actually tell their father what Joseph had said about their crime against him being part of a divine plan to preserve people alive? If so, this would involve disclosure of their own guilt in the matter. Obviously, Jacob must have learned the truth sooner or later. Possibly he already knew it; possibly he learned it definitely at this time.

What finally convinced Jacob that his sons were telling the truth was a sight of the wagons which Joseph had sent from Egypt. He well knew that his sons had not had money to purchase any such extensive equipment; therefore the presence of the wagons was real evidence that the son's story was true. On realizing this, Jacob's spirit revived. The sudden shock had passed, though he must still be very excited.

"It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go

and see him before I die" (45:28). We note that Jacob offers no comment on Joseph's exalted rank in Egypt. What really matters to him is the fact that Joseph is alive.

**Questions:**

1. What did Joseph instruct his brothers to tell his father?
2. In what part of Egypt were they to settle?
3. How many more years of famine remained?
4. What can be said about the wisdom of Joseph's plan?
5. How did Joseph express his affection for Benjamin?
6. How did Joseph express his affection for the other brothers?
7. What may have been the reason why the news of the arrival of Joseph's brothers pleased Pharaoh well?

8. What plan did Pharaoh propose?
9. What difference, if any, existed between the plan announced by Pharaoh and that already formulated by Joseph?
10. What was the nature of the wagons sent for Jacob's use?
11. What may have been the reason why Pharaoh issued a command instead of an invitation?
12. What gifts did Joseph give his brothers prior to their return to Canaan? How was favoritism shown to Benjamin?
13. What wise counsel did Joseph give his brothers just before their departure?
14. Why was this wise counsel acceptable?
15. What was the effect on Jacob of his sons' announcement upon their arrival at home?
16. What finally convinced Jacob that his sons were telling the truth?

**LESSON 80**

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

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

Chapter 46 relates the move of Jacob and his clan from Canaan to Egypt. The first stage of the journey is to Beersheba. We are not told what the point of departure was, but the residence of Jacob at the time of Joseph being sold was at Hebron (37:14). From Hebron to Beersheba is about 25 miles in a direct line, and Beersheba was on the direct route between Hebron and Egypt.

At Beersheba the company pauses and Jacob offers sacrifices "unto the God of his father Isaac". The God of Isaac is of course identical with the God of Jacob. The mention of Isaac at this point serves to remind the reader of Isaac's earlier offering of sacrifices at the same place. In this hallowed spot Jacob would think of the great divine promises to which he was heir. Another reason for offering sacrifices at Beersheba may have been that this was the traditional southern limit of the Promised Land, and Jacob is about to take the serious step of going outside the Promised Land. He earnestly desires the clear guidance and approval of God before taking so serious a step.

God's answer to Jacob comes in the form of a vision seen during the night. The Lord addresses the patriarch at this time as "Jacob," not as "Israel," which may surprise us somewhat. The reason may be to recall to the patriarch's mind the kind of person he once was, or "to indicate that as long as he doubts and hesitates he is the old Jacob rather than the new Israel" (Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, II, 1107).

God reassures Jacob: "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again; and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes" (46:3, 4). Here we may raise the question, why should Jacob fear to go to Egypt? This could hardly be a fear of danger to his personal safety or that of his family, in view of the position of Joseph as supreme ruler of Egypt next to Pharaoh. It must have been a fear of acting contrary to the will of God. It will be recalled that Abraham's trip to Egypt (chapter 12) had some bad consequences, and that God specifically forbade Isaac to enter Egypt, commanding him on the contrary to abide in the land of Canaan (26:2). Moreover, God's warning to Isaac against entering Egypt came precisely in a time of famine. Jacob would naturally recall these facts and wonder whether perhaps a trip to Egypt might be contrary to God's will. Hence the divine revelation reassuring and instructing him was necessary at this time.

God also promises Jacob at Beersheba that he will make of him a great nation, and that this will be done precisely in Egypt (46:3). Jacob is also promised that God will bring him up from Egypt again — a promise fulfilled unto Jacob not in his own person but in his posterity centuries later in the time of Moses. For Jacob will die in Egypt (49:33) and only his mortal body will be brought up from Egypt for burial in the cave of Machpelah (50:13).

Thus reassured and encouraged, Jacob and his clan depart from Beersheba to go to Egypt. Jacob the aged father, rides in one of the Egyptian carts; so do the women and young children. The rest presumably walked or possibly rode by turns upon donkeys. We should not fail to note that the act of removal from Canaan to Egypt

is represented in the narrative as an act of Jacob — “And Jacob rose up from Beersheba . . .” — the decision and the responsibility are Jacob’s as the patriarchal head of the clan.

The narrative informs us that the entire connection (“all his seed”) left Canaan to enter Egypt. Specific mention is made of sons, grandsons, daughters and granddaughters. Though we know of only one daughter of Jacob by name — Dinah, 34:1 — we do know that he had “daughters,” for we find mention of “all his daughters” in 37:35.

The record next presents a list of the members of Jacob’s party entering Egypt. The sons of Leah, with their offspring, are mentioned first (verses 8-15). These total 33 persons not counting Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah. Next are listed the sons and descendants of Zilpah; these are 16 in number not counting Asher’s daughter Serah. Next come Rachel’s sons and descendants, 14 in number. Of these, of course, Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim were not in the party entering Egypt, for they were already in Egypt.

There is a difficulty in connection with the listing of the sons of Benjamin. Ten sons of Benjamin are listed in 46:21. As the data presented in the narrative indicate that Benjamin at this time was a young man in his early twenties, it seems almost impossible that he could already have ten sons. The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) lists only three of them as sons of Benjamin, the other seven being listed as his grandsons. This removes part of the difficulty, assuming that the Septuagint is correct over against the Hebrew text. But still a difficulty remains. If Benjamin is a young man of about 23 years of age on entering Egypt, how can he have grandsons at that comparatively young age? The conclusion seems inevitable that part, at least, of the descendants of Benjamin were born after the settlement in Egypt, just as we know that Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were born in Egypt, even though they are included in the list of “the names of the children of Israel which came into Egypt” (46:8).

Last of all the sons and descendants of Bilhah are listed (verses 23-25), being seven in number.

This gives a total of 70, of whom 33 are descended from Leah, 16 from Zilpah, 14 from Rachel, and 7 from Bilhah. This reckoning of 70 however does not include Jacob himself, nor Dinah, nor the wives, nor (with the exception of Serah) the daughters.

The total given in verse 26, with the definite statement that the wives are not counted, is 66. But in verse 27, the total is given as 70. An added complication consists in the fact that in the New Testament (Stephen’s speech, Acts 7:14) the number is given as 75. It is not certain that we can fully reconcile these apparently conflicting statements. With regard to Stephen’s speech, it seems clear that he was following the Greek version of the Old Testament (Septuagint) which at this point varies from the Hebrew text. Ordinarily the Hebrew text is regarded as much more reliable than the Greek version. Leupold suggests that perhaps Er and Onan (who died in the land of Canaan) are not to be counted in

the list of Leah’s descendants, but Jacob and Dinah counted instead. This would give the total of 70 including Jacob and Dinah. Thus one difficulty seems to be solved. As for the total of 66 given in verse 26, he suggests that Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh are not counted in this figure, for the figure is for “all the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt” (Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, II, 1115).

A further matter that needs to be considered is what may have been the total counting all the wives and daughters. Clearly this must have been considerably more than 70, though not necessarily double that number. Also, should we not suppose that a considerable number of servants or slaves accompanied the household into Egypt? In Abraham’s day, that patriarch was able to organize a private army of 318 men, at a moment’s notice, from his own establishment (14:14), clearly implying a total establishment of several hundred or possibly even a thousand. Isaac also was very rich, with flocks and herds, and “great store of servants” (26:14). It would seem natural to suppose that Jacob’s establishment, also, had numerous servants or slaves. What became of these if they did not enter Egypt with the patriarch? It has been suggested that he had liberated them on account of the famine, or had lost them in some way. However this is mere speculation, and it seems at least as reasonable to suppose that a considerable number of such persons entered Egypt along with Jacob. Since even the wives of Jacob’s son are not listed or counted, it need not surprise us that no mention is made of the servants or slaves. Allowing for the latter class, it is quite possible that the total number of persons accompanying Jacob into Egypt was in the hundreds.

#### Questions:

1. What was the first stage of Jacob’s journey to Egypt?
2. What is the distance from Hebron to Beersheba?
3. What religious act was performed by Jacob at Beersheba?
4. What religious associations did Beersheba have for Jacob?
5. Why would Jacob hesitate to go beyond Beersheba?
6. How did God reassure the patriarch at this point?
7. What promises did God give to Jacob at Beersheba?
8. Which of the company rode in the Egyptian carts?
9. What is known as to the number of Jacob’s daughters?

10. How many descendants of Leah are listed as entering Egypt? How many of Zilpah? Of Rachel? Of Bilhah?

11. What difficulty exists concerning the sons of Benjamin listed in 46:21? What possible solutions have been suggested for this problem?

12. What problems exist as to the total number of

people entering Egypt? What solutions can be suggested?

13. How many may have been in the company if we count the wives?

14. Why may it be regarded as probable that a considerable number of servants, not counted in the total, also accompanied Jacob into Egypt?

#### LESSON 81

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

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

There is one matter in the listing of Jacob's party which still calls for some attention. In 46:10 among the sons of Simeon we find listed "Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman." This specific mention of a marriage between one of Jacob's sons and a Canaanite woman seems to indicate that such was exceptional. We are not told where Jacob's sons got their wives but it may be assumed that they obtained them from Mesopotamia as Isaac and Jacob had, or possibly from other tribes which were not involved in the extreme religious and moral corruptions of the Canaanites.

As the party enters Egypt, Jacob sends Judah on ahead to inform Joseph of their imminent arrival, "to direct his face unto Goshen" (46:28). The party soon after arrives in Goshen, where they are met by Joseph in person, who has travelled there by chariot (46:29). On seeing his aged father again, Joseph "fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while." Jacob (here called Israel) on his part says to Joseph: "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive" (46:30). Jacob's long pent-up and now at last released emotion is understandable. Actually, however, the patriarch lived seventeen more years (47:9 compared with 47:28).

Joseph next announces his intention to inform Pharaoh and his court of the arrival of his father and his kindred. He proposes to inform Pharaoh that his brethren are shepherds by occupation, and have brought their flocks and herds with them. He coaches his brothers as to how they are to answer when Pharaoh inquires as to their occupation. They are to reply that they are and always have been "about cattle." This will make it suitable that they dwell in the land of Goshen. Joseph adds an explanation: "For every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians" (46:34).

The Egyptian antipathy to shepherds is confirmed by archaeological discoveries in Egypt. It included not only foreign shepherds but also Egyptian ones. They were regarded as an inferior and contemptible class of people. Exodus 8:26 indicates that not only shepherds but also sheep were an abomination unto the Egyptians.

Pharaoh, as the ruler of Egypt, would of course have to reckon with this Egyptian prejudice against the

sheep industry. It will be recalled that it was Joseph, not Pharaoh, who had specified the land of Goshen as the place where his brethren should settle (45:10). Pharaoh had been much more general in his language, saying "I will give you the good of the land of Egypt" (45:18). Since Goshen was well suited to sheep and cattle, Joseph desires that Pharaoh confirm his plan that his brethren settle there. Hence his careful coaching of his brothers as to how to reply to Pharaoh's inquiries. Goshen would not only be suitable for live-stock raising, but it would also serve to isolate the Israelites from the Egyptians, and thereby would help to shield them from Egyptian race-prejudice. Also, as Leupold remarks, it was near the border of Canaan, which would facilitate their exit when the time came for that.

Joseph informs Pharaoh that his father and his brethren have arrived in Egypt, with their flocks, herds and possessions, and are at the moment located in the land of Goshen. It was certainly a wise move for Joseph to locate his brethren in Goshen first, and inform Pharaoh of it afterwards. The easiest course for Pharaoh to adopt would then be simply to give his formal approval or ratification to what Joseph had arranged.

Joseph has selected five of his brethren for presentation at the court of Pharaoh. We do not know which five these were, but presumably he selected the five that he felt would make the best impression at the court of the king. On their being presented, Pharaoh asks the question which Joseph had anticipated, and Joseph's brothers reply frankly and honestly, even though their honest reply might perhaps be expected to arouse prejudice. They state plainly that they are shepherds as were their fathers before them.

Joseph's brothers add an explanation as to their reason for coming to Egypt. It is "to sojourn" — that is, to live there temporarily only. They explain that they were forced out of Canaan by the famine conditions and lack of pasture for their stock. For these reasons, they request that they be allowed to dwell in the land of Goshen.

We take the brothers' request for permission to "sojourn" — to dwell only temporarily — as honest and made in good faith. Even though as a matter of fact the Israelites remained in Egypt for centuries, that was not contemplated by Jacob or his sons at the time of their entering Egypt. It was regarded as a temporary expedient rendered necessary by the famine, with the presumption, of course, that when the famine was over they would return to the Promised Land of Canaan again.

In his reply Pharaoh says to Joseph: "The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and thy brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell . . ." (47:6). So the land of Egypt is at the disposal of these newcomers, and since Joseph has already located them in the land of Goshen, Pharaoh confirms this, making it an official decree not only of Joseph but also of Pharaoh himself.

Pharaoh adds: "If thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle" (47:6b). "Men of activity" means "men of ability" or "competent men."

**Questions:**

1. What special fact is recorded concerning Simeon's son Shaul?
2. What seems to be implied by the mention of the nationality of Shaul's mother?
3. How did Jacob notify Joseph of his imminent arrival in Egypt?
4. Where did Joseph meet his father, and how did he get there?

5. What did Joseph do on meeting his father?
6. What did Jacob say on meeting his son Joseph?
7. How did Joseph coach his brothers concerning their appearance before Pharaoh?
8. What was the Egyptian attitude toward shepherds and sheep?
9. What reasons can be suggested as to why Goshen was a specially desirable place for Joseph's brethren to settle?
10. How many of his brothers did Joseph introduce to Pharaoh?
11. How did the brothers answer Pharaoh's inquiry?
12. What request did they make of Pharaoh?
13. How long did they intend to remain in Egypt?
14. What position did Pharaoh offer to any men of special ability among Joseph's brothers?

**LESSON 82**

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

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

Having introduced five of his brothers to Pharaoh, Joseph next presents his father Jacob to the king. With true and typical oriental courtesy Pharaoh asks Jacob the proper question under the circumstances: "How old art thou?" (47:8). Americans and Europeans who are getting along in years sometimes do not like to be asked their age, but it is evident that in ancient Egypt as in modern China it was considered the courteous thing to ask an older person's age, and considered a distinct honor to be of outstanding age.

Jacob's reply is both dignified and truly beautiful: "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage" (47:9). People took time to speak deliberately and gracefully in those days; what a contrast it forms to the constant rush and pressure of modern American life! Perhaps people who lived deliberately as Jacob did avoided nervous breakdowns of modern life with its stress and strain.

"And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh" (47:10). Since it is a recognized principle in Scripture that "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better" (Hebrews 7:7), Jacob here appears as Pharaoh's superior in spiritual and human values. But what was involved in Jacob's blessing

Pharaoh? Luther suggests that Pharaoh became a convert to the true God whom Jacob served. This, however, is an unwarranted inference. Nor should we suppose that Jacob's blessing bestowed in Pharaoh included any promises or predictions of his eternal salvation or participation in God's work of redemption. Rather it would seem that this was a blessing such as a truly godly person could invoke upon a ruler even though the ruler might be of another faith. For instance, Americans are accustomed to pray for God's protection and blessing upon the President of the United States, quite regardless of whether he is of the same faith with themselves or not. It is the exalted office that they have in mind, rather than the personal qualities of the man holding the office. Such prayer or blessing does not imply a bond of religious communion between the person blessing and the person blessed, but merely the recognition that it is the will of God that Christian people invoke the goodness of God on behalf of those who, in God's providence, are in positions of high authority in the state.

The presentation at court being finished, Joseph definitely settles his father and his brethren "in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded" (47:11). The land was given to them for "a possession" which seems to be more than they had asked for, and more than they had enjoyed in Canaan before entering Egypt.

The expression "land of Rameses" instead of "land of Goshen" is interesting. It seems clear that the region was not called "land of Rameses" in Jacob's and Joseph's day, but only later. Note the name of the store city Raamses in Ex. 1:11. Raamses is held to be the same as Rameses, only the spelling being slightly dif-

ferent. The explanation seems to be that Moses, the writer of Genesis, knew this region by the name of "land of Rameses", and here uses the name which was in common use in his own day, instead of "Goshen" which was the common name in Joseph's day.

As to the exact location of Rameses, it is said to have been located halfway between the Nile river and Lake Timsah.

"And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families" (47:12). Here "bread" of course means food in general, not merely what we call "bread" today. The implication is that the precious food was rationed in proportion to the number of persons in a household, so that even though the supply was strictly limited owing to the famine, still all had enough and none suffered lack. This continued, of course, through the five years which remained of the famine.

#### Questions:

1. What did Joseph do after introducing five of his brothers to Pharaoh?
2. What question did Pharaoh address to Jacob?

3. What are the characteristics of Jacob's reply to Pharaoh?

4. What principle is recognized in Scripture concerning the relative standing of the person who blesses and the person who is blessed?

5. What does Jacob's act of blessing Pharaoh indicate concerning the human and spiritual stature of Jacob in comparison with Pharaoh?

6. What must we regard as not included in Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh?

7. What may we suppose to be included in Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh?

8. What name is given to the part of Egypt where Joseph settled his father and his brethren? Why is it not called Goshen?

9. Where is Rameses said to have been located?

10. What provision did Joseph make for his father and his brethren in the matter of food supplies? How long would this provision continue?

### LESSON 83

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

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

From 47:13 to verse 26 the subject is Joseph's administration of the famine relief program in the land of Egypt. It is noted that the famine was very sore not only in the land of Egypt but also in the land of Canaan (verse 13). This indicates that Canaan was at this time regarded as a dependency of Egypt.

As the famine increases in severity, the people spend their available cash for food which is rationed to them by Joseph. The next stage of the rationing program is that in which Joseph issues food to the people in exchange for their cattle. Some have harshly criticized Joseph for making people give up their cattle instead of simply giving them the food free. We should realize, however, that the matter was not as simple as it might seem on the surface. Very likely even with the large reserve of grain accumulated during the seven years of plenty, there was not enough to tide all the people of Egypt and all their livestock over the entire seven years of famine. Not only would the reserve have to be carefully controlled, but a part — perhaps a large part — of the animals would have to be sacrificed in order to keep the people alive. At the same time, part of the livestock must be kept alive for breeding purposes to restock the land after the famine period was over. Such a program required the planning and administration of a government authority rather than every individual making his own plans and carrying them out. While the present writer has no sympathy with the idea of a government-controlled "planned economy" as a matter

of general economic policy, it would seem that in times of dire emergency and national crisis such as the years of famine in Egypt, central planning and control by a firm hand may be absolutely necessary. It was the good fortune of Egypt, in the providence of God, to have a truly wise and competent man at the head of this emergency program, instead of a stupid, blundering bureaucrat who would occasion greater evils that he sought to remedy.

The third stage of the relief program came when the people had given up both their cash and their cattle. Now they sell their land in return for rations of food. It should be noted that the proposal to sell the land originated with the people of Egypt, not with Joseph (47:19). Leupold comments that in this whole program of expecting the people to pay in some way for what they got, Joseph was being very wise rather than harsh. The fact of payment enabled the Egyptians to keep up their self-respect and to avoid the breakdown of morale which would result from their accepting free relief over a period of years. Joseph wisely avoided the appearance of a dole. Though it may be said that the people of Egypt were not in a very free bargaining position, owing to the pressure of the famine, yet all the way through the terms on which food is issued are agreed upon by both government and people.

"And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's. And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof" (47:20, 21). In return for food, the people turn in the title to their land. Then Joseph removes the people from the temporarily useless,

drought-parched farm land to cities located throughout Egypt. On the famine-stricken farm land they could do nothing as long as the years of famine continued. Having the people dispersed through the country would only make the relief program more complicated and difficult to administer. So Joseph adopts the wise and very practical course of removing the people to cities. In this way the issuing of rations would be much simpler and easier. No doubt the people were concentrated in locations where the grain reserves had been stored.

It is recorded that the only class of people in Egypt not selling their land were the priests. These did not find it necessary to sell because they had a "portion which Pharaoh gave them." This indicates the high standing of the Egyptian priesthood. They were provided for without having to renounce title to their lands.

"Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land" (47:23). This must be understood as spoken near the end of the famine period, for Joseph provides seed for planting.

Joseph accordingly announces what the policy as to taxation is to be when the expected harvest is realized. One-fifth of the crop is to be for Pharaoh, and the remaining four-fifths are to be for seed and for food for the people (47:24). Leupold comments: "Twenty per cent is a high tax rate but quite moderate for the Orient where one third and one half have been demanded. . . Our tax-ridden age ought not to find reason for objection here" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 1138). It has been reported that farmers in the Yangtze valley of central China have sometimes been required to pay as much as 75 percent of their crop as taxes to the Communist government of China. Americans are getting accustomed to a 20 percent tax on their taxable income, and much more than that in the higher brackets. So perhaps we should think twice before pronouncing an adverse judgment on Joseph's taxation program for Egypt.

As a matter of fact, the Egyptians seem to have accepted the new policy readily: "And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants" (47:25). This does not necessarily imply that there were no complaints or protests — very likely there were some. It only implies that the general reaction was one of willing submission to the conditions, in view of the fact that the program administered by Joseph had saved the people's lives. And this was indeed a great thing. How many famines have there been since Joseph's time, in various parts of the world, in which people have died by millions of starvation, although perhaps many if not all these lives might have been saved by a wise and firm program such as Joseph's, over a period of years.

Before leaving this subject of the Egyptian famine, we should consider whether Joseph acted rightly in what he did. Some have made bold to criticize Joseph in very harsh terms. We can imagine that present-day Communists would label Joseph as "an enemy of the people," yet Joseph saved the people from death by starvation, which Communist governments in Russia

and China have sometimes notoriously failed to do. Even some without any sympathy for Communism have held that Joseph took an intolerable advantage of the plight of the people of Egypt. The writer of these notes does not agree with this criticism of Joseph.

In the first place, it would seem that Joseph's program of requiring something in exchange for the food issued enabled the Egyptians to preserve their morale and self-respect better than if the food had been issued as an absolutely free grant with no strings attached. Secondly, the whole matter must be viewed in its context and setting of the second millennium before Christ. It is very unhistorical and unrealistic to try to apply twentieth century concepts of democracy and what some people call "social justice" to a situation which existed between three and four thousand years ago. Democracy simply did not exist at that period of the world's history. Government by a powerful monarchy was universally accepted as the normal state of affairs. The kind of objections that an American or European, more or less influenced by the socialistic trend of the present day, may feel inclined to raise against Joseph's program and methods, probably never entered the mind of the average Egyptian farmer who accepted the terms and received the benefits of Joseph's program.

#### Questions:

1. What subject is related in verses 13 to 26 of chapter 47?
2. Where was the famine sore besides in Egypt?
3. What was the first stage of Joseph's famine relief program?
4. Why may it have been a practical necessity that the people surrender their livestock to the Egyptian government?
5. What was the second stage of the relief program?
6. What was the third stage of the program?
7. What psychological benefit may have come to the people of Egypt from Joseph's requirement of payment for food?
8. Why did Joseph remove the people to cities throughout Egypt?
9. What class of people did not sell their land, and why?
10. Why must 47:23 be regarded as having been spoken toward the end of the famine period?
11. What was Joseph's taxation policy with regard to the new crop?
12. What can be said on the question of whether the tax-rate established by Joseph was excessive or not?
13. What was the reaction of the people of Egypt to

Joseph's announcement about the new tax policy?

14. How would present-day Communists label Joseph?

15. Why is it improper to criticize Joseph and his program from the standpoint of modern democracy?

#### LESSON 84

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

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

The last section of chapter 47 concerns preparations for the death of Jacob. "And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly" (47:27). This general statement carries us beyond the end of the years of famine, and seems to cover the years described from this point to the end of the book of Genesis. Although the famine is over, the people do not return to the land of Canaan, but remain in Egypt. As to the reason for this, we are not informed, but very likely it may have been because of great prosperity of the Israelites in Egypt. Of course God had a deeper reason in His plans and purposes, and we are inquiring as to the reason in the minds of the Israelites themselves.

As a matter of fact the Israelites were not totally out of contact with the land of Canaan during this period. Not only did they make a trip back to the Promised Land at the time of the burial of Jacob (50:7-13), but there is evidence of at least one other trip of some of them to Canaan during the period. It is not mentioned in Genesis but comes up rather mysteriously in I Chronicles 7:20-22, where we read: "And the sons of Ephraim: Shuthelah, and Bered his son, Tahath his son, and Eladah his son, and Tahath his son, and Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer, and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him." Comparison of the persons named with the listing in Numbers 26:35-37 indicates that part of the men mentioned were actual sons of Ephraim while part may have been descendants or grandsons. Ezer and Elead, therefore, may have been either sons or grandsons of Ephraim. Ephraim could be called their "father" in either relationship, according to common Old Testament usage. In any case, the cattle-stealing raid mentioned in I Chron. 7:21 must have been made from Egypt, for it is quite impossible to regard it as having happened before Jacob's entrance to Egypt, and of course it must have been long before the Exodus. It forms an interesting, if mysterious, sidelight on the dwelling of the Israelites in Egypt during the period of flourishing, before the onset of the Egyptian oppression of them. It would seem to indicate, also, that some of Jacob's descendants did not have very high ethical standards at this time, inasmuch as they were killed while engaged in what is today called "cattle rustling." Gath, the place of the incident, is in the Philistine area in southwestern Canaan.

"And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was a hundred forty

and seven years. And the time drew nigh that Israel must die . . . (47:28, 29a). Realizing that his death cannot be far away, Jacob, here called by his new name "Israel", sends for his son Joseph. He requests Joseph to swear a solemn oath, promising that he will not bury his father in the land of Egypt, but will bury him with his forefathers in their burying-place. This means, of course, the cave of Machpelah near Hebron in southern Canaan.

Joseph readily swears the oath, promising to comply with his dying father's wishes. "And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head." We may raise the question why Jacob regarded it as important that he be buried with his forefathers in the cave of Machpelah in Canaan instead of in the land of Egypt. Leupold states that this cannot be regarded, in Jacob's case, as a mere matter of sentiment. "With men of strong faith, such as the patriarchs had, such petitions would have a deep and worthy motivation" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 1140). "Jacob believed God's promises in reference to Israel, the land of Canaan, and the blessing of all the nations of the world through the Saviour to come. His deepest hopes were tied up with these promises of the Word of God. Jacob wanted even his burial to give testimony to this faith. But the only suitable land the patriarchs owned was the cave at Machpelah where Abraham and Isaac lay buried. Therefore he requests that he be laid to rest there" (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, II, 1140).

"And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head" (47:31b). "By this expression, Moses again affirms that Jacob esteemed it a singular kindness, that his son should have promised to do what he had required respecting his burial. For he exerts his weak body as much as he is able, in order to give thanks unto God, as if he had obtained something most desirable. He is said to have worshipped towards the head of his bed: because, seeing he was quite unable to rise from the bed on which he lay, he yet composed himself with a solemn air in the attitude of one who was praying" (Calvin, Commentary on Genesis, II, 417-8).

#### Questions:

1. What is the subject related in the last section of chapter 47?

2. What general facts concerning the Israelites are stated in verse 27?

3. How can it be shown that the Israelites were not totally out of contact with the land of Canaan during the early part of their sojourn in Egypt?

4. What does I Chronicles 7:20-22 show about the Israelites during the early part of their Egyptian sojourn?

5. What did Jacob do when he realized he was soon to die?
6. What promise did Jacob request Joseph to make upon his oath?
7. Why should burial in the cave of Machpelah be

important to Jacob?

8. How did Jacob show his appreciation of Joseph's oath and promise?

9. What act of Jacob indicated his reverence toward God?

#### LESSON 85

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

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

We have now reached the beginning of chapter 48 in our study of the book of Genesis. Jacob is near the time of his death. At the end of chapter 47 we noted that he asked Joseph to swear a solemn oath that his mortal body would not be buried in Egypt but would be laid to rest with the remains of his forefathers in the land of Canaan. Evidently there is a lapse of time between the end of chapter 47 and the beginning of chapter 48. Jacob has taken a turn for the worse, physically, and it is reported to Joseph: "Behold, thy father is sick." This implies that the end of Jacob's earthly journey is near.

Joseph therefore takes his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and goes to see his dying father. When Jacob is informed that Joseph is coming, he "strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed" (48:2). There is no indication that Jacob sent for Joseph's sons in order to pronounce a blessing upon them. Perhaps it had been planned long before that Jacob should bless Ephraim and Manasseh before his death. If we may suppose this to have been the case, it would explain the fact that Joseph takes the two sons with him on this occasion.

On the arrival of Joseph with his two sons, Jacob first recounts God's dealing with him in the land of Canaan. The thoughts of the aged patriarch go back many, many years to that lonely night when he slept under the stars at Bethel, and saw the vision of the ladder reaching to heaven, and received assurance of the covenant blessings of the Lord. He recalls that God promised to make him fruitful, and make of him a multitude of people, and to give him the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. All of this, of course, Joseph already knows well, but Jacob tells it over again because it leads up to what he is about to say next.

Jacob announces that Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, are to be counted as Jacob's sons just as Reuben and Simeon. This does not mean, of course, that Ephraim and Manasseh are to supplant Reuben and Simeon among Jacob's sons, but only that they are to be put on a par with them — that is, to be reckoned as Jacob's sons, not as his grandsons (which is what they really were). Jacob evidently has a special preference and favor for Joseph's sons because they are descended from Rachel, his first and true love. This act on the part of Jacob accounts for the fact that no tribe of Joseph is listed among the twelve tribes of Israel. Though the number twelve is conventionally used in speaking of the

Israelite tribes, it is not strictly exact. For since Ephraim and Manasseh each constituted a tribe, the total is thirteen. Indeed, since the tribe of Manasseh in the settlement of Canaan actually received two extensive but not contiguous tracts of territory, one tract on each side of the Jordan River, there is a sense in which we can speak of fourteen tribes. The tribe of Dan also came to hold territory on both sides of the Jordan River.

As Jacob's eyesight is failing, he asks his son Joseph "Who are these?" On being reassured that they are indeed Joseph's two sons, he proceeds to bestow the blessing upon them. After embracing and kissing them, the aged patriarch lays his hands on their heads. Joseph is careful to place the boys so that Jacob's right hand will rest on the head of Manasseh, the firstborn, and his left hand on the head of Ephraim, the younger son of Joseph. But strangely, Jacob crosses his arms so that his right hand rests on the head of Ephraim, the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, the firstborn. The record states that Jacob did this "wittingly," that is, intentionally.

Joseph naturally thinks that his father has made a mistake, which he attempts to correct, informing his father that Manasseh, not Ephraim, is the firstborn. But Jacob insists upon keeping his arms crossed so that the right hand will rest upon the younger son. In this we see, as we have already seen in the Book of Genesis, the priority of grace over nature. In the sovereignty of God what may seem fitting or right according to nature may have to give way to special requirements of the kingdom of God. God chose Isaac, not Ishmael; He chose Jacob, not Esau; and now the best blessing rests upon Ephraim, not Manasseh. The bestowal of the blessings of divine grace is sovereign and cannot be regimented according to human notions of custom or propriety.

The blessing itself is a beautiful and wonderful one. We should realize that this is something much deeper than merely the pious wishes of a dying man for his grandchildren. It partakes of the nature of true prophecy. We rightly regard Jacob as acting under a divine impulse in bestowing this blessing upon his grandsons.

"God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth . . . In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh" (48:15, 16, 20).

This blessing, we should note, does not give Ephraim and Manasseh the place in God's redemptive program which belonged to the tribe of Judah (49:10). It would be from the tribe of Judah, not from the descendants of Joseph, that the Christ would finally come. Yet the naming of the name of Abraham and Isaac upon the lads seems to indicate that something more than merely earthly prosperity and numerical increase must be meant. This is a covenant blessing, not merely a promise of material and natural blessings. As for the numerical increase and inheritance of territory, we may note that this was abundantly fulfilled in the later history.

Finally, Jacob says to Joseph, "I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your father." This is the true patriarchal faith in the promise of God. Jacob dies in a firm faith that the divine promise concerning inheritance of the land of Canaan cannot fail to be fulfilled.

"Moreover I have given thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow" (48:22). This reference seems mysterious to us because the matter is not mentioned elsewhere in the Genesis record. However it seems to be referred to in the New Testament (John 4:5) where we read of "the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph," located near Sychar (not far from Shechem, near Mount Gerizim). Apparently on some occasion Jacob had been in armed conflict with the Amorites. Possibly they had attacked him, and he defended himself and defeated them, thus gaining control of the piece of land mentioned. With the Israelites all in Egypt, no doubt the Amorites again took control of this "parcel of ground." Jacob, however, counts it as his by special right, apart from the general

prospect that his seed shall inherit the whole land of Canaan. As something specially his to bestow, he grants it to his son Joseph.

Questions:

1. What news did Joseph hear about his father at the beginning of chapter 48?
2. Why did Joseph take Ephraim and Manasseh with him when he went to see his dying father?
3. What incident of past years did Jacob recall when Joseph arrived?
4. What special provision did Jacob make concerning the two sons of Joseph?
5. How many tribes of the Israelites actually existed?
6. What intentional act of Jacob was at first opposed by Joseph?
7. What theological principle seems to be implied in Jacob's disregarding of Joseph's objection?
8. In what respect did the blessing pronounced on Ephraim and Manasseh fall short of that pronounced later on Judah?
9. What firm conviction concerning the future was in Jacob's mind as he faced death?
10. What light does the New Testament shed on the meaning of 48:22?

#### LESSON 86

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

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

Chapter 49 records the dying Jacob's blessing upon his twelve sons, starting with Reuben his firstborn and ending with Benjamin the youngest. Like the blessing presented in the previous chapter, this series of blessings in chapter 49 is to be regarded as more than a summary of human thoughts and wishes. It is prophecy uttered by divine impulse. Moreover, it is remarkably fulfilled in the later history of Israel. In a way, we have here a condensed preview of the future destinies of the twelve tribes. Jacob, guided by the Spirit of God we may be sure, shows a keen insight into the real character and capacities of his various sons. At the same time he is really giving some of his sons a much needed warning concerning their ways.

There is a great difference in the blessings of the twelve sons. Some receive detailed predictions, some a very brief general statement, and some solemn warnings or censures only. That the whole is to be regarded as prophecy is evident from the statement of Jacob in verse 1: "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you

that which shall befall you in the last days." The expression "the last days" means "in the distant future." It may be translated "at the end of days" (Leupold). The Hebrew (*b'acherith hayyamim*) is an expression often used in Old Testament prophecy to mean the distant future when the Messiah would appear and Messianic prophecies would be fulfilled. Thus we are warranted in saying that here Jacob by inspiration of the Holy Spirit is able to look across centuries. He sees not only the occupation of Canaan by his descendants, but he sees the time of the Christ (verse 10). Yet the multitudinous details of the historical periods between — the periods of the Judges, the united kingdom, the divided kingdom, the Babylonian Captivity, the Persian dominion, the Maccabees, the coming of the Romans — all these are left almost unmentioned. This is characteristic of the perspective of Old Testament prophecy. It views the high peaks of the distant future, while taking little or no notice of the centuries of historical time that may lie between one peak and another.

Concerning Reuben, though Jacob recognizes that he is the firstborn, little good is said. He is declared to be "unstable as water." Furthermore, Reuben "shall not excell," that is, shall not have any position of pre-eminence among the tribes. The reference concerning Reuben's immoral conduct is to what is recorded in 35:22.

Next, Simeon and Levi are the objects of their father's disapprobation. The statement that Simeon and Levi are "brethren" implies more than the literal sense of their being brothers — that is so obvious that it would not need to be stated. The meaning probably is that Simeon and Levi are similar, they think and act alike. The reference of Jacob to their wicked conduct is to what is recorded in 34:25-31, namely, the ruthless massacre of the men of Shechem. At the time Jacob told them how strongly he objected to their conduct. Now, after many years, he again recalls to mind their criminal behaviour. The consequence is: "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (49:7). This prediction was indeed fulfilled, though somewhat differently in the case of Simeon and that of Levi. As for Simeon, the tribe rapidly decreased in numbers. In Numbers chapter 1 the tribe of Simeon is listed as having 59,300 men, but forty years later (Numbers 26) the number is only 22,000 — less than half the earlier figure. Being so small, the tribe of Simeon received its land "in the midst of the inheritance of the children of Judah" (Joshua 19:1). In Deuteronomy 33 Moses omits Simeon completely from his blessing on the tribes. Still later (I Chron. 4:42,43) we find members of the tribe of Simeon seeking a dwelling beyond the limits of the land of Canaan. To summarize the history, we may say that Simeon virtually ceased to exist as a tribe of Israel, though no doubt there were some individuals descended from Simeon living among the other tribes.

With regard to Levi, his descendants indeed occupied an honorable position among the people of Israel, for it was from this tribe that the priesthood was taken. Yet the posterity of Levi was literally divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel, for the tribe of Levi received no allotment of land when the land was portioned out in the days of Joshua. The Levites received certain cities, but these were scattered about in the territory of the other tribes. Even though Levi himself was evil and immoral, during part of his life at least, the tribe of Levi turned toward righteousness as we are informed in Exodus 32:26-29.

Next comes the blessing pronounced upon Judah, and this is the most remarkable of all, for it contains a distinct, though mysterious, prophecy of the coming of the Christ. In verses 8 and 9 the emphasis is on Judah's future as a victorious conqueror. His hand shall be on the neck of his enemies, and his father's children shall bow down before him. This was fulfilled, of course, in the history of King David (see II Samuel 5:1-3). David, of the tribe of Judah, not only gained kingly power over all twelve tribes, but subdued all their enemies and founded a dynasty which lasted through twenty-one kings and more than four centuries of time (although during the greater part of this time the dynasty did not rule over the entire twelve tribes). But the conquering, victorious character of the tribe of Judah surely is a type (or small scale advance sample) of Him who as King of kings and Lord of lords goes forth conquering and to conquer (Revelation 6:2). For the kingship of the tribe of Judah did not stop when the last king of David's line (Zedekiah) was blinded and miserably confined in a Babylonian prison. The kingship was only interrupted — it was in abeyance until He should come to whom it really belongs, the One of whom it is said, "He shall be great,

and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32,33).

We now come to the most mysterious part of this mysterious prophecy. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be . . ." (49:10). The word "sceptre" is clear; it signifies a rod which symbolizes kingly rule or power. The word "lawgiver" is however not so clear. It can be correctly translated "lawgiver" as in the King James Version, or it may be translated "ruler's staff", and Leupold in his commentary prefers this latter rendering. At any rate, the meaning is that kingly power shall continue in the tribe of Judah "until Shiloh come."

But what is the meaning of "Shiloh"? Literally, the name means "tranquillity" or "rest." It was the name of a well-known town in Palestine, long the location of the Tabernacle, and also the residence of the prophet Ahijah. Jacob, in uttering his prophecy about the future of the tribe of Judah, uses the name Shiloh as symbolizing the possession of Canaan in peace and rest. The ultimate meaning, however, must be a reference to Him who is the Prince of Peace. This verse has always been regarded as a Messianic prophecy, though interpretations have differed in detail. Leupold states that Shiloh may be interpreted as "Restgiver," and adds that when the peoples "become aware of these superior achievements of his, they shall willingly tender 'to him obedience' " (Exposition of Genesis, II, 1179).

We are warranted, then, in taking Shiloh as a prophetic designation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Restgiver who said "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Christ is "the lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5).

"And unto him shall the gathering of the people be". In this sentence the pronoun "him" refers unquestionably to "Shiloh." Leupold paraphrases, "He shall be so great that men will readily yield him obedience" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 1180). The Hebrew verb used implies willing obedience, not that which is grudgingly yielded because of force. It is therefore a prophecy of the victories of the Gospel of Christ among the nations of the world.

We take verses 11 and 12 as non-Messianic prophecy, referring to the material and earthly blessings to be given to the tribe of Judah. The emphasis is on the fertility of the soil and the abundance of its fruits. Grape vines are so abundant that an ass's colt can be tethered to the choice vine — there are so many vines that it does not matter if one vine is damaged by the beast tied to it.

Zebulun is described as dwelling near the sea, and the border of Sidon. A glance at a map of the distribution of the twelve tribes under Joshua will show that this was fulfilled in the later history. The territory of Zebulun, however, did not fully reach to the border of Sidon, for the territory of the tribe of Asher came between.

Next the tribe of Issachar is mentioned. "Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens" (49:14). This quality of physical strength is no doubt something that Jacob has noted concerning his son Issachar, which now becomes a prophecy concerning the characteristics of the tribe descended from Issachar. "And he saw that rest was good, and the land it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute" (49:15). Leupold interprets this as follows: "Seeing the prospect of 'rest' and a good 'land' and 'pleasant,' this tribe would rather surrender other advantages and become a group who would 'stoop over with the shoulder to take on a burden', working for others in work that required only the contented exertion of brute strength" (Exposition of Genesis, II, 1187). That is, this tribe will prefer security and the enjoyment of common comforts to the benefits that might be obtained by greater enterprise and greater risks.

"Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent in the way, and adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward" (49:16,17). The name Dan means "Judge." So the name suggests the first thought expressed here by the patriarch: "Dan shall judge his people." Nothing is known concerning the later history of the tribe of Dan which throws any special light on the fulfillment of this prediction.

The rest of the prediction about Dan concerns his ability in self-defense if attacked. As fast and effectively as a serpent he will be able to strike back at the enemy who attacks him. Leupold remarks that the hero Samson was of the tribe of Dan.

"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord" (49:18). This statement of Jacob, while it interrupts his blessing of the tribes, is connected in thought with what precedes it. Jacob has been speaking of the powers of the tribes to help or defend themselves. Judah has been compared to a lion, Issachar to a strong beast of burden, and Dan to a lurking serpent. Yet the true source of help is not in human powers or efforts, but in the Lord God and His gracious promises. After all, even what man can do for himself is really only a gift from God. Therefore at this point Jacob injects his confession of faith: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord," lest anyone suppose that his real faith is faith in man.

Next Gad, Asher and Naphtali are briefly mentioned. A troop shall overcome Gad, but he shall overcome at the last (49:19). In the distribution of the tribes Gad was located on the east side of the Jordan River, a location exposed to attack by many enemies such as the roving Midianites and Ammonites.

Asher is mentioned as rich in food products. This tribe was located along the seacoast north of Mt. Car-

mel, which was a very productive region.

"Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words" (49:21). This metaphor calls attention to Naphtali's strength and speed, especially in warfare. We recall that Barak delivered Israel with an army of ten thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun (Judges 4:6). The "goodly words" are illustrated by the song of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5).

#### Questions:

1. What statement of Jacob proves that his blessing of his sons is to be regarded as a prophecy?
2. What is the meaning of the expression "the last days" or "the latter days" in Old Testament prophecies?
3. How far was Jacob able to look into the future?
4. How was Jacob's prophecy concerning Simeon fulfilled?
5. What did Jacob say concerning Levi, and how did it come to pass in later history?
6. What does Jacob first emphasize concerning the future of the tribe of Judah?
7. How was this prophecy concerning Judah fulfilled?
8. What may be the meaning of the word translated "lawgiver" in 49:10?
9. What is the literal meaning of the word Shiloh?
10. What must be the ultimate reference of the term Shiloh?
11. Why is it fitting that the Messiah be called Shiloh?
12. What is implied concerning the Gospel of Christ by Jacob's prediction about Shiloh?
13. How should the prophecy about Issachar be interpreted?
14. What is the connection between 49:18 and what precedes it?
15. What mighty Israelite warrior was of the tribe of Dan?
16. What episode in the Book of Judges is recalled by Jacob's blessing on the tribe of Naphtali?

#### LESSON 87

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

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

We have now reached Jacob's blessing on Joseph (49:22-26). This is the longest of all the blessings and clearly reflects Jacob's special love for Joseph, the firstborn son of Rachel. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the

wall" (49:22). The figure is that of a grape vine supported by a wall of masonry. The vine is prolific for the branches have climbed over the wall. Fruitfulness is increased by the fact that this vine is planted by the side of a well of water. We should realize that in ancient times wells were always fairly shallow — drilled wells hundreds of feet deep as we know them today were unknown. The roots of a tree or vine would easily reach the water of a nearby well. This prediction of fruitfulness well fits the historical development of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, which were descended from Joseph.

"The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. . ." (49:23,24). The picture is one of attack by enemies, but also of God-given strength for resistance and defence. Jacob well knows the true source of strength, whether physical or spiritual — the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. He adds: "from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel". This changes the metaphor from that of God strengthening the hands of a man drawing a bow to shoot an arrow to that of God as the Shepherd and Rock of His people. The idea of the Shepherd is that of protection and provision; that of the Rock is that of rugged strength available for His people.

In verses 25 and 26 Jacob continues his blessing on Joseph. Calling God "the Almighty" (how can liberal critics say that the patriarchs believed in a "tribal God"?) Jacob mentions rich blessings of nature—earth, deep, and sky—blessings to abound "above the blessings of thy progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." Fruitfulness of man and beast is emphasized in beautiful poetic language. These blessings "shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren" (49:26). In the subsequent history all this was abundantly fulfilled. It should be noted that natural rather than spiritual blessings are foretold for the descendants of Joseph. As a matter of fact the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were never outstanding for spiritual attainments. When the division of the kingdom took place, these tribes were found in the Northern Kingdom under the rule of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and sank into the depths of apostasy which finally resulted in the utter destruction of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C. by the armed forces of Assyria.

We may look a little longer at the blessing pronounced on Joseph, however. What is the precise meaning of the phrase "the blessings of thy father" in verse 26? The problem is whether this phrase means "the blessings which thy father bestows" or "the blessings which thy father has received." While the language itself might be interpreted in either way, it is best for theological reasons to understand the phrase in the latter sense. After all, man is not a bestower of blessings but only a receiver of them. God alone is the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Jacob's meaning, then, must be that the blessings granted to him have exceeded those granted to his forefathers Abraham and Isaac.

Finally, there is a brief blessing pronounced upon Benjamin. "Benjamin shall raven as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil" (49:27). The comparison of Benjamin to a wolf is not meant to be derogatory but rather the reverse. The meaning is that Benjamin will be successful in what he undertakes to do. We may call to mind two men of the tribe of Benjamin: Saul, Israel's first king, and Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the apostle of Christ to the Gentiles.

In the closing verses of chapter 49 we have Jacob's final charge to his sons. "I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite. . .". As we have already seen in a previous lesson, the expression "to be gathered unto my people" cannot mean merely "to be buried," for we read in 25:17 that when Abraham died he was "gathered unto his people." But Abraham was buried in the cave of Machpelah in the land of Canaan, while his forefathers were buried far away at Ur of the Chaldees in Babylonia. Rather, "gathered unto his people" is a reference to the life that is beyond the death of the body. While the doctrine of immortality is not revealed so clearly and fully in the Old Testament as in the New, still it is there. These patriarchs who held the long view of life (Hebrews 11:13-16) well knew that there is a better country, that is, a heavenly one, and a city whose builder and maker is God. They well knew that the death of the body cannot be the end of a human life, but only a transition to the mysterious life beyond.

Jacob's concern that his mortal body be buried in the cave of Machpelah is not to be regarded as mere sentiment. Rather, this is an expression of a strong, unwavering faith in the divine promise of inheritance of the land of Canaan by his descendants. They are not to remain in Egypt forever; Canaan, not Egypt, is to be their home and their inheritance; Jacob, just because he believes this firmly, wants to be buried with Abraham and Isaac in the land of promise.

Thus Jacob, at the end of his long earthly life of 147 years (47:28), finally "yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people."

#### Questions:

1. Why did Jacob have a special love for Joseph?
2. What is specially stressed in Jacob's blessing on Joseph?
3. What is shown by 49:23,24 as to the true source of human strength?
4. How did the later history of the descendants of Joseph compare with the blessing pronounced on Joseph by Jacob?
5. What is the meaning of the phrase "the blessings of thy father" in verse 26?
6. What is predicted concerning Benjamin?
7. What two famous Bible characters were

descended from Benjamin?

8. How can it be shown that the expression "to be gathered unto his people" does not mean simply "to be buried"?

9. What was the reason for Jacob's concern that his body be buried in the cave of Machpelah?

10. How old was Jacob at the time of his death?

#### LESSON 88

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

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

Chapter 50, which we have now reached, describes the mourning of the people of Israel for Jacob, the burial of Jacob in Canaan, the plea of Joseph's brothers that he seek no revenge for their bad treatment of him, and finally, the death and burial of Joseph.

The typically Semitic and Israelitish concern for honorable treatment and burial of the dead is illustrated by this chapter. At the command of Joseph, the body of Jacob is embalmed by the "physicians" of Egypt. This process, which is well known from a detailed description of it in the works of the Greek historian Herodotus, took forty days. A brief summary of this is found in Leupold's Exposition of Genesis, II, 1205-6. This process of embalming in the Egyptian manner was necessary if the body was to be taken to Canaan for burial. Ordinarily the Israelites buried the body of a person who had died as soon as possible after death — usually the same day — so that no elaborate embalming was necessary. But that involved burying near the place where the person had died. The burial of Jacob, on the other hand, would involve a long journey.

We are informed that the Egyptians mourned for Jacob seventy days. This fact indicates the very high regard in which Jacob, as well as Joseph, was held in the land of Egypt. Nothing is said about how long the Israelites mourned for Jacob, but perhaps it was the same period of seventy days.

Following this period of mourning, Joseph presents himself before the house of Pharaoh with a request that he be allowed to leave Egypt temporarily in order to keep his solemn oath to bury his father in the land of Canaan. There may have been some taboo concerning death which made it impossible for him to appear directly before Pharaoh in person. At any rate, the request was made in an indirect way, through "the house of Pharaoh." Leupold suggests that Joseph purposely acted through Pharaoh's courtiers so that they, having officially sponsored his request to Pharaoh, would not be in a position to make any insinuations later concerning his loyalty or the purpose of the journey to Canaan. We know that Joseph was rich in practical wisdom, and we cannot doubt that he had a good reason for acting as he did.

In presenting the request to Pharaoh, the fact that Joseph is under oath to go to the land of Canaan is stressed. This would serve to convince Pharaoh that Joseph was not acting from personal or selfish motives but from a sense of moral obligation. Such a request

could not well be denied. Pharaoh accordingly graciously grants the requested permission: "Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear" (50:6). The expression "go up" is used, since Canaan is mostly higher in altitude than Egypt, the latter country lying largely near sea level.

Verses 7 to 13 describe the funeral procession from Egypt to Canaan. "It was a very great company" (50:9), including not only the men of the Israelites, but also many prominent Egyptians. The latter are described as "all the elders of the land of Egypt," together with the elders of Pharaoh's house, and "all the servants of Pharaoh." While we cannot say how many people were included in this funeral procession, the number must have been in the hundreds. Also we are told that there were chariots and horsemen; that is, an armed guard. The word translated "chariots" may mean "wagons" and does not necessarily mean war chariots. The "horsemen," however, were undoubtedly a guard of armed men. The wagons or "chariots" may have been used for transporting provisions needed for so many people on such a long trip.

At the threshing floor of Atad the procession comes to a halt. This is described as located "beyond Jordan," that is, presumably, on the east of the Jordan River. Note verse 13 which says that Jacob's sons carried the body INTO the land of Canaan for burial. Apparently, then, the great procession including the Egyptians, the chariots and horsemen, stopped at a point in Trans-jordan, while the sons of Jacob proceeded with the body to the cave of Machpelah near Hebron in southern Canaan. This implies that the route followed by the funeral procession was not the most direct one possible (which would have been along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea) but a more roundabout one which may, however, have been easier and safer for various reasons.

At the threshing floor of Atad, seven days of mourning were passed, "and they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation" (50:10). This mourning was observed by the local Canaanites with the comment that it was a grievous mourning to the Egyptians. On account of this the place came to be called Abel-mizraim, that is, "Meadow of the Egyptians." To understand this, we should realize that in Hebrew the word for "mourning" differs only slightly in pronunciation from the word for "meadow". The Hebrew consonants in the two words are identical; it is only the vowels which differ. As originally written, the Old Testament in Hebrew consisted only of consonants, without vowels except where one was occasionally indicated by a letter used for the purpose. The vowel signs or "points" which appear in a printed Hebrew Bible today were added many centuries later by Jewish scholars who sought to guard against the original pronunciation being forgotten owing to the lapse of time.

The actual burial of the body of Jacob is undertaken by the patriarch's sons. It is not clear from the narrative whether the Egyptians remained at Abel-Mizraim or whether they followed the body to Hebron where the burial was to take place. It was the sons of Jacob who were under obligation to carry out the burial at the cave of Machpelah, located near the city of Hebron. Following this, the entire party returns to Egypt.

Following the return to Egypt, Joseph is approached by his brothers, who fear that now, since their father is dead, Joseph may seek revenge for the evil which they did to him in his youth. They send a representative to plead their cause. Their plea is that Jacob, before his death, has given a command to them to beg Joseph to forgive their wrongdoing (50:17). Some have supposed that this story was a lie invented by the brothers, but there seems no reason to regard it as such. Although Joseph's brothers had not always been honest and truthful men, still at this stage we may assume that they have learned their lesson and are honorable and truthful. Their address to Joseph involves a frank confession of wrongdoing, without any attempt at extenuation or in any way excusing themselves. And evidently Joseph regards them as sincere, for "Joseph wept when they spake unto him" (50:17b).

It is not clear whether the "messenger" first approached Joseph alone, and was later followed by the brothers, or whether the "messenger" was really a spokesman accompanied by those whom he represented. By verse 18, at any rate, the brothers are all present, and fall down before Joseph, thus once more fulfilling his boyhood dream.

Joseph's response to the plea of the brothers shows real magnanimity and great-heartedness. There is no mean spirit of revenge or spite or resentment in Joseph. All is forgiven from the depths of his heart. Joseph replies: "Fear not: for am I in the place of God?" After all, their sin was against God. We can sin against God, and we can injure our fellow men. But we cannot injure God, nor can we really sin against man. God, not man, is the judge of man's moral life. David recognized this in Psalm 51:4 when he said, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned;" he had grievously injured two human beings, but in doing so he had heinously sinned against God. It is with God that the sinner really has to do.

Joseph adds a wonderful statement: "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive (50:20). Here we are face to face with the mystery of God's foreordination. Strange as it may sometimes seem to us, the Bible clearly teaches that even the sinful acts of men are foreordained by God and fitted by God into a larger framework so that they work out for good in the end (compare Romans 8:28). This of course by no means takes away or lessens the guilt of man's sin, nor does it in the least make it right to do evil that good may come. The man who does evil is guilty in God's sight, even though the act is part of God's plan in a larger framework. God judges man according to the motives and moral quality of his acts, not according to the ultimate purposes that God may use those acts for in the

end. Thus Joseph's brothers, in selling Joseph as a slave, were guilty of great sin. Yet that same act was part of God's plan for saving not only the people of Egypt, but the covenant seed of Abraham, alive through the years of famine. Indeed, we may say that as Christ was to come of the seed of Abraham, which could not be if the covenant people perished from starvation during the famine years, the crime of Joseph's brothers was essential to God's plan to redeem the world from sin. The same truth is illustrated by the act of Judas Iscariot in betraying Jesus. This was a sin, as Judas himself admitted when he said "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4). Yet this very sinful act of Judas was a necessary part of the larger pattern of God's plan to redeem the world from sin by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Let those who lightly brush aside the Biblical doctrine of divine foreordination ponder these clear facts of Scripture. Their quarrel is not with John Calvin but with the Holy Spirit who has deeply imbedded this truth of foreordination in the fabric of Scripture.

Joseph harbors no resentment. He reassures and comforts his fearful brothers with promises of good treatment and with kind words.

Next, the last days and death of Joseph are related. Continuing to dwell in Egypt, Joseph reaches the age of 110 years, and sees his own grandchildren. The wording in the King James Version might seem to imply that Joseph saw his great-grandchildren, but scholars rightly hold that grandchildren are meant; this seems proved by the usage of the same Hebrew word in Ex. 20:5 and Deut. 5:9. The statement that the children of Machir were brought up on Joseph's knees probably means that he lived long enough after their birth to take them upon his knees.

Finally Joseph realizes that he is soon to die. Solemnly he reminds his brethren of the promise of God to bring them back to the land of Canaan, as He had sworn to give that land to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As Jacob had done in his time, so now Joseph requires the swearing of an oath that his mortal body shall be buried in the land of Canaan. He does not anticipate a special trip to Canaan for this purpose, but requires them to swear that when God brings them out of Egypt, they will take his bones along.

Incidentally, this requirement on Joseph's part illustrates the descending character of an oath or covenant entered into by the lawful representatives of a people. The men who actually swear this oath will all be dead before the time to leave Egypt arrives. Yet the oath will be binding on their descendants, just as if those descendants had actually sworn it themselves. A lawful oath or covenant, taken by the lawful representatives of a people, is binding on the people and their descendants, until the matter in question has been accomplished.

Then Joseph dies, at the age of 110 years, and his body is embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt. From Exodus 13:19 we learn that the people of Israel remembered and kept the oath which Joseph had required them to swear.

# *Biblical Proverbs :*

## *God's Transistorized Wisdom*

A glimpse at the precepts of an ancient book  
casts divine light on many everyday problems

HAYDN L. GILMORE

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In this age of the transistor, there is a sense in which God may be said to have given us "transistorized wisdom." The Book of Proverbs contains hundreds of verses that present truth in the smallest possible package.

Proverbs are apt, succinct, and clear—characteristics of all good teaching. They are handles on truth to make it portable. Like road signs, they fulfill a specific function quickly.

The Hebrew word for "proverb" comes from the root for "likeness" or "comparison." And in the Septuagint, "proverb" and "parable" came to have much the same sense; there the heading of the Book of Proverbs uses both words. A proverb might be thought of as a condensed parable.

### "Answer a Fool . . . Answer Not"

Compilers of proverbs sometimes place contradictory thoughts in juxtaposition. An example is Proverbs 26:4,5: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." At first thought such contradictions seem very strange.

Yet is not life itself full of seeming contradictions? The proverb has the flexibility to be applied to the great problems of daily living. It carries truth into the realm of practical application. The intellect is persistently plagued with paradoxes and contradictions. Reality, however, is larger than the mind of man, and living requires more than jungle instinct on one hand and pure reason on the other. Thus the proverb is a view of life, designed for immediate practical action.

The proverb is intense. Brevity often means urgency. Stenciled emergency notations are on aircraft, not hidden in shelves of books. The shortest prayer in the Bible is Peter's "Lord, save me." Three words were sufficient to reach the Lord's ear. God sometimes speaks an urgent command or strengthening promise when he speaks most briefly, directly, and intensely.

The proverb often takes the form of "a dark saying." In Habakkuk 2:6 ("Shall not all these take up a

parable against him . . .?") the Hebrew word means "conundrum." The concept of the "dark saying" suggests that the proverb was sometimes hard to understand. On the other hand, the word "proverb" also took on the meaning of "popular with the people"—hence, a byword, a commonplace. "To understand a proverb, and the interpretation (as figure or image); the words of the wise and their dark sayings (conundrums)" (Prov. 1:6).

The New Testament uses both of these senses. For example, in II Peter 2:22, *paroimia*, from Greek words meaning "by the way," has the sense of a wayside saying or byword. However, the same term is used in John 10:6 and 16:25,29 in the secondary sense of figure, parable, and allegory. These, as dark sayings, were hard to understand.

### Jesus' Use of Proverbs

The Lord Jesus used proverbs in his teaching. Twice in the Gospels we have the proverb, "A prophet has no honor in his own country" (John 4:44, Luke 4:24). Jesus' enemies used proverbs against him, such as, "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke 4:23). This reminds us of Psalm 69:11, "I became a proverb to them." Jesus often taught through proverbs. Yet "the time cometh," he said, "when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father" (John 16:25). In both the parable of the soils (Mark 4:1-12) and the discourse on John the Baptist (Matt. 11:2-19), Jesus said, "He who hath ears to hear, let him hear." This proverb recurs in the last book of the Bible eight times (Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9).

The New Testament quotes or alludes to the Book of Proverbs thirty-two times. One proverb, "Shall he not render to every man according to his works?" (Prov. 24:12), is alluded to six times.

Ephesians 6:17 is a striking example of the sufficiency of a transistor-sized word. The sword of the Spirit is said to be, not the Word, considered in its totality (for the customary *logos* is not used), but rather the phrase, or saying (*rhema*), of God. The Christian warrior is to take the appropriate expression to use as the Lord's sword in spiritual warfare.

Proverbs is a highly practical book. The problems of youth, middle age, and old age are mentioned. Mild vexation and international strife are both dealt with in principle.

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There are thirty-one chapters in the Book of Proverbs, one for each day of any month. For years, in addition to my other Scripture reading, I read one chapter of Proverbs daily. This was one of the most practical steps I ever took in my Christian life.

In fact, Proverbs is a good place for anyone to start reading the Bible. It is well fitted to create a "market" for the Gospel. In it the human heart can see its own lack of practical righteousness and thus discover its own need. By showing us how far short we fall of God's standards, Proverbs shows us that we need a Saviour. And indeed, the Saviour is foreshadowed in Proverbs 8:22-31, 23:11, and 30:4.

When the words of God in Proverbs have been discerned, the Word of God in the Gospels can be more personally appreciated. Practical thinking as well as emotional turmoil introduces people to Christ. Christ is concerned with every aspect of life, and Proverbs may well be studied for the way God meets the diverse psychological needs of men.

#### Plain Advice for Youth

The Book of Proverbs is, in a special sense, dedicated and directed to youth, as the prologue (1:1-6) shows. There are few pieces of writing that young people need more than this book. The children of God should be wiser than the children of this world. As they go to school or to ball games or on dates, Proverbs is a spiritual transistor that can be carried in the heart if not in the pocket. In the barracks, in town, in school and home, the Book of Proverbs speaks to plain, everyday situations. It is an inspired part of the literature of realism, helping us face life as it is—difficult and demanding. None of us will ever outgrow his need for this type of plain-spoken wisdom.

The housewife, the professional man or businessman, the workman or the shopkeeper—each may turn to this most practical portion of the Word of God. The ear may be opened to the Spirit of God as he calls us to Jesus Christ above the noise of the day. In Proverbs we may all learn of the wisdom of him who at the appointed time made his Son, "Christ crucified . . . the power of God and the wisdom of God."

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## *Studies in the Book of Proverbs*

### LESSON I

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

The title of the Book of Proverbs in the Bible is: "The Proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel" (1:1). The Hebrew word translated "proverb" means "A brief, pithy saying which expresses wisdom" (E. J. Young). Another definition of "proverb" is: "A sententious, synthetic or antithetic statement of a principle which covers many cases" (Raven). A "synthetic" statement is one which combines two similar sayings to set forth a truth; 1:5 is an example. An "antithetic" statement is one which brings out truth by contrasting two opposites, as is done in 1:7. The Hebrew idea of a proverb is somewhat wider than the modern idea. The word "saying" is a good equivalent.

Solomon was the principal author of the Book of Proverbs. Besides Solomon, certain other individuals are credited with authorship or editing of portions of the book, namely: "the men of Hezekiah" (25:1), Agur (30:1), Lemuel (31:1), and "the wise men", 22:17, 24:23. It is not known who "the men of Hezekiah" who "copied out" proverbs were; possibly they may have included the prophets Isaiah and Micah. Concerning Agur and Lemuel nothing is known beyond what is stated in connection with their names in 30:1 and 31:1 ff. Chapter 30 is credited to Agur, and chapter 31 to Lemuel. It is possible, but not proven, that Lemuel is a name for Solomon.

From the beginning of the book to 22:16 the proverbs can be credited to Solomon himself. According to I Kings 4:32 Solomon wrote three thousand proverbs.

The book must have been completed at a later time than Solomon's; the earliest date at which it could have been completed in its present form would be the time of Hezekiah, that is, the 8th century before Christ.

Critical scholars have claimed that the Book of Proverbs has been influenced by Greek, Aramaic or Egyptian thought. There is no convincing evidence that such influence existed. An Egyptian book, called *The Wisdom of Amenemope*, has a purely formal resemblance to Proverbs 22:17 to 23:12. This Egyptian book however is polytheistic (believing in many gods) whereas the Biblical Book of Proverbs is strictly monotheistic. The Egyptian work is also logically continuous whereas the Biblical Book of Proverbs is very disconnected in its presentation of material. We will do well to attribute the Book of Proverbs to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not to ancient pagan sources.

Proverbs is a difficult book to outline in any detail. A general outline can of course be worked out. The following outlines from various standard works are suggested.

#### The New Bible Handbook (G. T. Manley)

- I. The Value and Attainment of True Wisdom. 1-9.
- II. The Proverbs of Solomon. 10:1 — 22:16.
- III. The Words of the Wise. 22:17 — 24:34.

IV. Collection by the Men of Hezekiah. 25 — 29.

V. Proverbs of Agur. 30.

VI. Proverbs of Lemuel. The Virtuous Woman. 31.

**The New Bible Commentary  
(Davidson, Stibbs & Kevan)**

I. Title, Purpose, Motto. 1:1-7.

II. Thirteen Lessons on Wisdom. 1:8 — 9:18.

III. The First Book of Solomon. 10:1 — 22:16.

IV. Sayings of the Wise. 22:17 — 24:22.

V. Sayings of the Wise: Another Collection. 24:23-24.

VI. The Second Book of Solomon. 25:1 — 29:27.

VII. Sayings of Agur. 30.

VIII. Sayings of Lemuel. 31:1-9.

IX. Appendix. The Perfect Wife. 31:10-31.

**Introduction to the Old Testament  
(Edward J. Young)**

I. The Praise of Wisdom. 1:1 — 9:18.

II. Miscellaneous Proverbs of Solomon. 10:1 — 22:16.

III. Sundry Duties and Rules. 22:17 — 24:22.

IV. Further Sayings of the Wise. 24:23-34.

V. Miscellaneous Sayings by Solomon. 25:1 — 29:27.

VI. The Words of Agur. 30.

VII. The Words of Lemuel. 31:1-9.

VIII. An Acrostic in Praise of the Virtuous Woman. 31:10-31.

It will be observed that these three suggested outlines of Proverbs are very similar. They differ (1) as to setting apart the first 7 verses of the book as an introduction, and (2) as to the division of chapter 31.

The Book of Proverbs is quoted a number of times in the New Testament. The following instances are cited by Dr. E. J. Young in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*.

Rom. 3:15 with Prov. 1:16

Heb. 12:5 with Prov. 3:11

James 4:6 with Prov. 3:34

I Peter 4:8 with Prov. 10:12

I Peter 4:18 with Prov. 11:31

I Peter 5:5 with Prov. 3:34

II Peter 2:22 with Prov. 26:11

Note also Matt. 6:44 compared with Prov. 25:21,22.

Jesus in His use of parables used a method of instruction somewhat similar to the Book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a very practical book. Dr. M. A. Hopkins states that it could be called "God's Handbook on the Art of Living for Young and Old" or "Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth," adding that the book contains the condensed wisdom of the ages focused upon practical affairs and the problems of daily life, especially in this world, but with an outlook on eternity.

**Questions:**

1. What is the full title of the Book of Proverbs in the Bible?

2. What is the meaning of the Hebrew word translated "proverb"?

3. How does the Biblical idea of a proverb differ from the modern idea?

4. Who was the human author of most of the Book of Proverbs?

5. What other authors contributed to the writing of the book?

6. Who may have been included among the "men of Hezekiah"?

7. How many proverbs did Solomon write, according to I Kings 4:32?

8. What is the earliest date when the Book of Proverbs could have been complete in its present form?

9. What foreign or non-Israelite influences are alleged by critical scholars to have affected the Book of Proverbs?

10. How can the claim of Egyptian influence be answered?

11. Give a general outline of the Book of Proverbs.

12. What method of teaching, similar to the Book of Proverbs, was used by Jesus?

13. Give examples of quotations from the Book of Proverbs in the New Testament.

14. Why is it correct to call the Book of Proverbs a practical book?

## LESSON 2

## SOME TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

The Book of Proverbs differs sharply from the world's philosophies and codes of conduct, in that Proverbs is theistic and always God-centered. The world's philosophies and codes are humanistic and secular — they are "of the people, by the people and for the people" whereas the wisdom in Proverbs is divinely revealed and centered in God — it is "of God, by God and for the glory of God." This of course causes the Book of Proverbs to be lightly valued by the world, but is at the same time a good reason why it should be highly valued by the Christian. And indeed only the Christian (that is, the regenerate person) can really live according to the principles revealed in the Book of Proverbs.

Proverbs can be studied chapter by chapter and verse by verse, but perhaps a better method may be a topical study of the book, for this will make it easier to remember the book's main teachings and fix them in the mind.

At the beginning of Proverbs the great principle is stated that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (1:7). Note that the fear of the Lord is the beginning, not only of wisdom, but also of knowledge. Our modern world has been deeply impressed by the achievements of physical science and has even become intoxicated on the wine of science, but it is a science without God. Therefore it is a science or knowledge without insight into the real meaning of the universe. The scientist who studies the age of rocks without knowing the Rock of Ages does not really KNOW anything; he lacks "the beginning of knowledge." The physicist who probes deeper and deeper into the mysteries of the atom without knowing the eternal Creator of matter and energy cannot really grasp the significance of the atom, for he lacks a truly valid approach to his researches.

Dr. M. A. Hopkins has truly said that Proverbs 1:7 states that "Right relation to God is the basic principle of life". He adds that a human life is "eccentric" when self occupies the place that rightly belongs to God, and he defines a God-centered life as meaning "That God is to occupy the central place in every sphere of human life and in all human relationships." This is certainly true, and most Christians will acknowledge its truth, at least formally, but how far do we live up to it in actual life? Even we Christian people are all but engulfed in the yawning chasm of present-day secularism. Our public schools assume as a matter of course that history, science, literature, etc., can be truly and adequately taught without even mentioning God. Our political government becomes more and more rigidly secular day by day. The whole cultural pattern has become one that feels no need of God.

The "fear" of the Lord does not of course mean panic-stricken terror. It is a term frequently used in Scripture and means something like "religion" in the best sense of the term: faith in God accompanied by reverence and love. The "fear" of the Lord deters a man from sinning against God. It leads to straight thinking

and right living. This is a very much needed idea at the present day, for the common emphasis today is on self-expression and an idolatrous idea of human freedom ("Don't fence me in!"). In religious circles this wrong idea of freedom is furthered to some extent by a one-sided view of salvation which verges on antinomianism (the notion that the Christian is not under the moral law as a standard of right living).

Another teaching of the Book of Proverbs which is much needed today is that on the subject of Prayer. Proverbs teaches with utter plainness that prayer is not acceptable to God unless it be accompanied by a godly life. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight" (15:8). "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (28:9). Surely this is a needed emphasis today, when people feel free to neglect, despise and reject teachings of the Bible and yet claim to be "spiritual" Christians who stress the importance of prayer. Prayer without obedience is an abomination to God. As the prophet Samuel said to the disobedient Saul, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:22,23). The person who says "Don't talk to me about Scriptural purity of worship; I am not interested in such discussions and intend to do as I please" should consider what he will say to the Lord at the Judgment Day. The person who lightly follows the path of least resistance and leaves a pure and faithful church to join a broad and popular one should soberly consider what he will say to the Lord at the Judgment Day. Those who are unwilling to make the will of God as revealed in Scripture their real standard of thinking and living are not "spiritual" just because they attend church and talk a lot about prayer.

## Questions:

1. What is meant by saying that the Book of Proverbs is God-centered?
2. What class of persons alone can really obey the principles of living that are taught in the Book of Proverbs?
3. What great principle is enunciated in Proverbs 1:7?
4. When is a human life "eccentric"?
5. What is meant by a God-centered life?
6. What does the expression "the fear of God" mean in the Bible?
7. What will "the fear of God" keep a person from doing?
8. Why is it very necessary at the present day to stress obedience to God's commands?

9. What teaching on the subject of Prayer is found in Proverbs?

10. How do some people at the present day violate the teaching of Proverbs on the subject of prayer?

### LESSON 3

#### SOME TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, CONTINUED

The Book of Proverbs teaches that there are some things which God loves and other things which He hates. Among the things that God loves are "such as are perfect in their way"; "him that followeth after righteousness"; "a just weight"; "they that deal truly"; "the prayer of the upright." On the other hand, God hates "them that are perverse in heart"; "every one that is proud in heart"; "pride, arrogance, the evil way, the perverse mouth"; "the sacrifice of the wicked"; "diverse weights and diverse measures"; "a false witness that uttereth lies"; "he that soweth discord among brethren."

These statements as to the objects of God's love and His hatred may be summarized by stating that God loves what is in harmony with His own nature, and He hates that which is contrary to His own nature, for "he cannot deny himself." Note that this teaching on God's love and hatred differs widely from the modern popular notion that God is nothing but love. God is the moral Ruler of the universe and He must hate that which is contrary to His own nature. Were He to fail to do so, He would instantly cease to exist and the whole universe would in one instant be as if it had never been created — an impossibility, of course. The Book of Proverbs, like the rest of Scripture, presents a righteous God, a holy God, and (something that men often forget), an honest God.

Yet another prominent teaching of Proverbs concerns the sovereignty of God. This term is often misunderstood and misused today. Almost any Christian will say he believes in "the sovereignty of God". Many will go on to say that they believe that when God created man He limited Himself and that the ultimate issues of life are determined, not by the counsel of God, but by decisions of man's free will. An evangelist will say he believes in "the sovereignty of God" and then blandly add that "God's hands are tied; He can only wait for you to make your own decision." Such usage is a misuse of the term "sovereignty". The sovereignty of God does not mean merely that God is the most powerful of all beings, nor does it mean merely that God could in the abstract, if He so wished, determine what is to happen in the created universe; rather, it means that the eternal counsel or decision of God actually determines all that comes to pass in space and time. This view of the sovereignty of God is taught in the Bible, affirmed by Calvinists and denied by Arminians.

The real sovereignty of God is plainly taught in Proverbs. First, God's counsel determines what happens in an individual human life. "A man's heart

deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps" (16:9); "There are many devices in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand" (19:21). The eternal counsel of God also determines what happens on the broad field of history or world affairs: "The horse is prepared against the day of battle; but victory is of the Lord" (21:31). Moreover, the eternal counsel of God even determines the outcome of what men call "chance" happenings: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." When a man throws a pair of dice on a table, the result of the throw was decided by God in eternity before the universe existed. When a new automobile is raffled off and goes to the holder of the ticket bearing the "lucky number", the outcome of this "chance" event was decided by God before the universe existed. Thus God's sovereignty, according to Proverbs, includes human affairs, world events, the decisions of man's free will, and even the outcome of chance happenings.

#### Questions:

1. Name several things that God loves, and several things that God hates, as taught in the Book of Proverbs.

2. How can we summarize the teaching of Proverbs as to the objects of God's love and His hatred?

3. How does the idea of God in Proverbs differ from the popular modern idea of God?

4. What is there that God cannot do, according to Scripture?

5. What is meant by the sovereignty of God?

6. How is the sovereignty of God often misunderstood or misrepresented at the present day?

7. Give a verse from Proverbs which teaches the sovereignty of God in the life of man.

8. What verse in Proverbs shows the operation of the sovereignty of God in the field of history?

9. What verse in Proverbs teaches that the sovereignty of God determines even the outcome of "chance" events.

10. Why is it wrong to participate in a raffle or lottery of any kind?

### LESSON 4

#### TEACHINGS CONCERNING GODLY FAMILY LIFE

A godly family begins with a marriage in the Lord, that is, a marriage between a man and a woman who

fear God. In our day marriage has been largely secularized and also romanticized with a false glamor

which is derived not from Scriptural principles but from the idols of popular fiction, the motion picture screen and the television. In the face of this distorted view of love and marriage we also have a most tragic breakdown of marriage with many ending in the divorce courts and many which do not reach the divorce courts nevertheless becoming a distressing condition of continual cold war which neither honors God nor benefits man. Modern western civilization takes its goals and its standards from human sources, and thus is essentially idolatrous in character. A return to Biblical principles among Christian people would honor God and promote their own true happiness and welfare.

Dr. Hopkins in his little paperback book on the Proverbs (now out of print) starts out his discussion of this subject by saying that a godly wife and mother is essential to a happy home. He finds four types of women described in the Proverbs. Of these, one type is good and the other three are evil in various ways. They are as follows:

(1) The worthy, gracious and wise woman. She is the crown of her husband, 12:4. She obtains honor, 11:16. She is thrifty and constructive, building her house, 14:1. More verses along the same lines might be cited.

(2) The fair but indiscreet woman. This type is vividly compared to a ring of gold in a swine's snout (11:22). The inspired text declares that mere physical attractiveness is not a proper standard for evaluation: "Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain." Without a godly character, mere physical beauty is a snare and a delusion, as many have learned by bitter experience. Some of the wickedest women in history have been described as surpassingly beautiful physically. The famous Cleopatra of Egypt is an example. Possibly the infamous Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, was considered beautiful; at any rate her last act before she was slain by Jehu was to fix her hair-do and put on her make-up. On the other hand, some godly women in Scripture are described as beautiful. Thus Abraham described Sarah (Gen. 12:11), and thus are described Rebekah (Gen. 24:16) and Rachel (Gen. 29:17). In other words, Scripture does not discount the worth of bodily beauty; it only asserts that beauty alone, without character, is deceitful and disappointing. Beauty is the gift of God but it is meant to be the accompaniment of a beautiful character, without which it is without real value.

(3) The contentious, nagging woman. Dr. Hopkins cites a number of texts from the Proverbs as examples of this type. She wears people out and gets on their nerves (19:13; 27:15). All attempts to correct or restrain her nagging, complaining disposition prove futile (27:16). It is better for a man to enjoy a little peace and quiet in a corner on the flat roof of the house, than to live with a woman of this type in a luxurious house. It is even better to retire to "a desert land" and get away from human society altogether than to dwell with "a contentious and fretful woman" (21:19). Can there be any doubt that the Holy Spirit in Scripture pronounces this complaining, nagging spirit deeply sinful?

(4) The shameless, foolish woman. In Scripture the terms "fool" and "foolishness" imply moral perversity,

not merely lack of wisdom or intelligence. The foolish person is not only living in a stupid and senseless manner, but he or she is also in moral revolt against God, who is the true source of wisdom. Proverbs 12:4 says that the woman that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in her husband's bones, and that her folly tends toward waste and destructiveness (14:1). Such people were not limited to Biblical times. They can be seen today in our modern western culture. There are men who are worn and wearied because of the constant effort to provide money for their wives' lavish and extravagant tastes in clothes, cars and houses. No amount of money and no standard of living, however high, can satisfy a vain, proud, selfish, discontented heart. The man who is joined in marriage to such a wife has a heart-breaking problem which slowly crushes the life out of him. Such women are really guilty of slow murder though they may vainly imagine themselves to be paragons of idealism and virtue.

It should not be imagined that the Book of Proverbs implies that three women out of four are perverse while only one is godly and worthy. The book describes four types without implying anything as to numerical ratios. Nor should it be supposed that the Proverbs regard women alone as affected by the vices described, while men are all noble, unselfish and virtuous. A reading of the book as a whole will show the sins and faults of the male sex faithfully dealt with. But the character of the wife and mother has so much to do with making a home happy or unhappy that it is stressed in connection with this aspect of the general subject.

If we may summarize the lessons taught in this connection, we may say that hasty and ill-considered marriage is foolish and perilous. Marrying some person with the hope of reforming him or her is even more hazardous. This hope is seldom realized. The reforming should in any case be done first, and the marrying (if any) afterwards. It should be remembered that under the Old Testament divorce for a variety of reasons was permitted because of the hardness of the people's hearts. Even with the relief of divorce thus available, the Book of Proverbs speaks in extremely strong and pointed language about the evil consequences of an ill-considered marriage. How much more should we attend to this teaching, living as we do under the New Testament system when divorce is not lawful except on the ground of adultery (and perhaps absolute desertion). Young people contemplating marriage should do some sober thinking and consider the character traits of a possible mate apart from the enchanting glamor of romance. If the young lady is the type who sits watching television while her mother washes the dinner dishes alone, the young man should take warning. If the young man is the type who expects the family car for "dates" but is unwilling to wash the car occasionally, or if he is disrespectful toward his own parents, the young woman should take warning. These may seem to be trivial symptoms, but they are samples of a large number of warning signals that the alert and godly person should watch for.

Questions:

1. How does a godly family begin?

2. How has marriage been falsely romanticized in our culture?

3. What four types of womanhood are described in Proverbs?

4. Give a verse describing the godly woman.

5. What does Scripture say about the fair but indiscreet woman?

6. When is bodily beauty of value and when is it not?

7. What does Proverbs say about the nagging type of woman?

8. Can the nagging, complaining temperament be changed?

9. What is included in the idea of "foolishness" in Scripture?

10. What pattern of life and conduct is exhibited by the foolish woman in modern society?

11. Does the Book of Proverbs represent men as more virtuous than women?

12. Why is it foolish to marry a person in hope of reforming him or her later?

13. How can young people be sure of making a wise decision as to whom to marry?

## LESSON 5

### THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GODLY HOME

A good wife, according to Proverbs, is a great blessing to a man, and is to be regarded as a gift of God (18:22; 19:14). The joys of a pure married love are described as a gift of God for the benefit and enjoyment of His people, who were created male and female (Gen. 1:27) with the intention that the two sexes should complement each other (Gen. 2:18). Unlike some modern religious writers, the Bible treats sex realistically, and represents this relationship of married persons, not as an evil to be avoided so far as possible, nor as a mere concession to man's physical nature, but as a gift of God intended to bring happiness and contentment in the home. This is set forth especially in 5:15-21.

The description of "a worthy woman" in 31:10-31 may strike us as emphasizing chiefly the virtues of industry and thrift. Some have felt that the presentation is one-sided, as if a man was to value his wife chiefly because she is efficient in making or saving money. In answer to this charge of one-sidedness, certain things may be said. First, hard work and thrift were absolutely necessary in Biblical times just to keep out of debt. The economy was agricultural and the farming was done the hard way, without the benefits of machinery which are enjoyed today. Consequently life was a real struggle against ever-threatening poverty, and there was relatively little time left for leisure and the enjoyment of it. Secondly, the thrift and hard work described in Proverbs 31 are not regarded as an end in themselves, but as a means to an end. This is not work for work's sake, nor is it a miserly thrift for the sake of being stingy. It is industry and thrift as necessary means to a godly life. The underlying motive is the fear of the Lord. We live in a consumer-minded age. People are concerned, not with real economic justice, but with getting as much as they can while contributing as little as they can. In reality, however, consuming without producing is sinful and selfish. The industrial employee who does as little work as possible for his wage is selfish, sinful and really a thief. While modern mass-production of food and consumer goods has driven the wolf a little distance from the door, the godly person, whether man or woman, should be ashamed to live as a social parasite, consuming without producing. It is not necessary that one's

contributions be of the same kind as what one consumes (as in the simple agricultural economy of Biblical Palestine) but the contributions should be real and they should be of value.

Next, there is a strong emphasis in Proverbs on the reciprocal duties of parents and children. Obedience is enjoined upon children and many blessings are promised to obedient children. There are so many statements of this kind in the Proverbs that it is scarcely necessary to cite them. Mention may be made of 1:8,9; 23:22; 6:20,21; 19:27; 4:1-4; 4:10-13; 4:20-27; 3:1-4.

Surely these teachings of Proverbs are greatly needed in America today, where the tendency has been for parents to be "permissive" toward all the wishes of their children. It is reported that an Englishman visited America, and after his return to England was asked what he had seen. He replied, "I have seen many obedient parents." He did not, of course, assert that all American families are like that, but that many were.

This parental permissiveness has been abetted by an extreme emphasis of a passing phase of psychology — a type of psychology which has stressed "self expression" and has warned that any attempt to interfere with the natural impulses or actions of the child may cause "trauma" or an injury to his personality. This type of psychology is based upon a false view of human nature, namely that man is naturally good and is born without a sinful nature. The bad tendencies manifested in people's lives are said to have come from repressing some natural instinct or desire, not from being born with a sinful nature.

A cartoon in a religious magazine satirized this type of thinking quite effectively. It showed Cain, with his parents Adam and Eve, just after the killing of Abel. Abel is lying on the ground, wounded and bloody and obviously dead. Cain is standing nearby, a cigarette in his mouth, his left hand on his hip, and a "so what?" expression on his face. Adam is taking the whole thing very hard, and is pacing back and forth obviously having a difficult time controlling his feelings. Eve stands near

Adam and says, "Now, Adam, don't take this so hard. Cain didn't really mean anything bad by what he did. The trouble with you, Adam, is that you don't understand the younger generation and are out of sympathy with the ways of youth. This was just Cain's way of expressing his inner personality, frankly and unashamed, instead of being tied in knots by inhibitions."

In another cartoon a juvenile criminal (euphemistically called a "juvenile delinquent") has just killed a man. A police officer arrives to arrest the perpetrator of this deed. The police officer evidently is deeply shocked by the scene and is about to fasten handcuffs on the culprit, when the juvenile court child psychologist, who has also arrived on the scene, says, "Now whatever you do, officer, don't do anything to make him feel guilty about this."

Admittedly both of these cartoons present exaggerations, but they would not have been published at all if there were not much fact in the situation which is satirized. A case is reported by R. J. Rushdoony in his latest book, *Intellectual Schizophrenia*, where a junior high school boy actually attempted to knife a teacher. He was not expelled from school or visited with any real punishment as the court felt that it would be best for the boy to continue with his class in high school. It is reported that in at least one American city many high school teachers do not dare to turn their back on a class even for a minute lest the teacher suffer violence. This doubtless is also extreme, yet it certainly shows the folly of the "permissive" idea in dealing with the impulses of children and youth.

Proverbs also teaches the duty of parental discipline and that it results in obedience and the building of character. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (22:6). This is asserted as a general principle. It does not mean that there may never be any exceptions in any degree. In general, however, parental training forms character which persists through life. Contrary to the prevalent idea today, there are many injunctions to parents to discipline their children in Proverbs, and several of these speak of corporal or physical punishment or correction. Some of these texts are 22:15, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him;" 13:24, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes;" 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself causeth shame to his mother;" 29:17, "Correct thy son, and he will give thee rest; yea, he will give delight unto thy soul;" 19:18, "Chasten thy son, seeing there is hope; and set not thy heart on his destruction;" 23:13,14, "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."

These verses do not imply, certainly, that all correction must be physical punishment. Sometimes other forms of correction may be much wiser and better. But when verbal reproof does not result in changed conduct, something more drastic is called for. This may or may not be physical punishment, depending on the age of the child, his temperament and the nature of his

conduct. But in any case correction should be something that brings the child up sharply to face his wrongdoing and to realize that it has definitely unpleasant consequences. Nothing is more futile than overly mild correction which causes the child no real pain or deprivation.

Children should not be corrected by a parent who is angry. To be effective correction must be administered by a self-disciplined parent, and it must be done in due moderation and love. If done properly according to these Biblical principles it will not have to be repeated for a long time, perhaps never. Experience, as well as Scripture, teaches that "a child left to himself causeth shame to his mother," and that "the rod and reproof give wisdom." Modern theories of child rearing which hold that wayward children should never receive physical correction claim to be wiser than God, who has given explicit instructions on this subject in His Word. These modern theories, of course, are based on a false, unscriptural view of human nature, which holds that children are essentially good by nature and that there is no radical moral evil in their nature which needs to be curbed or corrected.

Many texts of Proverbs tell of the joy and happiness that exist in a home with obedient children. 10:1; 23:15,16,24-26; 13:1; 15:20; 28:7 and 29:3 may be cited as examples.

Incidentally, the family is not a democracy in which parents and children each have one vote as to what is to be done. Of all the ridiculous extremes to which the idea of democracy has been pushed by some misguided people, this is the worst. We have read of a family where a secret ballot of parents and children was cast to determine whether the birth of another baby in the family should be permitted. In another case the father had been promoted in the business firm in which he was employed, but to accept this promotion would have to move to a distant city, and the father, mother and children each cast a secret ballot on whether the promotion should be accepted or not. The inspired author of the Proverbs never had to comment on any such absurd situation as this, but possibly we can imagine what his comments might be — that foolishness is bound up in the hearts of some adults. We believe in democracy as, on the whole, a just and effective form of government for the nation. But the home, as revealed in the Bible, is not a democracy, and children have as little right to a determinative vote in the home as they have in a national political election. According to God's Word, authority in the home is committed by God, first of all to the father, and next to him to the mother. The children, while they are minors, are subject to the authority of their parents in the Lord; they are not co-rulers of the family on a democratic basis. Even the sinless child Jesus "was subject unto" his foster father Joseph and his mother Mary (Luke 2:51). Moreover, it is psychologically harmful for children to have this democratic notion of the family structure. Children need the security which comes from knowing that they are living under a firm but loving parental authority. When this is removed, they are likely to feel insecure, with various kinds of bad reactions. Looking at the same matter in another way, parental authority is coupled

with parental responsibility. Minor children cannot participate, really, in this responsibility, nor should they be expected to. Therefore it is folly and confusion to expect them to share authority equally with their parents.

**Questions:**

1. Does the Bible regard sex in marriage as a blessing or a curse?
2. What kind of virtues are stressed in the description of the "worthy woman" in Proverbs 31:10-31?
3. How can we answer the claim that this description is one-sided?
4. What evidences exist to show that we are living in a consumer-minded age?
5. When is a person a social parasite?
6. What duty of children to parents is stressed in Proverbs?
7. What is wrong with the psychology that would permit free and unrestricted "self-expression" to

children and youth?

8. What are the good results of proper parental discipline?
9. Does the Bible teach that correction of children must take the form of corporal punishment?
10. If corporal punishment is not always called for, what is implied as to the duty of parental correction of children?
11. Why should children never be corrected by a parent in anger?
12. Why are moderation and love necessary in correcting children?
13. What is basically wrong with modern theories of child rearing which rule out all physical correction of children?
14. Why is it incorrect to regard the family as a democracy?
15. What harm may result to children when the family is regarded as a democracy in which parents and children share equally in all decisions?

**LESSON 6**

**THE BLESSING AND DUTY OF HARD WORK**

According to the Bible, work itself is a blessing, not a curse. Even before sin entered the human race, man had work to do. Adam had both a physical occupation and an intellectual task. He was the first gardener and he was the first scientist (Gen. 2:15,19,20). This double assignment was neither physically exhausting nor mentally exhausting. On the contrary, it was for man's own great benefit and happiness. Man is essentially an active being, and idleness is not only sinful, but also physically and mentally harmful. God is a Worker, and Adam, created in the image of God, was to be a worker.

With the coming of sin, work was transformed from wholesome occupation to man-killing toil. A curse was pronounced upon the world of nature (Gen. 3:17-19) by which nature, from being man's friend, became partly man's enemy, and life became a struggle for existence. Only by hard work would human life thenceforth be possible. Man would eat bread in the sweat of his face. Though human life would be difficult, it would not be impossible: man could still "eat bread." But hard work would be needed.

From that day to this the vast majority of earth's millions of people have existed just a step or two ahead of death by starvation. With our surplus of food in America produced by modern science, technology and mass production, we tend to forget that sheer physical hunger is still a desperate problem for the majority of the world's people. Even before Communism took over, there were many, many millions of people in China who went to bed hungry every night, and untold millions of children who were pitifully undernourished. The writer

has seen men working twelve hours a day unloading eighty-pound sacks of cement on their backs, without machinery, from a ship and placing them on railway flat cars, at a wage equivalent to perhaps twenty American cents a day — just enough money to buy enough of the cheapest kind of stomach-filling food (corn meal mush or millet) to keep them alive to go through the same ordeal of labor the next day. Such people are worn out and die in what we would call middle life. The children never got the meat, milk and fruit that they needed for normal health and growth. Under Communism starvation in China is reported to be much worse than it was years ago under the old government. Conditions among the four hundred million people of India are reported to be similarly bad in many parts of India. The causes of these distressing conditions are no doubt many and complex. We are only calling attention to the fact that human life is still a struggle to prevent death by starvation, appearances in America to the contrary notwithstanding. Hard work, thus, is a desperate necessity.

According to the Bible, both Old Testament and New, diligent work is also a duty, and idleness and laziness are sins. The Proverbs also emphasize this aspect of duty. Many texts can be cited to show the duty and reward of diligent work, and the disastrous consequences of sloth and idleness. We may cite 10:4,5; 12:14; 12:11; 28:19; 27:23-27; 12:27; 13:4; 21:5; 22:29; 12:24.

Our natural (but sinful) tendency to rationalize our own laziness is pointed out in Proverbs 26:13, "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the

streets." That is, if a person is just lazy, and doesn't want to work, almost anything will serve as a plausible excuse for this neglect, but the real reason is just sinful laziness. A woman took her son to see a physician because of his extreme disinclination to do any useful work. The doctor examined the boy and said, "Madam, your son is suffering from an aggravated condition of constitutional inertia," on which the boy promptly commented, "There, Mom! and you said I was just plain lazy!"

The description of the lazy man's vineyard in Proverbs 24:30-34 is a telling one. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall thy poverty come as one that travelth; and thy want as an armed man." The owner of this vineyard will soon become a social problem, dependent on the surplus produced by people more diligent than himself, or lacking such provisions, he will starve to death. Hard work will not solve all our problems, but it will solve many of them. It is a virtue commanded by God in Scripture, even though it is not very popular in American life at the present day.

Modern technology with its machinery, automation and mass production in western lands has made it possible to live with less hours of work and less back-breaking, man-killing labor than was formerly the case, and that is still the case in much of the world. For this we should be deeply thankful to God, the source of all good, and we should determine to use the time and strength released in this way in occupation that will be beneficial to ourselves and others and fruitful to the glory of God. But is this the common result of the new freedom from exhausting toil? It is to be feared that it is not. The forty-hour work week does not always consist of forty hours of honest work. There are all sorts of ways of doing nothing part of the time or rendering less than an honest day's work for a day's pay. We have heard of a Christian young man who got a job in an industrial plant, and was told by other employees that he would have to stop working so hard, and learn to do less in a day's time. He said he believed in an honest day's work, but was informed that the other men would not stand for it in that plant.

And how is leisure time expended? How many hours a week are spent idly watching television or listening to broadcasts about sporting events? We do not mean to imply that no time should be spent on such things. But are Americans — even Christian Americans — on the whole treating their free time as a trust from God, for which they will finally have to give account to the Judge of their moral life? What is the real gain in our modern technological release from toil if the new freedom is spent merely in self-indulgent idleness or

selfish pleasures? That many people know of no other ways to employ newly gained free time is itself an indictment of our culture as dying and sterile. Even apart from religious activities, there are many personality-enriching ways in which free time can be spent. Think of music, art, literature, science, history — any or all of which may become fascinatingly interesting to the person with an awakened mind. Are people intended to be mere vegetables, like turnips or cabbages? Remember the occupation assigned by God for Adam's mind to work on (Gen. 2:19,20). And think of the interesting, personality-developing hobbies that can be cultivated in one's free time, which may bring one to a new and deeper appreciation of some aspect of God's creation, and thus bring honor to the Creator! Yet people drift and vegetate, and sit by the hour watching the television. And whatever we may think of American television, certainly a great deal of it is less than personality-enriching and God-honoring material — some of it is downright silly, and some of it is sinful, presenting false goals and values to the viewer.

#### Questions:

1. Why is work a blessing rather than a curse?
2. What work did Adam have to do before sin entered the world?
3. What change in human work resulted from man's fall into sin?
4. What has been the economic condition of the majority of human beings from Adam to the present day?
5. What is the condition of millions of people in the Orient?
6. Give a text or texts from Proverbs showing that hard work is a duty.
7. Give a text that is an example of rationalizing laziness.
8. How is the vineyard of the lazy man described, and what lessons does it teach?
9. How has the need for toil been modified in the western world by modern science and technology?
10. How has the average American responded to the new leisure time and freedom from exhausting toil that modern science has brought?
11. How much time each week should a Christian spend watching television?
12. What God-honoring ways of spending leisure time can be suggested?

### LESSON 7

#### WARNINGS AGAINST SOME SPECIAL TEMPTATIONS

Among many other matters, three special temp-

tations are strongly warned against in the Book of

Proverbs, and will be considered in this lesson. These are the temptations to intemperance, impurity and suretyship.

Distilled liquors with high alcoholic content, such as are common today, were unknown in Biblical times. The process of distillation was not invented until late medieval times. Yet intoxicating liquors were well known and are warned against in Proverbs. Some of the references to wine in Proverbs are figurative in character, such as 4:17 ("For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence") and 9:2 ("Wisdom . . . hath mingled her wine"). In other places wine is spoken of literally, with accompanying warnings concerning its perils. Some of these references are 20:1; 23:30,31; 31:4. In 31:6 wine seems to be spoken of as a narcotic medicine to be used to relieve the sufferings of those in a dying condition, as an injection of morphine might be used by a physician to relieve the pain of the dying today, or as a man about to die in the electric chair is first mercifully given a dose of morphine to calm his extreme fear. In this connection we may recall that "wine mingled with gall" was offered to our Saviour at His crucifixion, though He refused to drink it. This "wine mingled with gall" was a stupefying or pain-deadening drug which was offered in mercy to those about to experience the terrible agonies of crucifixion. Jesus refused it because as the Substitute for sinners He must bear the appointed suffering to the end, consciously and deliberately, with an unclouded brain. There is no reason to suppose that it would have been wrong for Him to drink it except for this fact, or that it was sinful for others who were crucified to drink it.

Other references to wine in Proverbs warn strongly against its dangers. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging" (20:1); "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder" (23:32). The wild hallucinations of alcoholic delirium are graphically described in 23:33,34, "thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast." Certainly such warnings should be enough to terrify any conscientious person. In our day the problem of temperance is greatly compounded by the availability of distilled liquors with their very high alcoholic content, coupled with the persuasive advertising of these liquors which seems to meet us at every turn. Therefore if people in Solomon's day needed to beware of this type of temptation, much more is this the case at the present day.

There is more teaching on this subject in the Bible than is found in the single Book of Proverbs. Some people with much zeal but little training in exact thinking have over-simplified the whole subject as if the cause of alcoholism were simply drinking wine. As a matter of fact it may be much deeper than that. The person who finds alcohol a welcome escape from the hard reality of life is already a sick person mentally and spiritually. This person has a personality weakness; he finds the problems of life intolerable and life unbearable; he feels himself deeply inferior and unable to cope with life. In his spiritual desperation he seeks some kind of escape route from a life that he considers unendurable. Alcoholic liquor is a very poor, disap-

pointing and dangerous escape route and it brings only sorrow and trouble in the end. But to the person concerned it may seem to be the only escape route available, so he takes it. We should not condone this sort of thing, but at the same time we should not oversimplify the problem and imagine that simply making alcohol unobtainable will solve the problem. The person who finds life unendurable will then seek some other desperate escape route — possibly suicide. We will not solve the temperance problem, really, until we deal with the causes that make some people feel so desperately that they must find some escape from intolerable problems. We have heard many religious people ridicule the notion that alcoholism is a disease, who yet do not seem to understand what is meant by saying that alcoholism is a disease. When we speak of alcoholism as a disease we do not mean simply addiction to alcohol, or the habit of drinking; what is meant is a personality disorder which is characterized by a desperate feeling of inferiority, inadequacy and inability to cope with unendurable conditions or problems — a feeling which drives the person to mental and spiritual desperation resulting in the use of alcohol as a means to at least temporary relief. We should think of people in this terrible condition, not with a self-righteous denunciation, but with Christian compassion. Merely to denounce their use of alcohol, while we do nothing to try to remedy their desperate mental and spiritual need, may be only a form of self-righteous hypocrisy.

We who have never experienced the temptation to seek relief from an unendurable reality in alcohol<sup>l</sup> liquor should be deeply thankful to God for this fact. And we should be moved to seek a real and truly adequate solution of the temperance problem which is so much in evidence today. One way in which we can do this is to oppose the widespread and extremely obnoxious advertising of liquors in our newspapers, magazines and other media of mass communication.

Another terrible temptation warned against in Proverbs is that to impurity. By this we mean all sins against the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Sex was given by God to be rightly used, for man's benefit and God's glory, not to be misused. We live in a day when Biblical teachings on this subject are laughed out of court by many people as "old fashioned taboos" while lawless indulgence of sexual desires is increasingly prevalent. Dr. Kinsey's notorious books on sex behaviour confound what is average with what is normal, and purport to show that a majority of the American people are unchaste. Dr. Kinsey's method of statistical research is open to serious criticism, however. One writer has said that Kinsey's first book, "Sex Behaviour in the American Male" should have been given the title "Sex Behaviour of Some American Men who were Willing to Talk about it", or still better "Sex Behaviour of Some Men who have no Sense of Shame." The same might be said, certainly, about his book on the sex behaviour of women. That the persons who were willing to talk to Dr. Kinsey's interviewers were really a representative cross-section of the American people is open to serious question. But even waiving this point, what is average or prevalent is not therefore normal or right. You might go into a village where the entire population was sick with malaria, and

one and all would register a body temperature that would be classed as fever. This would not mean that 100 degrees Fahrenheit is a normal body temperature, nor yet that such people are healthy. In the same way, the prevalence or alleged prevalence of sexual immorality does not imply that it is right or normal, but only that a lot of people are very sinful.

Some modern psychological theories, pushed to extremes, have led many people to think that a chaste life, even for an unmarried person, is an impossibility and may be psychologically damaging. The psychology pioneered by Sigmund Freud has led to a great deal of this kind of thinking — perhaps much more than Freud himself ever intended. This is undoubtedly one factor in the prevalence of immorality. Another factor is the breakdown of belief in the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible. Men like Wellhausen and Driver were ivory tower scholars who were interested only in their own specialties. These men probably had no intention of breaking down public morality. But their theories about the Old Testament led to the idea that the Ten Commandments are just a code of human customs, not a revelation of divine law. This breakdown of faith in the Bible as the inspired Word of God has its end product in a life that throws off all moral restraints. “Don’t fence me in” becomes the slogan of the person who rejects the authority of the Ten Commandments and other moral laws of the Bible.

The Book of Proverbs is truly eloquent in its inspired warnings against immorality. The description of the seductive wiles of the prostitute is graphic (5:1-14; 7:5-27). These passages are a strong antidote to this kind of temptation. They show in terrible realism the disgust, remorse, poverty and degradation which are the end product of this kind of sin. In 6:23-35 the moral and spiritual peril of committing adultery (i.e., with someone else’s wife, not necessarily a professional prostitute) is vividly described. This is not only a wicked sin, but senseless and irrational. Yet this kind of sin is glamorized by a good deal of the popular literature of our day, not to mention motion picture films and other media of entertainment. There is filth of this type openly for sale on newsstands today which would have landed the proprietors in jail a generation or two ago. Pornography, both of the crude type and of the more subtle, sophisticated type, is a big business today. These merchants are truly dealing in the souls of men and women, boys and girls. It is difficult to keep a clean mind today, and for the person who is not a Christian, probably impossible. But the Christian, by the grace of God, is enabled to do it, if not absolutely, yet increasingly.

Another temptation is that to suretyship (6:1; 11:15; 20:16; 17:18). We may wonder why this practice is so emphatically warned against. These texts do not mean that suretyship is always wrong or sinful, but that in most cases it is an improper and dangerous practice. A little reflection will show why this is so.

If a man has a million dollars, and becomes surety for the obligations of a foreign student in college which may run to a thousand or two dollars at most, there is neither sin nor danger in that arrangement, because the guarantor is financially able to make good on the

guarantee without damage to himself or his family. But suppose that a man with a family to support and no resources beyond his home, automobile (needed in his business) and a very modest savings account, is prevailed upon to sign a note for a friend who is borrowing some thousands of dollars to start a business. The guarantor here risks everything he has. If he has to make good on the guarantee he may lose his savings account, car and home and be reduced to utter poverty. A man does not have a moral right to undertake such a risk even for a friend. We are commanded to love our neighbor as ourself, but the man who undertakes suretyship, of the type just described, is loving his neighbor more than himself. He is loving his neighbor out of balance with his obligations to himself and his own family, obligations which are primary and which God has placed upon him. Suretyship thus becomes a financial, social and spiritual trap and snare. Those whom God by His saving grace has made free men are not to allow themselves to become involved in this way. There is more than one way to get into slavery, and improper suretyship is one of the ways that may destroy the Christian’s true freedom under God.

#### Questions:

1. What three special temptations are warned against in Proverbs?
2. What may be the proper interpretation of Proverbs 31:6?
3. Why did Jesus refuse to drink the wine mingled with gall?
4. How is alcoholic delirium described in Proverbs?
5. In what ways is the problem of temperance more difficult today than in Solomon’s day?
6. What kind of personality type is likely to become an alcoholic?
7. What can Christian people do to help the type of person who uses alcohol as an escape from life?
8. How can we oppose the prevalent advertising of liquors?
9. What great error is involved in Dr. Kinsey’s books on sex behaviour?
10. How has the psychology of Freud led to immorality in practice?
11. How has Biblical criticism, such as that of Wellhausen and Driver, tended to break down Christian morality?
12. What is suretyship, and why is it warned against in Proverbs?
14. Why are we not commanded to love our neighbor more than ourself?

The End

## *Religious Terms Defined*

**EXALTATION OF CHRIST.** "Christ's exaltation consisteth in his rising again from the dead 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" (Shorter Catechism, 28).

**EXCOMMUNICATION.** The final censure of church discipline, by which the offending person is solemnly excluded from the visible Church until he gives evidence of repentance.

**EXEGESIS.** The drawing out of the meaning of a text of Scripture by a painstaking, accurate study of its words, context, historical setting and background. (The too common use of the word exegesis as if meant opinion or subjective personal preference is entirely wrong. The exegesis of a text of Scripture is not a matter of personal preference or subjective opinion any more than the solution of a problem in mathematics is a matter of personal preference or subjective opinion. Every text of Scripture means just what it means, neither more nor less. Exegesis is a sound method of finding out what it means.)

**EXHORTATION.** The act of presenting to a person motives calculated to move him to action in the performance of duty. Christian doctrine is to be accompanied and followed by Christian exhortation, that the hearers may be stirred up to a practical profession of Christianity.

**EXPIATION.** The canceling of sin through a sacrifice offered to God, involving the shedding of blood and the death of the victim. Under the Old Testament ceremonial law expiatory sacrifices were offered to God as an atonement for men's sins. These, however, could not in themselves be effective to cancel sin. Their effectiveness was due to the fact that they prefigured Christ's sacrifice of Himself, which truly and effectively cancels sin.

**EXTREME UNCTION.** One of the non-Biblical sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, in which those about to die are anointed with oil and prayed for by the priest.

**FAITH.** An attitude of belief and trust, founded upon evidence which is regarded as adequate. The dependence of a person on the truthfulness and reliability of another person.

**HISTORICAL FAITH.** A mere assent to the facts of the Gospel as a matter of history, as that Christ was born in Bethlehem, crucified on Calvary, etc., without personal trust in Christ for salvation. Historical faith is necessary for salvation, but not sufficient without personal trust or commitment.

**FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.** "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel" (Shorter Catechism, 86).

**OBJECT OF FAITH.** That on which faith ter-

minates and rests. All faith has an object, and this object is, ultimately, a person. The immediate object of faith may be a proposition or a doctrine (Heb. 11:3), but the ultimate object of faith is the person on whose testimony we believe the proposition or doctrine. Thus faith in the Bible is ultimately faith in God whose revelation the Bible is.

**SAVING FAITH.** See definition of "Faith in Jesus Christ", above.

**TEMPORARY FAITH.** A faith which superficially resembles saving faith, but which does not proceed from a heart renewed by the Holy Spirit, and which therefore cannot endure persecution or tribulation for Christ's sake. Such temporary faith often results from artificial "high pressure" methods of evangelism, which induce many to profess faith in Christ who later fall away from this profession to their former worldly life.

**FALL OF MAN.** The lapse of the human race from its original state of moral perfection to a state of sin and misery, which took place by the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in eating the forbidden fruit.

**FATE.** The heathen notion that all events are determined by a blind, impersonal, irresistible force which operates regardless of the free agency of men. This is very different from the Calvinistic doctrine of foreordination, which teaches that the infinitely wise, loving, righteous, personal God has determined all that comes to pass, including the motives, decisions and acts of all free agents such as angels and men.

**FLESH.** The term "flesh" is used in Scripture in various senses, as: (1) a part of the bodily organism of man, Gen. 2:21. (2) Man in his human weakness, in contrast to the permanence and power of God, Isa. 40:6. (3) Man in his present mortal condition, in contrast to the immortality of the resurrection, I Cor. 15:50. (4) Man as totally depraved and corrupted by sin; man in his condition of enmity against God; man's sinful nature, Rom. 8:8. When the term "flesh" is used with a bad meaning, it does not mean the human body, but the entire sinful nature of man, including the soul or spirit.

**FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD.** The knowledge of God by which, from all eternity, He has known all things that will ever come to pass. This foreknowledge of God is based upon His own decrees of foreordination, and is not in any way contingent or dependent upon acts of His creatures. (See Westminster Confession of Faith, II.2).

**FOREORDINATION.** God's determination, from all eternity, of every fact in the universe, including every event that takes place in time. God's foreordination is not based upon His foreknowledge, but upon the counsel of His own will. Eph. 1:11. Westminster Confession of Faith, III.1,2. Shorter Catechism, 7).

**FORGIVENESS.** God's act of canceling the guilt of a person's sin, and remitting its legal penalty. Also

called pardon. Forgiveness is possible only because of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the sinner's Substitute, to whom the sinner's guilt was imputed by God, and by whom the sinner's penalty was vicariously borne.

**FORMALISM.** That perversion of Christianity in which emphasis is placed upon the mere external observance of the ordinances of worship, while the heart remains unaffected by the power of godliness (II Tim. 3:5). Formalism affects all churches, not only those with an elaborate ritual, but also those which insist upon Scriptural purity and simplicity of worship.

**FREE AGENCY.** The capacity of rational beings, including man, for making decisions and performing actions in accordance with their own nature, without constraint from outside their own personality. Free agency means only freedom of the personality from external constraint; it does not mean freedom of the will from the personality as a whole. The unsaved sinner is a free agent, but because his nature is sinful, his free decisions and acts are always sinful too. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

**FREE WILL.** A misleading and incorrect term for free agency. Man is a free agent, but his will is not free from the rest of his personality. The will is free in the sense that it is not determined by anything outside of the person; it is not free in the sense that it can operate independently of character and motives.

**FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.** The many-sided holiness of life which is progressively produced in every true Christian by the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification, and which attains its complete perfection at the Christian's death. Gal. 5:22,23.

**FUTURE LIFE.** The "world" or "age" to come, which will follow the present age in which we are now living. The present world is the world of history; the future world will be the world of eternity. Scripture divides the life of man into "this world (age)" and "the world (age) to come" (Matt. 12:32; Eph. 1:21). The future life is "the life which is life indeed" (I Tim. 6:18, ARV) — the life in which we will really and fully be alive.

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## *Calvinism And The Altar Call*

By the Rev. G. I. Williamson

The purpose of this article can be briefly stated: it is to examine the altar-call method in the light of the Biblical system of truth. We say 'Biblical system of truth' because it is our conviction that this is what Calvinism really is.

"If anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist," wrote C. H. Spurgeon a century ago, "I should reply, 'He is one who says, Salvation is of the Lord.' I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this. This is the essence of the Bible. 'He only is my rock and my salvation.' Tell me anything contrary to this truth, and it will be heresy; tell me a heresy, and I shall find its essence here — that it was departed from this great, this fundamental, this rock-like truth: 'God is my rock and my salvation.'"

Anyone who understands the true genius of Calvinism will therefore realize that there is nothing against which it "sets its face with more firmness than every form and degree of autosoterism." The simple assertion that man — sinful and fallen man — can do at least something to save himself, or to help save himself, or at least prepare himself to be saved, is utterly anathema to the Calvinist. And herein lies the reason for a careful evaluation of the modern altar-call method of evangelism. For, as Spurgeon again has expressed it,

"... since we are nothing without the Holy Spirit, we must avoid in our work anything which is not of Him. We want these dead people raised, and we cannot raise them; only the Spirit of God can do that." Well, then, "let us take care that there is nothing which would grieve the Spirit or cause Him

to go away from us." "A headlong zeal even for Christ may lead into a ditch. What we think to be very wise may be very unwise; and where we deem that at least a little 'policy' may come in, that little may taint the whole. . ."

But what do we mean when we speak of 'the altar-call method?' We mean every effort on the part of an evangelist or minister to get an overt and immediate reaction to the gospel in some humanly appointed act. It can be an appeal to 'come forward' to some place before the pulpit. It can be an invitation to stand, or raise the hand, or sign a card, or something similar. The variations are no doubt legion, but the basic features are these — (1) an immediate response is insisted upon — (2) the response is registered in some visible way — and (3) the manner in which the response is registered is prescribed in the directions that are given.

### SCRIPTURE

Let us begin our examination of this practice with a brief consideration of the Calvinistic doctrine of scripture.

"The whole counsel of God," says the Westminster Confession of Faith, "concerning all things necessary for His own glory, (and) 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."

The Bible, in other words, is the only rule of faith and practice. And the obvious question is this: does the Bible teach us to use the altar-call method?

Probably no greater season of evangelistic effort can be imagined than that which is infallibly recorded for us in the New Testament book of Acts. What urgency and zeal we find! The word of God was faithfully preached. Sinners were commanded to “repent . . . and be converted” (Acts 3:19). Many turned to the Lord, and daily there were added to the Church such as were saved. But where do we find any direction — by way of precept, example, or even indirect suggestion — that men were to ‘come forward,’ or ‘hold up the hand,’ or ‘stand,’ or ‘fill out a card?’ Where do we even find a testimony of silence that would leave room for any such method? No, the inspired account informs us, for “when they heard” — when they heard the sermon of Peter — “they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). The sermon was all that Peter gave them. They had to ask what to do, because no directions had been given. But when they did ask, what did the Apostle say? He simply said, “repent, and be baptized” (2:38)! And so it is throughout the entire book, for the fact is that we cannot find a single instance of the use of this present day method.

We realize, of course, that for some people this will hardly seem important. There is a very wide-spread idea today that so long as we preach the basic truths of the Bible, it isn’t very important what method we use. But how can anyone really think this way who seriously honors the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and practice? Perhaps you are familiar with the wonderful statement in Chapter XXI of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

“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.”

Now think of what this means in connection with the altar call. Isn’t this usually a part of a worship service? If the “ordinary” elements of “religious worship” are what the Westminster Divines thought they were — the reading of the Scriptures — the preaching of the gospel — prayer — the singing of the psalms — and so on, then it would certainly be hard to deny that the altar-call is commonly made a part of a worship service. But if true worship is only what God has commanded in His word, then how can we justify the use of this method? How can we justify it unless — and until — someone has demonstrated that this is either expressly set down in Scripture, or that it may be legitimately deduced from Scripture?

#### MAN’S TOTAL DEPRAVITY

A second great teaching of the Calvinistic system, which I cannot reconcile with the altar-call method, is the total depravity of man. We believe that man is “dead in sin.” He is “utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good.” He has “wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good.” And He is “not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.” That is why we not only speak of man’s total depravity, but also of his consequent total inability.

But isn’t it rather obvious that the altar-call method tends to obscure this very important truth? This is certainly plain enough when the evangelist is openly Arminian. How many times have you heard Dr. Billy Graham say — in the plainest possible terms — that every man has the power to repent and believe in order to be saved? The whole Arminian conception of fallen man rests upon this great delusion: that he has the power to make a decision for Christ. If we believed that — if we believed that fallen and sinful man does have this power and ability within himself — then we too would incline to think in terms of this method. We would want a system in which man’s autonomy is respected. But what are we to do if we believe no such doctrine? What are we to do if we believe that man, of himself, can do absolutely nothing pertaining to the procurement of life and salvation? Will we not then want to be careful to avoid any method which tends to obscure this truth?

Calvinists will sometimes say that we should “make our appeal to sinners just as though they can respond, even though we know they cannot, apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.” But is this really true? Is it not rather true that our methods should reflect the message that we preach? We certainly should command men to repent and believe. We should also command men to be perfect even as the Father in heaven is perfect. Man’s duty is never limited by his ability. But do we urge men to be perfect just as we would if we knew that they were able to be perfect? Not at all. We urge men to be perfect and at the same time we tell them that there is no possible way in which they can meet this demand. The very purpose of our preaching these truths is to make them see that that which is impossible with man is nevertheless possible with God! And the same may be said of this command to repent and believe. We want them to see that they must repent and believe, and yet the same time that this very thing is beyond their natural powers. Herein lies the tremendous difference.

“What the Arminian wants to do” says C. H. Spurgeon “is to arouse man’s activity: what we want to do is to kill it once for all — to show him that he is lost and ruined, and that his activities are not now at all equal to the work of conversion; that he must look upward. They seek to make the man stand up: we seek to bring him down, and make him feel that there he lies in the hand of God, and that his business is to submit himself to God, and cry aloud, ‘Lord, save, or we perish.’ We hold that man is never so near grace as when he begins to feel he can do nothing at all. When he says, ‘I can pray, I can believe, I can do this, and I can do the other,’ marks of self-sufficiency and arrogance are on his brow.”

We should never act as if men — fallen and sinful men — are something that they are not. We should never allow them to think more highly of themselves than they ought. No, we should simply ‘tell it like it is,’ and leave the rest to God.

Some years ago the writer was teaching a group of people the basic doctrines of the Calvinistic system. In that group was a person who had long resisted the overtures of grace. Urging and persuading were to no

avail. Invitations were refused. But then came a study of the total depravity of man. We got into this awesome and awful truth that sinful man can do nothing to deliver himself. Now human wisdom would surely say that this was the wrong approach — the surest possible way to turn such a person away, once and for all. But such was not to be. No, but rather was it the sovereign pleasure of God to use this very truth to set her free. Suddenly she stood up — quite literally — and, without any direction from anyone, she said, ‘if this is true, then there is no hope for me!’ But of course there was hope for her now as never before.

#### THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

But this leads us on to another of these great Calvinistic principles. For we also believe in the absolute sovereignty of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit — who is the sole author of regeneration — works when, and where, and as, He will.

“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is every one who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

But isn't this also obscured by the use of the invitation system? Oh yes, perhaps the Holy Spirit is mentioned. Perhaps it is even said that no one can be born again except by His power. Yet for all that is said that we can appreciate and approve, the fact remains that the all-important truth is obscured. It is obscured in much the same way that it is in Roman Catholic teaching. Here too we find a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and of grace. No one can be born again without this power of the Holy Spirit. But how does the Spirit work in the Roman Catholic view of things? That is the crucial point. And when we learn that the Church is a kind of storehouse of grace, and that everything is accomplished by sacramental means, we also see that the one who really performs the decisive act is the sinner. For it is he alone who determines whether or not this tremendous power is released. This is what Warfield called the power-house view of grace. And all the talk about the tremendous generator, and the transformers, and wires, cannot disguise the fact that everything depends upon the one who throws the switch. But isn't it really the same conception that is suggested by the altar-call method? Is not the impression created that the power of the Spirit is there — even in an unusual degree — and that it is readily available to all — but that it is man himself who has to turn on this power? Once the meeting is ended, and the invitation has been allowed to pass, the opportunity will be gone! The power will not be there, somehow, in the same manner and degree — within reach, as it were. Isn't this the impression we receive? Isn't the altar-call itself thought of as the means of releasing this power?

But why should we think of the power of the Spirit this way? It is true, thank God, that the word of God is quick and powerful. God does use the foolishness of preaching to effectually call His people. But how does He accomplish His purpose? Is it not by having Paul plant and Apollos water? Isn't the word like a seed that is planted in order to grow “we know not how?” And is it not God himself — in His own time and way — who gives this increase? If man is dead — and the Spirit quickens whom He will — then what do the surroundings have to

do with it? One must indeed hear the true gospel preached. But this of itself is not sufficient.

“If Jesus Christ were to stand on this platform tonight” said Spurgeon, in a great Sermon on God's shalls from Isaiah 53:10, “what would many people do with him? If he were to come and say, ‘Here I am, I love you, will you be saved by me? not one of you would consent if you were left to your will. He himself said, ‘No man can come to me except the Father . . . draw him.’ Ah! we want that: and here we have it. They shall come. They shall come. Christ shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.”

The writer was brought to repentance in a dance hall. Is there a more unlikely place? Or do we not rather err to use such terms at all. Should we not expect the sovereign Spirit to work in ‘unlikely’ ways? The altar-call system, to say the very least, does not suggest this truth. It does not minister to a forming of a proper conception of the Spirit's work. It rather tends to inculcate this notion of the sovereignty of the human will.

#### THE ORDO SALUTIS

This leads us to the Calvinistic view of the ‘ordo salutis,’ the scriptural order of the application of redemption.

“Do we become regenerate, or reborn” asks Iain Murray, “because of our faith and repentance, or is faith the effect and result of regeneration?”

This question gets at the root. According to our historic Reformed Confessions, regeneration is logically prior to repentance and faith. It is not until *after* a man has been regenerated that he can see and enter into the Kingdom. And no man who has been thus born from above can fail to respond to the invitations of grace. Because the very nature of man is radically changed, in an instant of time, by the power of the Holy Spirit, there will be a capacity to understand, and accept, the offer of gospel grace.

But if this be so, then what possible assistance can the altar-call render? If a man is born of the Spirit, he will see and enter into the Kingdom of God. He will do this by repentance toward sin and faith in Jesus Christ. If he is not regenerate, he will not be able to understand or receive the things of the Spirit. The natural man cannot know the things of God. Of what use is the altar-call then? The man who is regenerated has no need that can be supplied by it, and the man who is not regenerated has a need that it cannot supply. The only thing the altar-call can do, then, is to seriously confuse the issue. The one real issue is presented in the divinely authorized call to repent and believe. But here, in the use of the altar-call, this is by no means clear. The sinner is now summoned to do two different things as if they were really one. He is summoned to do something that he can never do except he be regenerated by the Spirit. But he is also summoned to do something that the natural man too can do. And it is certainly doubtful, to say the least, that the sinner is aware of the difference. It is greatly to be feared that he does not at all realize that there is a vast difference between the two — that one is commanded of God, and the other not — that one is essential to salvation — and the other not — and that the one cannot be done by

man's native power at all — and that the other can!

We cannot escape the conviction, therefore, that it is the Arminian view of the 'ordo salutis' that underlies this altar-call system. It certainly is an historic fact that the invitation system was developed by Arminian evangelists. Think of the names of such men as Finney, Moody, Sunday, and Graham. In Billy Graham's well known book entitled *Peace With God* we have the matter set before us clearly. The chapter on man's conversion comes before the chapter on the new birth. Man repents and believes in order that he might be born again. This is the great assumption in his exhortations in these Crusades — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — comes to a focus in terms of a universal grace that is available to all men alike. And man's autonomous decision — to get up and come forward — is the final or ultimate thing.

#### ASSURANCE

Does not this invitation system also contradict the Calvinistic doctrine of assurance? The Westminster Confession warns us that "unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favour of God and estate of salvation." It was for this reason that the Puritans were so careful in their efforts to bring sinners to repentance!

"Years ago," wrote Spurgeon, "when people were converted, there used to be such a thing as conviction of sin. The great subsoil plough of soul-anguish was used to tear deep into the soul. Fire also burned in the mind with exceeding heat: as men saw sin, and felt its dreadful results . . . but now we are dinned with bragging about rapid salvations."

"It is to be feared" he cries, in another sermon, "that some zealous brethren have preached the doctrine of justification by faith not only so boldly and so plainly, but also so badly and so out of all connection with other truth, that they have led men into presumptuous confidences . . . to stand up and cry, 'believe, believe, believe,' without explaining what is to be believed — to lay the whole stress of salvation upon faith without explaining what salvation is, and showing that it means deliverance from the power as well as from the guilt of sin — may seem to a fervent revivalist to be the proper thing for the occasion, but those who have watched the result of such teaching have had grave cause to question whether as much hurt may not be done by it as good."

What would Spurgeon say today — when ignorance of Scripture truth is compounded — as an even greater stress is put upon this act of coming forward? What can this possibly do but contribute to hasty action on the part of those who lack an adequate understanding? And then, because they have done this thing that is constantly held before them as of decisive importance, they at once fall victim to a false assurance as well! One witness testifies that these very words were spoken by Billy Graham to those who came forward!

"You have come tonight to Jesus Christ, you have come to receive Him into your heart. . . He says, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' You accept that. The past

is forgiven. . . He cannot even see your sins. Accept by faith that He comes into your heart. . . you are going to be tempted, but you are His child. . ."

Just contrast this, for a moment, with that soul-searching second question of the Heidelberg Catechism. "How many things are necessary for you to know, that you . . . may live and die happily?" There are three things, answers the instructor: "first, how great my sins and misery are. . . second, how I am delivered from all my sins and misery . . . (and) third, how I am to be thankful to God for such deliverance." Right away I realize, as I hear this, that I must not be deceived. I realize that I must not lightly assume, on the basis of a single momentary act, that all is well with my soul! But is this not the very evil that the altar-call tends to produce?

#### GOOD WORKS AND CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

Now we realize that there is nothing new or original in what we have been saying. There are, however, some aspects of the Calvinistic system that also bear on this matter which have not always received the attention they deserve. To this we now direct our attention.

When, then, is the act by which a sinner responds to the altar-call? We cannot call it an act of faith, for faith is not a physical act at all. Faith is not the sinner doing something himself. It is rather the sinner relying upon the Son of God to do something for him. "Faith in Jesus Christ" says the Westminster Shorter Catechism "is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel" (Q. 86). But if response to the altar-call is not an act of faith, is it perhaps a good work? No, not according to the Calvinistic faith. For "good works are only such as God hath commanded in his holy word," says the Westminster Confession, "and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intention." It is often argued that the altar-call is a good work, of course. Indeed, one would wonder how it could be defended otherwise. For "good works . . . are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith." A Calvinist, realizing that regeneration precedes conversion — and that conversion consists of repentance and faith — would surely have to argue for the altar-call (if he argued for it at all) on the grounds that it is an acceptable example of these "fruits and evidences" of faith. But when we remember that things devised by men are not really good works at all, we again see the lack of a Biblical foundation for this method.

And here we are immediately confronted with the whole question of our liberty of conscience. "God alone is Lord of the conscience," says the Calvinist, "and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it (that is, in addition to it), if matters of faith or worship." It is commonly argued, against this, that many people have been saved by means of the altar-call method. The inference is that if many have been saved, then surely a few — a very few — cannot have rights that can stand in the way of the many. But it is right here that the true glory of Calvinism is seen. For if God alone is

Lord — if He has left the conscience free — so that He alone has the right to say 'do this,' or 'do that' — then no amount of supposed human welfare can have the slightest weight against this sacred consideration. And here again we find the invitation system wanting. If even one person attending a religious service is presented with a crisis of conscience, so that he feels constrained to do something that God does not require, then the whole method is wrong.

#### PUBLIC PROFESSION

Very close to this is the solemn and conscientious nature of a public profession of faith. No one, says the Westminster Confession, should ever take a solemn religious vow without a clear understanding of "the weightiness of so solemn an act." He should never promise anything that he is not persuaded, on good ground, that he is able to perform. And here, again, the altar-call method fails. It is argued, of course, that people often professed their faith in the Apostolic Church immediately after they first heard the gospel. And this certainly seems to be the case on the day of Pentecost, for example (Acts 2:41). It would seem equally certain that the Philippian jailer professed his faith very soon after he heard the gospel message (Acts 17:33,34). But even so, there is evidence to support the conclusion that profession was only made — and accepted — with due preparation. After all, these great events that constitute the content of the gospel message did not happen in a corner (Acts 26:26). People were well aware of the identity and claims of the Son of man. They were also aware of what it had cost him to make these claims! Thus the whole situation was such as to discourage anyone from rashly professing this unpopular faith. And surely Paul had ample opportunity that night in Philippi, to assure himself that the jailer did comprehend the meaning of professing faith in Christ. But who could possibly argue that the invitation system provides any such thing?

It has always seemed to us that those who use the altar-call ought to be consistent. They ought to immediately baptize those who respond to the invitation. This is certainly what the Apostles did. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized," says Luke, "and the same day there added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). It is said that Charles Finney originally defended the invitation system as the moral equivalent to baptism. But no one, as far as I know, has ever been willing to baptize forthwith those who respond to the altar-call. And we can only ask: why? Is it because it is really not considered a reliable indication of conversion even by those who use it?

Whatever our views may be as to the proper mode — and subjects — of baptism, no Calvinist will baptize a convert who does not first make a credible profession of faith. A person must be able to show, by word of mouth, that he does have an essentially correct conception of the gospel message. He must be willing to tell us that he receives Jesus Christ as he is freely offered in the gospel. And furthermore there must be at least a good report concerning a manner of life consistent with this profession. Only upon the basis of such a credible profession will we baptize this person. But the very

arguments that support this view of the sacrament, necessarily argue against the altar-call method.

Imagine, if you will, the furore that would arise if one of our popular evangelists today would simply make baptism the focal point of the gospel invitation. A simple man, reading his Bible, might wonder why no one has done this! But you and I know the reason. It is because these men who use the altar-call method have no Biblical doctrine of the Church. (We are not saying that they realize this. We are merely saying that this is the way it is). Baptism is a sacrament of the Church. But the whole movement that has popularized the altar-call method is outside the visible Church. The Westminster Confession says "Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God" to His "catholic visible Church." He has given these ordinances to the visible Church "for the gathering and perfecting of the saints." Well, then, says John Kennedy (not the President, but the great Scottish preacher back in Dwight L. Moody's time):

"What right has any individual, not authorised by a Church of Christ to do so — to insist on a public confession on the part of any one? Even the Church can admit to public confession only after trial. And the admission must be in connection with the dispensation of the appointed sealing ordinances. But here is a stranger, who never saw their faces before, hurrying people . . . to make public profession of faith, thus associating them, without possibility of trial, with the Christians of (that) locality, and involving the credit of religion in their future conduct before the world. This, surely, is both unwise and presumptuous."

Of course this does not have the same force when the altar-call method is used by the local Church itself. Yet the very fact that this method has been so commonly used against the good order of the Church, seems to us a powerful argument against its use by the Church!

"When a crowd of seemingly anxious souls gathered about" our Lord, says Rev. Kennedy, "instead of urging them to confession, he tested them by searching doctrine — and the result was, that instead of crowding an inquiry room, they 'went away and walked no more with Him.' "

#### SUMMARY

But perhaps it is time to turn again to the main thrust of our argument. The most common reason given for the use of the altar-call is simply the fact that souls are saved! No doubt they are, in spite of the method. But even the pragmatic argument should by now begin to wear thin. Twenty years ago, when the Rev. Billy Graham suddenly sky-rocketed into prominence, this argument was hard to withstand. Calvinists were often silenced — and humbled — when they were told that Graham's way of doing it was much better than their way of not doing it. But surely, by now, with all these marvelous crusades — and the multiplied thousands of decisions — the evidence ought to be in. But the incredible thing is that there has been no improvement. Even Graham himself admits that we are going down hill at 'break-neck speed.' Why, then, should we any longer swallow the once invincible argument from results!

We say it is time to turn the pragmatic argument around. It is time to tell the world that this whole business has only been a sorry substitute for the thing we really need. What we really need is just a mighty revival of the Calvinistic faith. We need a mighty resurgence of the kind of preaching that refuses to pander in any way to this so-called autonomous man. Too long we have been afraid to 'tell it like it really is.' Too long have we been reluctant to tell men that they are dead, and that they can never ever be saved at all except by the sovereignty of grace! Spurgeon saw it long ago — when the Church was beginning to depart from the old Calvinistic moorings — this is what he said:

"Ah! says somebody, 'I fear that this kind of preaching will be very discouraging to a great many people.' Well, how will it discourage them? 'It will discourage them from trying to save themselves.' That is the very thing I want to do. I would not only like to discourage them from attempting the impossible task, but to cast them into despair concerning it. When a man utterly despairs of being able to save himself, it is then that he cries to God to save him, so I believe that we cannot do a man a better turn than to discourage him from ever resting upon anything that he can do towards saving himself."

And Spurgeon practiced what he preached. (Or should I say that his sermons constantly exemplified this principle)?

"Sinner" cries Spurgeon in a sermon on the new birth "I warn thee thou canst never cause thyself to be born again, and though the new birth is absolutely necessary, it is absolutely impossible to thee — unless God the spirit shall do it."

"You" he says in the close of an Exeter Hall sermon "you who have not been converted, and have no part or lot in the present salvation — to you I say this much: man, man, you are in the hand of God. Whether you shall live to reach home today or not, depends absolutely on His will."

Now does that sound like a man who preached without confidence and hope? Well, it wasn't that way at all. To the contrary. Spurgeon was mighty precisely because he saw the true source of hope.

"I know this," he cried, "if the Lord willed it, there is no man so desperately wicked here this morning that he would not be made now to seek for mercy,

however infidel he might be; however rooted in his prejudices against the Gospel: Jehovah hath but to will it, and it is done. Into thy dark heart, O thou who hast never seen the light, the light would stream; if he did but say, 'Let there be light,' there would be light. Thou mayest bend thy fist and lift up thy mouth against Jehovah; but he is thy master yet — thy master to destroy thee, if thou goest on in thy wickedness; but thy master to save thee now — to change thy heart and turn thy will — as he turneth the rivers of water."

Do you see why he abhorred the invitation system? It was simply because he knew something so very much better. He knew the power of the Calvinistic faith.

"There is something in these doctrines" he says "that drives right into the soul of man. Other forms of doctrine run off like oil from a slab of marble, but this chisels them, cuts into the very quick. They cannot help feeling there is something here, which if they kick against, it nevertheless has force, and they must ask themselves, 'Is the thing true or not?'"

Yes, that is the crux of the matter. If we were only preaching this Biblical system of truth, there would be no need at all for the altar-call method. For it is in truth nothing but a poor human substitute for the power that has so long departed from our preaching. It is an invented means of getting people to respond to a powerless gospel that can move none of itself. And this is not the gospel that you and I should want to preach. If our preaching has no power, let us face that fact. Let us lament it. Let us get down on our knees and cry out to God because of it. And let us stay there until he anoints our lips to preach the gospel of grace. Then let us expect see again what alone will delight our hearts. It is described in these words by the prophet Ezekiel.

"So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." (37:7-10).

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## *How Can I Know I Am Saved?*

By J. G. Vos

Suppose you are a student and would like to know, somewhere in the course of a term, what your standing in your courses is. One student says, "I have a feeling that I am doing all right." Another says, "I dreamed I passed all my courses." But both feelings and dreams are undependable. Another says, "You never can tell till the course is finished and the grades are filed in the

Registrar's office. The prof is unpredictable."

But suppose you become so interested in your work that you are studying for the sake of knowledge, not just to get grades. You have come to the point where you are really seeking education, not just a diploma. This would be good evidence that you are academically solvent. You

would not need to worry any more about passing or failing courses.

Now about assurance of salvation. One says, "I just have a feeling I am saved." Another says, "I heard a mysterious voice in the dark." "I put a whole five dollar bill in the collection plate." None of these is proper ground for assurance of salvation. Someone else says, "I believe in Jesus Christ, and salvation is promised to those who believe." Yes, but the Bible teaches that there is true faith and there is counterfeit faith. The devils also believe, and tremble with fear. How do I know that my faith is the real thing — true saving faith — not a mere mental assent or intellectual acceptance of truth? "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10); how do I know that I am not just believing with my head?

"And you did he make alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1); "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; . . . all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). The Christian is spiritually alive, alive to God and the things of God, though once he was dead in sin. What is the proof of life? Activity, growth proves the presence of life. In Manchuria hundreds of lotus seeds were found deep under a layer of peat. The radio-carbon test at the University of Chicago proved that these seeds were 1040 years old (with possible error of 210 years either way).

Were they dead or alive?

Stories about wheat found in the pyramids of Egypt, which grew on being planted, are all false. The wheat was found, but it never grew. It was as dead as the mummy of Tutankhamon. But the lotus seeds? The lotus is a beautiful water lily which grows in muddy ponds in the Orient. These thousand-year-old seeds looked dead — they were dry and hard. But a Japanese scientist proved they were alive. Nicked with a file and soaked in dilute sulphuric acid, the shell softened. Planted in a greenhouse, they germinated and grew, producing plants similar to a lotus grown in India today. Life was proved by growth. It was proved by the vital self-expression of the living germ in the seeds.

The Christian has the germ of life from the Holy Spirit. When this has produced some real and recognizable growth, you have a solid ground for believing that your faith is the real thing and that you really are saved. Life, spiritual life, is the real evidence of salvation, and growth is the real evidence of life. You can be sure you are saved when you find the life and growth in your own personality. The classic treatment of this subject in the Bible is in the First Epistle of John. Look up and ponder these references: I John 2:3; 2:16,17; 3:14. Now go back and read the whole Epistle — it is only five short chapters.

—The Goal Post

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## *The Unity Of Scripture*

By J. G. Vos

We live in a day when the truth and authority of the Bible is being denied or diluted on every hand. It is common today even in what are called evangelical circles to hold that the Bible is a collection of differing human insights mixed with legends, folklore and much pre-scientific nonsense. Those who take the Bible seriously as the infallible Word of God and rule of faith and life are ridiculed as narrow-minded, ignorant, bigoted Fundamentalists.

It is perfectly obvious that there is diversity in the Bible. Written by forty or more men over a period of about 1500 years, the Bible bears the stamp of many human personality types and backgrounds. The human diversity in the Bible is so obvious that there should be no argument about it. But beneath this diversity there is a unity which is deeper and more basic than the diversity. Back of the human authors is the real author of the Bible, God the Holy Spirit. It was God the Holy Spirit that inspired the human writers and led them to write exactly as they did. Thus the unity of the Bible is deeper than the diversity. The literary style of the Bible varies from human author to human author. But the message of the Bible is a unity, and it must be a unity just because it is from God. The Bible may contain some paradoxes and some unsolved problems, but we cannot admit that it contains the truly contradictory and still hold that it is really the Word of God. To say that Christ is both divine and human is a paradox. To say that God is sovereign and yet man is free is a paradox. These paradoxes in-

volve mysteries which human reason cannot solve. But to say that the Bible teaches that heaven and hell are real and that they are not real is a contradiction. To say that the Bible teaches that all men are born with a sinful nature and that all men are not born with a sinful nature is a contradiction. No one who holds that there are real contradictions in the Bible can really believe that the Bible is the Word of God. God is truth itself and He cannot contradict Himself.

Negative or destructive criticism of the Bible is widespread today. This negative criticism discounts the divine truth of the Bible and reduces it to a collection of human wisdom. This treatment of the Bible is sold to the public under the slogan "All scholars are agreed." This statement, of course, is an untruth. Only those scholars who place man's reason above God's revelation are agreed that the Bible is full of errors, contradictions, etc. There are scholars with doctors' degrees in Biblical studies from the world's greatest universities who nevertheless hold that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and free from errors.

Negative Biblical criticism starts with faith in man's reason as the highest test of truth. It proceeds on this basis to deny the infallibility of the Bible, the consistency of its religious message, the divine truth and authority of the whole, and the genuineness of many of its parts. It is common, for example, to say that the first five books — Genesis to Deuteronomy — were written by

several different authors at different times (given the symbols J, D, E, P) and finally put together hundreds of years after Moses' day by an unknown editor called "R" (for Redactor). Daniel is said to be a book written about 400 years after Daniel's time, when its prophecies had already come true as history. Isaiah is said to be the work of two or even three different men. This treatment destroys the integrity and authority of the Bible as the Word of God. It is treated as a merely human book, just one of the world's many great religious books.

Dr. Robert Dick Wilson, under whom the writer once studied Hebrew, was a learned defender of the Bible. He once said, "Remember, gentlemen, opinion is

not proof." Again, "Blessed is the man who will not trust a professor." And again, "No man living knows enough to prove any statement of the Old Testament to be untrue." Dr. Wilson learned every language that any part of the Bible was translated into down to 500 A.D. This man was a giant in the defence of the Bible. When someone tries to knock you down by saying that "All scholars are agreed" that the Bible is full of errors, etc., remind that person that there are many thorough and distinguished scholars who hold the contrary. This is not a question of scholarship — it is a question of basic approach; it concerns a person's basic philosophy of religion, his basic view of God, man and the universe.

—The Goal Post

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## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

Better go swimming and wet through our waters than drown by the way: especially now when truth suffereth, and great men bid Christ sit lower and contract Himself in less bounds, as if He took too much room.

—Samuel Rutherford

The bush has been burning these five thousand years, and no man yet saw the ashes of that fire.

—Samuel Rutherford

There cannot be a more humble soul than a believer. It is no pride in a drowning man to catch hold of a rock.

—Samuel Rutherford

We cannot understand God's providence till He hath done His work; he is an impatient spectator that cannot tarry till the last act, wherein all errors are reconciled.

—Thomas Manton

Thou darest not pray, Lord, let me have my worldly comforts, though they damn me; let me not be afflicted, though it do me good; and if thou darest not pray so, wilt thou murmur when God ordereth it so?

—Thomas Manton

Nothing can go amiss to him that is found in the way of duty.

—Thomas Manton

We cannot be saved by a dead Christ, who undertook but could not perform, and who still lies under

the Syrian sky, another martyr of impotent love. To save, He must pass not merely to but through death. If the penalty was fully paid, it cannot have broken him, it must needs have been broken upon Him. The resurrection of Christ is thus the indispensable evidence of His completed work, of His accomplished redemption.

—Benjamin B. Warfield

Men no longer cast us to the lions when we proclaim Jesus the only Saviour the world can know; His name the only name under heaven given among men wherein they must be saved. But the world of today endures with no more real patience than that older world two thousand years ago the arrogance of such lofty claims. This is above all others that have preceded it, the day of indifference, if not hostility, to the high claims of Jesus.

—Benjamin B. Warfield

The whole earthly career of Christ, including His death, was obedience in one aspect and suffering in another. Inasmuch as it was suffering, it expiated the sins of His people; inasmuch as it was obedience, it merited for them the covenanted reward of eternal life.

—A. A. Hodge

It is certainly as impious, and perhaps more foolish, to refuse to see clearly what God has revealed clearly, as it is to attempt to understand in detail undefined facts which God has seen fit to leave upon the verge of our horizon.

—A. A. Hodge

A believer of the nineteenth century knows much more than a believer of the tenth or third century could know, but that additional knowledge is ever dug from the selfsame gold mine; and that former generations stood behind in wealth of knowledge, can only be explained by the fact, that in those times the working of the mine

was not so far advanced.

—Abraham Kuyper

Many of our Calvinistic preachers do not feed God's people. They believe in election, but they do not preach it. They think particular redemption true, but they lock it up in the chest of their creed, and never bring it out in their ministry. They hold final perseverance, but they persevere in keeping quiet about it. They think there is such a thing as effectual calling, but they do not think they are called effectually to preach it. The great fault we find with many is, that they do not speak right out what they do believe. You could not know if you heard them fifty times what were the doctrines of the gospel, or what was their system of salvation. And hence God's people get starved.

—Charles H. Spurgeon

The abandonment of the name "Theology" and the substitution in its room of the name of "Science of Religion", was nothing but the honest consequence of the fundamentally atheistic point of view which was held.

—Abraham Kuyper

The deepest question in every Christian confession and dogmatics is this: How can God be one and, nevertheless, three? The degree of purity with which the other truths are presented depends upon the degree of accuracy with which this question is answered. The doctrine of the Trinity is the heart of God's entire revelation of redemption.

—Herman Bavinck

Reception of truth on the authority of God is an eminently religious act. Belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures can be appraised as an act of worship under given circumstances.

—Geerhardus Vos

Whenever the New Testament speaks about the inspiration of the Old, it is always in the most absolute, comprehensive terms. . . It is either "plenary inspiration" or nothing at all.

—Geerhardus Vos

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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.

UNCLE FRANK AND DANIEL, OR PEN PICTURES FROM BABYLON, by F. Ellsworth Powell. Published by the author, 610 Second Avenue, N.W., Largo, Florida 33540. 1970, pp. 220, paper cover. \$2.95.

A highly unconventional treatment of the prophetic element in Daniel. The viewpoint is premillennial. Well written and attractively printed, it nevertheless contains many things with which we cannot agree. The most debatable matters are presented with confident dogmatic certainty.

The cover bears a picture of one of the Mesopotamian Ziggurats, or staged pyramid-type towers, with the caption "Tower of Babel — Origin of Babylon." This picture is an artist's reconstruction, from existing ruins, of what a Ziggurat looked like. It cannot possibly be the real Tower of Babel of Genesis 11, for two reasons: (1) the Genesis Tower of Babel was never completed — the builders left off building and were scattered because the Lord had confounded their speech; (2) the Genesis Tower of Babel was a humanistic and anti-religious project (Gen. 11:4), whereas the Mesopotamian Ziggurats were definitely religious — each one had a temple to a god or gods on top. The cover of this book is therefore misleading.

Our main objection to this book, however, is based on the fact that the author regularly confounds the meaning of a prophecy with identification of the fulfillment. To say that Revelation 13 predicts a world

dictator who will attack Christianity is to state the meaning of the prophecy. To go on and say that Napoleon Bonaparte is the dictator, is to attempt to identify the fulfillment. The author indulges in this type of "interpretation" constantly. For example, on page 180 he sees the British Empire, the Soviet Union and the United States of America as the fulfillment of elements in Daniel's visions. In attempting to identify the fulfillment in this way, the author is of course dependent on ordinary fallible human historical records and hence can easily err. This is not to say that this book is devoid of value. The author is a strong Bible-believing Christian and resolutely defends the Bible as the infallible Word of God, and historic Christianity as credible truth.

—J. G. Vos

THE CHURCH AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY, by Francis Schaeffer. Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515. 1971, pp. 153. \$3.95.

This book is must reading for every pastor and elder in the Evangelical Church. One might be tempted to begin by writing all kinds of criticism. The author is guilty of over-simplification. He fails to openly espouse Reformed Theology etc., etc. But who in the Evangelical Church in such a clear and incisive way is attempting to give people an understanding of the sociological milieu of a post-Christian culture? Let no one criticize who is not ready to produce such a non-jargonistic and forthright series of books.

**The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century** is an attempt to show "how we got to be where we are" and then suggest how the Church of Christ must re-tool itself to be effective in its ministry today. Be prepared for a shock treatment when you read this book! There is here no narrow view of Christianity as a purely personal religion, but Dr. Schaeffer cogently places before us a comprehensive gospel that reaches men, nations, and the world. There is here a critique of our society that is given by a man who has read the books, seen the movies, observed the art forms of the modern world. There are here some words that are hard to take. Speaking of the silent majority who are living on the memory of a Christian Culture he says: "Their values are affluence (they are practical materialists) and personal peace at any price. They are no closer to the true Christian than are the hippie community and the New Left. In fact they are probably further away. . ." (p. 35). Writing to self-righteous Evangelicals he says: "The danger is that the evangelical, being so committed to middle class norms and often even elevating these norms to an equal place with God's absolutes, will slide without thought into accepting the Establishment elite. . ." (p. 37). He calls upon Christians to be real revolutionaries. We must become part of a revolution based on the propositional truth of God's Word — a revolution in which we are pitted against everybody who has turned from God. Dr. Schaeffer insists that the Church of Jesus Christ cannot be in any man's camp. "At times you will seem to be saying exactly the same thing as the New Left elite or the Establishment elite. If there is social injustice, say there is social injustice. If we need order, say we need order. In these cases, and at these specific points, we would be cobelligerents. But do not align yourself as though you are in either of these camps. You are an ally of neither. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is different from either — totally different." (p. 37)

The author also calls upon the Church to practice the orthodoxy of community within and between Christian groups, and to balance form and freedom while implementing a sense of community in the Church. The last two chapters of the book demonstrate Dr. Schaeffer's attempt to speak to the issues of the day. One chapter is entitled "Adultery and Apostasy — The Bride and Bridegroom Theme." In this chapter he clearly puts his finger on the spiritual adultery and apostasy that exists in the Church. It is the issue of loyalty to the living God and spiritual adultery that is the issue today. After reading this chapter, a self-righteous ecclesiastical separatist is ready to give a resounding amen to Schaeffer's words. But he is not finished with his writing. He closes with a chapter entitled "The Mark of the Christian." That mark is love — a love for each other in Christ and those who are out of Christ. It is a love that expresses itself in a practical and visible oneness.

Before I write any word of criticism I want to urge that all of the readers of this review buy all of Dr. Schaeffer's books as soon as possible. I believe that they provide a Biblical critique of our culture and present a Reformed answer to our dilemma. However I would be unfaithful to the responsibility of a reviewer if I did not raise some questions which I trust will be part of a continuing dialogue with the author. He cogently demonstrates how our culture has rejected the idea of a

reasonable universe and a reasonable God. But does he mean to imply that what we need is a return to the rationalistic approach to Christianity which was so much a part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Evangelical Christian apologetic? A reformational view of our "revolutionary task" certainly calls upon us to take man's fallen nature and Biblical pre-suppositions seriously. Also one could wish that Dr. Schaeffer would state clearly whether he believes that Christ's redemption has to do primarily with the individual and that there is a social concern that then emanates from this individual redemption. Or is there a coordinate redemption for the individual as well as the structures of society and the world?

Dr. Schaeffer also rejects the regulative principle of worship which is a tenet of the Reformed Creeds. He says: "anything the New Testament does not command in regard to Church form is a freedom to be exercised under the leadership of the Holy Spirit for that particular time and place." (p. 67). It is true that we in the Reformed Tradition need to discuss what things are essential to worship and those things which are "ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence according to the general rules of the Word." (Westminster Confession of Faith chapter 1:6.) But those who have held that whatever is not commanded by the Word of God is forbidden in the worship of God have usually made the distinction between the circumstances of worship and the worship itself. It seems to this reviewer that if the regulative principle is abandoned, then there is no guardian of the purity of worship.

In spite of these few reservations, we owe Dr. Schaeffer our deepest thanks and can only pray that God will enable him to produce more books that help us understand our culture and enable us to think Christianly about it.

—John H. White

**A WORD TO THE ANXIOUS**, by Kenneth A. MacRae. The Drummond Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland. Copies obtainable at cost price from Mr. George Fraser, 11 Windsor Crescent, Portree, Isle of Skye, Scotland. 7 pages, pocket size, paper cover. (Write to above address for prices).

This little booklet is an excellent tract by the late Rev. Kenneth A. MacRae, of Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, Scotland. It is simple and direct in its presentation, and thoroughly Biblical in its content. This brief message is well calculated to guard against the twin perils of presumption and discouragement in the Christian life.

—J. G. Vos

**REST ASSURED** (Anonymous). Faith, Prayer and Tract League, 934 Eleventh St., N.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504. 6-page folded tract, pocket size. \$.20 per doz., \$.95 per 100.

This is a brief but valuable tract on Assurance — what it is and how we get it. The presentation is simple, direct and Biblical. This tract can be very helpful to

Christians who are troubled by doubts about their salvation. It avoids the falsely simplistic approach to the subject of Assurance which is so characteristic of Fundamentalism, and presents a truly Biblical and Reformed view. This would be a good tract for church tract racks, as well as for individual distribution. The cost is low — why not obtain a supply to use when occasion arises?

—J. G. Vos

**ALL THE ANIMALS OF THE BIBLE LANDS**, by G. S. Cansdale. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 271. \$6.95.

The work lists approximately 600 Bible references from Genesis to Revelation dealing with animals. The Hebrew, Greek, and English Bible names, and the scientific Latin name of each species is given in an index form. The work also includes a general index for the variety of related topics from Aaron to the Zerka River.

The photographs and illustrations do not do this quality study justice, but I recommend it as a stimulating study for young people, and pastors, of man's servants, the animals.

—Edward A. Robson

**MODERN ART AND THE DEATH OF A CULTURE**, by H. R. Rookmaaker. Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515. 1970, pp. 256, paperback. \$3.95.

Rookmaaker begins with the premise that art not only reflects but presages the mentality and temperament of a culture; more specifically, modern art documents the decline of an older Western culture which has, since the Enlightenment, proceeded on the assumption that Man was autonomous, perfectible, the source of all meaning, and that a technological science would aid his inevitable triumph.

Although Rookmaaker traces the first scepticism back to Goya and Turner (1800-30), the mature and most despairing statements of the modern movement begin with the twentieth century. Men like Picasso, Klee and Dali, whose style is recognizably modern, had by then managed to replace the old humanistic ideals with an aesthetic realization that a culture of mechanized work and mechanized war had stripped man of his humanity, of his meaning and his freedom. They reacted to the lush banalities of impressionism with harsher manifestoes of human absurdity, anguish and perplexity. Their figures bespeak a man who is lost in a world which is mechanistically determined, which has lost beauty and all humanistic ideals; and yet, Rookmaaker accuses, they have not spoken in human terms, they have spoken from their rage or frustration. Their art has lost its humanity, it does not even tell us anything of the artist himself (consider the music of Cage or the paintings of Warhol), or when it does depict man, as Picasso does, he is mutilated and distorted.

Rookmaaker's programme is not so pretentious as

was Francis Schaeffer's (in *The God Who Is There*), consequently it is more thorough, more professional, and well documented by illustrations. He has a firm and workable notion of the role of the Christian artist in the twentieth century: he must be thoroughly a man of his time, fluent in the temper and language of present day Western culture. He eschews the didactic sentimental and stylistically prosaic art which has satisfied modern Protestantism; "... art must never be used to show the validity of Christianity. Rather the validity of art should be shown through Christianity." The Christian artist must depict his ideas with an insight enlightened by love of God. He must return humanity to his art without falling into empty humanism; what is Christian in art does not lie in its theme, but in the spirit of its execution, in its wisdom and the understanding of reality which it reflects.

—Robert Hill

**DIMENSIONS OF CHRISTIAN WRITING**, by A. Donald Bell and John C. Merrill. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 96, paperback. \$1.95.

The purpose of this paperback is to encourage Christians to communicate more effectively the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the medium of the printed page. It gives practical suggestions regarding semantics, balance, and style — while not overlooking the importance of the message itself, the need for empathy by the writer, and the desire to witness. This book would be valuable for anyone, from a Director of Christian Education to the girl who types up a weekly Church bulletin.

—Donald Weilersbacher

**BIBLICAL COSMOLOGY AND MODERN SCIENCE**, by Henry M. Morris. Craig Press, P. O. Box 13, Nutley, New Jersey, 07110. 1970, pp. 146. \$2.50. paperback.

Herein the author argues convincingly for catastrophism as a more consistent thesis than the uniformism presumed by many people. That is to say, he concludes that the geological evidence points to a drastic and sudden change in the earth rather than the infinitely slow process of change which is made the basis of much evolutionary thought. This sudden and cataclysmic change he believes to have been the Genesis flood. His most important chapter seems to be "Sedimentation and the Fossil Record: a Study in Hydraulic Engineering." His work is written from an evangelical and pre-millennial perspective. It must be read slowly and digested word by word. Although rather technical in some parts for most readers, it is a valuable contribution to this particular area of Christian apologetics.

—Donald Weilersbacher

**GRACE IN GALATIANS**, by George Sayles Bishop. Reiner Publications, Swengel, Pa. 17880. 1968, pp. 146, paperback.

This appears to be a reprint of a Calvinistic classic. As such it ought to be read and reread by all recipients of the Blue Banner. Of special blessing was his treatment of the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace as depicted by Paul's allegory on Hagar and Sarah. The author strongly urges us to preach the whole counsel of God; noting that the natural tendency of Arminianism is toward Unitarianism, then moralism, and finally amoralism.

—Donald Weilersbacher

**THE MINOR PROPHETS**, by John B. Taylor. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1970, pp. 94, paperback. \$1.25.

The intent of this book is to provide a mature and organized guide for one's daily reading and study of the Scriptures. Information is given on the background of each book, a brief outline and commentary on its contents, plus appropriate questions for meditation. Any person not well acquainted with the Minor Prophets could well benefit from this evangelical and reformed approach to the Scriptures.

—Donald Weilersbacher

**HEBREWS: A Digest of Reformed Comment**, by Geoffrey B. Wilson. The Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern St., London W1M 1PS. England, or Puritan Publications Inc., P. O. Box 652, Carlisle, Pa., 17013, U.S.A. 1970, pp. 192. paperback. \$1.25.

Mr. Wilson is a Calvinistic Baptist who is obviously well informed. Herein he combines his own brief exegesis with the explanatory comments of some 50 or more Reformed writers. He concludes that Hebrews was written by some unknown author to a group of Christian Jews, that the date of the writing was prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and that its purpose was to counteract the temptation to relapse into some form of Jewish ritualism as a defense against persecution. Well done!

—Donald Weilersbacher

**THE LIVING GOD**, by R. T. France. Inter-Varsity Press, 39 Bedford Square, London WC 1B 3 EY or Box F, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515. 1970, pp. 228, \$1.50, paperback.

This is a fresh, dynamic, and personal approach to some aspects of the nature of God. The author's words stir the heart to an exciting contemplation and experience of the living God as revealed in the Scriptures. The brief section on God's covenant love was superb. If you don't read this book, you'll surely miss a blessing!

—Donald Weilersbacher

**SCIENCE RETURNS TO GOD**, by James H. Jauncey. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1971, pp. 106, paperback. \$.95.

This is a revised edition of a book published in 1961 and reviewed in the January-March 1964 issue of this magazine. The sub-title is: "A popular treatise of modern scientific thought and its relationship to Christian Faith." There is much of truth and value in this little book. The author's viewpoint is evangelical and he seeks to encourage and reassure Christians who are troubled by the sweeping claims of unbelieving scientists.

It would seem that the title is too optimistic. Some anti-Christian positions held by many scientists have been shown to be untenable, and there are many scientists who are believing Christians. But the sweeping statement that "Science Returns to God" goes far beyond the reality of the situation. Non-Christian thought is the thought of the natural man, and only by spiritual regeneration can the natural man become a Christian and think Christianly. The great majority of professional scientists are secular and humanistic.

On page 56 the Neanderthal Man is classed as a "super-ape". There is some evidence that the Neanderthal Man was true man (*homo sapiens*) — fossils intermediate between the Neanderthal and Cro Magnon types have been found. The author correctly adds that "On present evidence, man as we know him appears in the fossil record pretty well as we see him now" (p. 56).

On pages 67-68 the author rightly hesitates to affirm that the "flood layer" discovered by Woolley at Ur can be identified with the Biblical flood of Noah's day. Woolley, of course, believed that the Biblical Flood was only local in the Tigris-Euphrates valley, and he certainly did not regard the Biblical Flood narrative as infallible divine revelation.

—J. G. Vos

**HEREDITY: A STUDY IN SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE**, by William J. Tinkle. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 182, paperback. \$2.45.

The author is secretary of the Creation Research Society, holds his Ph.D. degree from Ohio State University, and is a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He is thus clearly qualified as a scientist and author on his chosen subject.

Dr. Tinkle expounds the main points of the science of genetics in a way that the "layman" can understand. He shows what kind of genetic change has taken place and is taking place in the world of living things, and in doing this he explodes some popular but erroneous beliefs about heredity in connection with the theory of organic evolution. The viewpoint is consistently Biblical and creationist. Heartily recommended to our readers.

—J. G. Vos

**ANOTHER HAND ON MINE**, by William J. Petersen. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, reprint of 1967, pp. 228, paperback, illustrated. \$1.95.

This book is the story of Dr. Carl K. Becker of the Africa Inland Mission. Dr. Becker is a medical missionary who lived and served through the troubled and violent scenes in the Congo of a few years ago. This book tells of many difficulties overcome, many triumphs of the Gospel of divine grace, many problems faced and solved by faith in the Lord. It is a story of devotion, of love that overcomes obstacles, and of heroic action in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. Heartily recommended.

—J. G. Vos

**DESIGN FOR DISCIPLESHIP**, by J. Dwight Pentecost. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1971, pp. 130. \$3.95.

The author is a professor in Dallas Theological Seminary, Texas. The book is a study of evangelism and Christian commitment based on passages in the Gospels. The author writes with simplicity and directness, and presents a strong challenge to the reader to be a true and consistent disciple of Jesus Christ.

—J. G. Vos

**EXPOSITORY SERMONS ON THE BOOK OF DANIEL**, by W. A. Criswell. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1970, pp. 147. \$3.50.

This book contains 11 sermons based on the first 3 chapters of Daniel. It is the second in a series of volumes not now complete. The author writes from an evangelical and pre-millennial viewpoint. An attempt is made to see the book in its historical context and as such contains much helpful background material. Perhaps a paperback edition would have been preferable to help reduce the price.

—Donald Weilersbacher

**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR 1971**. Great Commission Publications, 7401 Old York Road, Philadelphia, Pa. 19126. Complete sample kit of materials (returnable for credit or refund within 3 weeks if in good condition). \$4.65.

It is a pleasure to recommend these Vacation Bible School materials. They ring true to the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, they set forth a consistently Reformed view of Christianity, and they are technically of high quality and most attractive in appearance.

Separate materials for teachers and pupils are provided in four levels or age groups. Each of these levels runs through a three-year cycle, so no child need have the same material as in a previous year. The materials for 1971 for pre-school or kindergarten age children are on "Homes that God Made", for grades 1, 2 and 3 on "Fathers and Sons", for grades 4, 5 and 6 on "The Ten Commandments", and for grades 7, 8 and 9 on "The Exodus."

As in former years, the Great Commission VBS materials are free from so-called "pictures of Jesus" — a feature that will be commended by many of our readers on theological grounds. We understand that a Reformed Presbyterian Edition is available which has Psalms with musical score in place of the hymns which appear in the end of some of the books. The Reformed Presbyterian Edition must be specially requested in ordering, however. The sample books which come in the kit contain some hymns.

In this reviewer's opinion these are by far the best VBS materials available for churches committed to the Reformed Faith. Send for the kit and see for yourself.

—J. G. Vos

**OUT OF CONCERN FOR THE CHURCH**, Five Essays by J. Olthuis, H. Hart, C. Seerveld, B. Zijlstra, J. H. Olthuis. Published by Wedge Publishing Foundation, Box 10, Station L, Toronto, 10, Ontario, Canada. 1971, 125 pages. Price \$2.50.

This is not an easy book to review. The writers all stand within the same philosophic perspective (Dooyeweerdian). They also belong to the same denomination (Christian Reformed). And none of them is a pastor or theologian. All of these things make it difficult to evaluate these essays which are highly critical of the status quo in the Christian Reformed Church, and the wider evangelical community in North America.

It will perhaps be sufficient, here, to say that much of what these men say is just. The fact that it is said in plain — or should we say sharp? — terms helps to underline the effect. And while it is very easy to find offense because of the way in which these criticisms are expressed, much more than this is required. For the fact is that these things only hurt because they are true! As an example (and I almost hesitate to cite one, where there are so many) consider John Olthuis' description of the feeble answer to modern secularism offered by the Minneapolis Congress on evangelism in 1969 — it amounts to this, he says — "Christians with secular occupations should take more time to be holy!"

Now there is too much here to do more than comment selectively. Nevertheless, the focus of much is upon the tragic extent to which the Church has succumbed to a false synthesis. The radical demands of the gospel for all spheres of life activity have been subverted. The discussion of the "two-realm view" of life, by James Olthuis, is particularly illuminating here, in my judgment. The clarion call of these men for concerted effort to build a system of Christian thought touching all societal formations may not be shrugged off. We must read what these men are saying, and take heed. There is indeed much in the pioneer work of these thinkers associated with the Toronto Institute for Christian studies that deserves our gratitude and our prayers. What is said in the remainder of this review is not intended in any way to detract from this most important fact.

There is, however, an area in these essays that leaves something to be desired. For radical as the criticism is in some respects, it is not radical enough. What I mean is that there is not a sufficient recognition of the danger of theological liberalism (or modernism). Here, to my mind, is evidence of a certain limitation in the view-point of these writers. The Church looks one way from the standpoint of one who has lived in a long-time bastion of orthodoxy. It looks different when one has seen what liberalism does. I cannot escape the conviction that defection from the inerrant authority of scripture — and from the historic Confessions (as a

consequence) — is a far greater danger than is recognized here. I can heartily agree with these men that the Church has been remiss in societal concern. I cannot agree that this is first in order of needed concern today. Until the Church again has the strength of a living and orthodox faith in its heart, it really will not accomplish anything. This is the point at which these essays appear to me to be significantly weak.

With appreciation, however, I recommend the thoughtful consideration of these essays.

—G. I. Williamson

## *Blue Banner Question Box*

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

### Question:

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

### Answer:

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

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

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

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

"Gambling is dishonoring to God in that what is called chance is not chance but an appeal to God in an irreverent manner. When the lot was properly cast during the Old Testament dispensation, it was done with

a reverent appeal to God to decide and show His will. If it is ever right to use the lot today it should be done in the same spirit. The Bible tells us that 'the lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord' (Prov. 16:33).

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

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

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

—J. G. Vos

## *The Death Of Death*

By J. G. Vos

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" — Rev. 1:18.

The Puritan John Owen entitled a book, "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ." Christ's death fully atoned for sin, therefore He could not remain dead. On the third day He rose with new life and power. A Chinese inquirer asked a missionary: "That story in the Bible about Jesus rising from the dead — is that really true or is it just a story?" This missionary was a liberal in theology, so he replied, "If you believe it is true, it is true for you; if I believe it is true, it is true for me, but the important question is, Are you following the ethical ideals of Jesus." This kind of double talk abounds on every hand today. Over against all such attitudes the Bible affirms that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact of history as truly as the crucifixion was a fact of history.

Christ has crashed the barrier of death. He has overcome the reality and power of this terrible last enemy of mankind. The horror and abnormality of death, its apparent destruction of all human hopes and values, has been canceled by the One who passed through that dark portal and returned clothed with the life of immortality. He rose in the same body that was nailed to the cross; the print of the nails was still visible. Yet that body was changed and could never again suffer or die. He is the One whom death could not hold — the once dead but now forever deathless One, with "the

power of an indissoluble life" (Heb. 7:16, Greek).

Christ's resurrection is our ultimate ground of optimism. If this be true, nothing else really matters in comparison with it. If it be true, the ultimate issues of life and of the universe can only be favorable to the one who is in vital union with Christ. If this be true, our future is held in the hands of Him who has conquered our final enemy — death. If this be true, all else must eventually be adjusted to it.

During World War II a liberal minister preached on the question, "What would Hitler do with Jesus?" But a Bible-believing minister reproved him, saying that the real question is rather, "What will Jesus do with Hitler?" Jesus Christ, and not the evil men of this world, will have the absolute last word, and it will mean eternal peace and victory for His own. We have the key facing death without fear, and this really includes victory over all our lesser fears.

So Jesus, vibrant with the power of immortality, says to His fearful disciples "All hail!" (Matt. 28:9). This means "Rejoice!". In the next verse He says "Be not afraid." What is your relationship to this Person who has crashed the dark barrier of death? The most important question for every person in the world is "What is my relationship to Jesus Christ?" There are various possibilities — opposition, unbelief, indifference, formal assent, or true faith in and commitment to Him. Has the Christ of history become the Christ of experience in your heart and life?

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## *The Absolute Prophet*

By J. G. Vos

The British Bible scholar Dr. G. Campbell Morgan once said that the Old Testament can be summarized as "A sigh for a prophet, a sigh for a priest and a sigh for a king." This very perceptive statement could perhaps be improved by describing it as the God-Given promise of a perfect prophet, a perfect priest and a perfect king. It is not merely a matter of man's longing for these, but of God's promise to provide them. In the Old Testament there were many prophets, many priests and many kings, but all of them were imperfect. Yet each was intended to be a type, or small scale sample, of what a prophet, priest or king ought to be. Christ's work as our Redeemer can be analyzed into these three functions or "offices" — prophet, priest and king. This formula, better than any other, fits the totality of the Biblical data about the work of Christ. (A prophet in the Biblical, sense, of course, is not merely a predictor of future events, but is essentially a revealer of divine truth; he brings an authoritative message of truth from God to men).

These three functions of Christ correspond to humanity's three deepest needs, which are:

1. The need for a truly satisfying and dependable knowledge of truth.
2. The need for forgiveness of sin.
3. The need for a truly challenging life aim or goal.

Or we may state humanity's deepest needs in terms of freedoms. We deeply need:

1. Freedom from ignorance and error.
2. Freedom from guilt.
3. Freedom from aimlessness and self-centeredness.

Christ is the absolute Prophet, who meets humanity's deep need for truth. We live in an age when mankind has lost the sense of truth. "To travel joyfully is better than to arrive at the goal" was a very modern

sentiment expressed by a bishop in *The Great Divorce* by C. S. Lewis — a bishop who finally went to hell. Anyone who claims to possess absolute truth is regarded as a fanatic by some people today. Truth is supposed to be a fluid and constantly changing commodity. Pragmatism or Instrumentalism, the philosophy promoted by John Dewey and others, denies the existence of absolute truth and holds that anything is “true” if it works or gets practical results.

The popular philosophy of our day is Existentialism, which also denies that real truth exists. The Existentialist says there is no meaning in life except what you put in yourself. Acceptance of this view has resulted in a loss of the sense of meaning in life. Students on many university campuses are baffled and uneasy because they have lost the sense of absolute truth. A specialist has been defined as someone who learns more and more about less and less until by and by he knows everything about nothing. This of course involves the

loss of a sense of overall meaning. The president of the University of California at Berkeley has said that it should no longer be called a “university,” but rather a multiversity. Someone else said that the same institution is a set of separate departments held together by a common parking problem.

In Christ is found the answer to this deep, unsatisfied hunger for absolute truth. He is the ultimate Revealer of truth — through the prophets and apostles and through His own teachings. “He is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col. 1:17). Everything is related to everything else just because everything is related to Christ, the Word, the eternal Son, from whom all existence and all meaning proceed. He promised, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Now take your Bible and read John 1:1-10 and Proverbs chapter 8 (these two are closely related in meaning). If you possess Christ, you know the absolute Revealer of unchangeable truth.

---

## *What You Were Really Created For*

By J. G. Vos

God created us to live, not to die. Life is the normal thing; death is abnormal and unnatural. Built into each of us is a God-given thirst for life. This is not merely a thirst for more of this present earthly life, but for the real life, which the Bible calls *eternal life* or *the life that is life indeed* — the life that is really life. Though you are usually only dimly aware of it, your deepest longing is the longing for the perfect life, the life that we call “heaven.” C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain* wrote: “All your life an unattainable ecstasy has hovered just beyond the grasp of your consciousness. The day is coming when you will wake to find, beyond all hope, that you have attained it, or else, that it was within your reach and you have lost it forever.”

If you are a Christian, this article concerns your real destiny. If you are not in Christ, then of course you are headed toward eternal ruin in hell. But if you are in Christ, then that deepest of all your mysterious longings will be satisfied — truly and fully satisfied — at last and forever. Many questions which our curiosity raises cannot be answered. But to some of our questions real, though often tantalizingly incomplete, answers can be given on the basis of God's Word.

We are composite beings, with a material body and a non-material self or soul. In this life, the body is necessary for any communication with others or interaction with our environment. Yet the body is only part of the human personality; it is not itself the personality. When a Christian dies, the soul, self or mind leaves the body, because through injury, disease or old age, the body is no longer able to function as the tool or organ of the self or soul. The body dies, and soon returns to “dust” — its component material elements. But the mind, soul or self lives on. It is vital; it can never sleep or die. This condition of the self, mind or soul living on

without the body is abnormal and temporary. We need a body for full self-expression and contact with our environment. But after death, the soul lives on apart from the body. This is called the *Intermediate State*, because it comes between death and the resurrection. It is a state of consciousness, quiet peace and rest, and waiting — waiting for the resurrection day. The Bible does not suggest that there is any kind of progress in the Intermediate State, nor any kind of activity other than communion with the Lord. This Intermediate State is not our destiny — it is only an interim stage on the way to our destiny. Our destiny — the real object of Christian hope, is the resurrection of the body at the last day.

The first impression in the consciousness of a Christian after he dies will be that he is, at last, in the direct presence of Jesus Christ. How wonderful this will be! If we are in the Lord's presence, all else will be all right.

The second impression of the Christian who has died, according to God's Word, will be a sudden and complete relief from the life-long conflict with sin. The pressure will be off. Sin will no longer be a problem. No longer need we fight against evil thoughts, evil desires, selfishness, temptation. For the first time in our experience, what we ought to be, what we want to be and what we are will be exactly the same, and this will be effortless. It will actually be fun — a spontaneous, effortless pleasure, . . . to be good! Read Revelation 6:9-11 and 14:13.

A third impression or feature of the life of the Christian after death will be that time as we know it in the present life will no longer have any importance or meaning. Here we border on speculation, hence must be cautious. But the Bible seems to imply that time is a part

of the structure of the physical universe and does not necessarily apply to the soul or mind after death. Clocks, watches and calendars are useful, even necessary, here and now. But the person who has died no longer needs clocks, watches or calendars. Very probably there may be something comparable to time in the life of heaven; yet time as we know it will not be there.

On the negative side, Scripture teaches that all communication between the souls of the dead and their

former environment in this world is impossible. Whatever mysterious dark reality may exist in Spiritualism (more correctly called Spiritism) — and much of it has been proved to be shameless fraud — it certainly does not involve real communication between the living and the dead. Rather, its strange phenomena are to be explained by (1) fraud, (2) psychology and (3) sometimes demonic spirits.

### THY WORD

Thy Word is like a garden, Lord,  
With flowers bright and fair;  
And every one who seeks may pluck  
A lovely cluster there.  
Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine;  
And jewels rich and rare  
Are hidden in the mighty depths  
For every searcher there.

Thy Word is like a starry host,  
A thousand rays of light  
Are seen to guide the traveler,  
And make his pathway bright.  
Thy Word is like an armory,  
Where soldiers may repair,  
And find for life's long battle-day  
All needful weapons there.

Oh, may I love Thy precious Word;  
May I explore the mine;  
May I its fragrant flowers glean;  
May light upon me shine.  
Oh, may I find my armor there;  
Thy Word my trusty sword,  
I'll learn to fight with every foe  
The battle of the Lord.

—Author Unknown

### NONE OTHER LAMB

By Christina G. Rossetti

None other Lamb, none other Name,  
None other Hope in heaven or earth or sea,  
None other Hiding-place from guilt and shame,  
None beside Thee.

My faith burns low, my hope burns low  
Only my heart's desire cries out in me  
By the deep thunder of its want and woe  
Cries out to Thee.

Lord, Thou art Life tho' I be dead,  
Love's Fire Thou art, however cold I be:  
Nor heaven have I, nor place to lay my head,  
Nor home, but Thee.

Let the doctrine of atonement never grow stale, but  
let it have dew upon it for our souls.

—C. H. Spurgeon

### JEHOVAH TSIDKENU The Lord Our Righteousness

I once was a stranger to grace and to God,  
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;  
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,  
Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me.

I oft read with pleasure, to soothe or engage,  
Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page;  
But e'en when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree,  
Jehovah Tsidkenu seemed nothing to me.

Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,  
I wept when the waters went over His soul;  
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree  
Jehovah Tsidkenu — 'twas nothing to me.

When free grace awoke me, by light from on high,  
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;  
No refuge, no safety in self could I see —  
Jehovah Tsidkenu my Saviour must be.

My terrors all vanished before the sweet name;  
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came  
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free —  
Jehovah Tsidkenu is all things to me.

Jehovah Tsidkenu! my treasure and boast,  
Jehovah Tsidkenu! I ne'er can be lost;  
In Thee I shall conquer by flood and by field —  
My cable, my anchor, my breastplate and shield!

Even treading the valley, the shadow of death,  
This watchword shall rally my faltering breath;  
For while from life's fever my God sets me free,  
Jehovah Tsidkenu my death-song shall be.  
—Robert Murray McCheyne

Lord, grant us eyes to see, and ears to hear  
And souls to love, and minds to understand,  
And confidence of hope, and filial fear. . . .  
Lord, grant us what Thou wilt, and what Thou wilt  
Deny, and fold us in Thy peaceful fold;  
Not as the world gives, give to us Thine own;  
Inbuild us where Jerusalem is built  
With walls of jasper, and with streets of gold,  
And Thou, Thyself, Lord Christ, the corner-stone.  
—Christina G. Rossetti

The impulse to pray, within our hearts, is evidence  
that Christ is urging our claims in heaven.

—Dr. A. H. Strong

## GO TELL THEM THAT JESUS IS LIVING

A light on the dark horizon,  
Shining with luminous ray,  
Banishes fear and sorrow,  
For Christ is risen today!

O sing it to those who sorrow,  
The message is clear and sweet,  
"He is the Resurrection,"  
Go tell it to those who weep.

Go tell them that Jesus is living,  
He's living just as He said,  
And some day He's coming in glory,  
Coming to quicken the dead.

Then all the pain and the suffering  
That now His beloved ones feel,  
Will pass, for "There is no sorrow  
On earth that heaven can't heal!"

So tell them that Jesus is living,  
That He will illumine the way  
Over the troublesome waters,  
For Christ is risen today!

—Author Unknown

## LEAD ME ON

Traveling to the better land,  
O'er the desert's scorching sand,  
Father! let me grasp Thy hand;  
Lead me on, lead me on!

When at Marah, parched with heat,  
In the sparkling fountain greet,  
Make the bitter water sweet;  
Lead me on!

When the wilderness is drear,  
Show me Elim's palm grove near,  
And her wells, as crystal clear;  
Lead me on!

Through the water, through the fire,  
Never let me fall or tire,  
Every step brings Canaan nigher;  
Lead me on!

Bid me stand on Nebo's height,  
Gaze upon the land of light,  
Then transported with the sight,  
Lead me on!

When I stand on Jordan's brink,  
Never let me fear or shrink;  
Hold me, Father, lest I sink;  
Lead me on!

When the victory is won,  
And eternal life begun,  
Up to Glory lead me on!  
Lead me on, lead me on!

—Author Unknown

## THE TIDE IS SURE TO WIN

Out on the far reef the breakers  
Recoil in shattered foam,  
While still the sea behind them  
Urges its forces home;  
Its song of triumph surges  
O'er all the thunderous din:  
The waves may break in failure;  
But the tide is sure to win.

The reef is strong and cruel  
Upon its jagged wall,  
One wave, a score, a hundred  
Broken and beaten fall:  
Yet in defeat they conquer,  
The sea comes flooding in:  
Wave after wave is routed  
But the tide is sure to win.

O mighty sea! Thy message  
In splashing spray is cast:  
Within God's place of progress  
It matters not at last,  
How wide the shores of evil,  
How strong the reefs of sin,  
The waves may be defeated  
But the tide is sure to win.

—Author Unknown

Can you conceive the dismay which will fill your  
soul if you come too late to the closed door of heaven and  
begin the hopeless cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us"?

—Dr. Wm. Arnot

Christ took the Sabbath into the grave with Him and  
brought the Lord's Day out of the grave with Him on the  
resurrection morn.

—Dr. B. B. Warfield

It is the whole tragedy of mankind that it keeps on  
arguing against its own salvation. Man in sin is always  
anxious to claim a little credit for himself. He resents the  
doctrine that salvation is solely and entirely the free gift  
of God.

—Dr. M. Lloyd-Jones

He that hath not love enough to give a reproof  
seasonably to his brother nor humility enough to bear a  
reproof from him, is not worthy to be called a Christian.

—William Gurnall

When it (the Bible) speaks about the origin of  
heaven and earth, it presents no saga or myth or poetical  
fantasy, but even then, according to its clear intention,  
presents history, which deserves faith and trust. And for  
that reason Christian theology, with but few exceptions,  
has held fast to the literal, historical view of the account  
of creation.

—Herman Bavinck

**THE HOLY LAND**

By Esther Belle Heins

We read within God's Holy Word  
 Of mountains, deserts, plains,  
 And far-flung battlefields, great kings;  
 Of losses, righteous gains.  
 The names of cities, little towns,  
 Toll in our hearts like bells;  
 We learn of Abraham, God's friend,  
 His grove of Seven Wells.  
 There is a peace and loveliness  
 On shores of Galilee,  
 Christ spoke here to the multitude  
 Close by the shining sea.  
 In Bible lands the centuries  
 Somehow just fade away;  
 Beneath the olive trees once more  
 Our Saviour kneels to pray.  
 Here was the bridge to farther shores  
 To spread His ministry;  
 Set in the midst of earth, its Light  
 Still glows from Calvary!

Christ enjoins faith in saying Father; love in saying  
 our; hope in saying which art in heaven.

—John Boys

In his Gospel, John teaches especially faith; in his  
 Epistles especially love; in his Apocalypse especially  
 hope.

O, 'tis a goodly thing to be on our knees, with Christ  
 in our arms, before God.

—John Bunyan

The one moral elevator is the cross and the com-  
 panionship of the Saviour who died on it.

—Rev. Jas. Hunter

**COUNTLESS BLESSINGS**

By Esther Belle Heins

I watched the sun-kissed water drops,  
 The silvery cascade  
 The fountain spread with gaiety  
 On children there who played.

One could not count the silver pearls  
 That danced and leaped for joy,  
 As though to join in all the fun  
 Of every girl and boy.

A songster sweetly improvised  
 The melody I heard,  
 Unnumbered were the leaves which hid  
 The little mockingbird.

As well count Heaven's glowing stars  
 Or number grains of sand,  
 As count the blessings given us  
 From God's almighty hand!

The estimate which God makes of the value of the  
 soul is shown in the provision which He has made for its  
 salvation.

—Dr. Chas. Hodge

Christianity makes no appeal to men who do not  
 feel the burden of sin.

—Dr. B. B. Warfield

The whole world is now my parish. Wheresoever  
 my Master calls me I am ready to go and preach His  
 everlasting Gospel. My only grief is, that I can do no  
 more for Christ.

—Geo. Whitefield

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## *Contributions Received*

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 income. The substantial increase in U.S. postage rates  
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 need more money than before to publish and circulate  
 the magazine.

J. G. Vos, Editor and Manager  
 3408 Seventh Avenue  
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## *The Wigtown Martyrs*

(Author unknown)

On Solway sands the tide flows fast,  
The waters swiftly rise;  
Alas for him whom lingering there  
The rushing waves surprise!  
Full quickly must he hurry thence,  
Full swiftly must he ride,  
Who tempts his fate on Solway shore  
And races with the tide.  
Past Wigtown Borough to the sea  
The Blednoch River goes,  
With many a pool and shifting shoal  
Across the sand it flows.  
Ah! Blednoch's stream and Wigtown bay  
Have sights of sorrow seen,  
When ships were stranded on the shore,  
And boats have shipwrecked been.

There many a time has woman wept,  
And wrung in grief her hands,  
When loved ones she longed for have been  
Found dead on Solway's sands.  
But sight so strange was never seen  
As when those martyrs died,  
And gave their life on Wigtown shore,  
And perished in the tide.  
For many years ago 'tis now.  
'Twas in the month of May;  
The level sands were smooth and dry,  
The tide out in the bay:  
'Twas then the brother of fierce Graham  
Of Claverhouse rode down,  
With Winram, Strachan, and with Cultron  
The Provost of the town.  
And cruel Grierson of Lagg

The persecutor came,  
To do that day by Blednoch's bank  
A deed of sin and shame.  
At ebb of tide two stakes of wood  
Were driven in the sand,  
And fastened there two prisoners were,  
At Grierson's command.  
An aged widow one of them,  
And one a maiden young;  
And thus amid the rising waves  
The virgin martyr sung:  
"To Thee I lift my soul, O Lord,  
My God, I trust in Thee;  
Let me not be ashamed; let not  
My foes triumph o'er me."  
The aged widow was the first  
Drowned by the rising tide.  
"What think you of her now?" in scorn  
The persecutors cried,

"What think I of her? In that saint  
Whose soul is on the wing  
I see but this", the maid replied:  
"My Saviour suffering."  
Still ever deeper flowed the tide;  
The billows higher rose,  
As there that young defenceless girl  
Was tempted by her foes  
To buy her life by breach of faith  
To Him who was her Lord;  
Oh, she was young, and life is sweet,  
And it was but a word.

Yet was temptation vain. She chose  
For Christ to suffer wrong;  
And still amid the rush of waves  
The men could hear the song:  
"Let not the errors of my youth,  
Nor sins remembered be.  
In mercy, for Thy goodness, Lord,  
Do Thou remember me."  
By this the waves rose to her lips;  
The voice that sung was still.  
They raised her head: "Pray for the King!"  
"God save him if He will",  
She answered. Then they dragged her forth  
Half drowned amid the tide.  
"Will you renounce the Covenant?  
Abjure your faith!" they cried.

She raised her eyes nigh dimmed in death:  
"Renounce my Saviour? No!  
I'm one of Jesus' little ones.  
I pray you, let me go!"  
They let her go. The waters closed  
Above her youthful head.  
One of the glorious martyr throng.  
One of the deathless dead.  
Her name shall never be forgot,  
While Blednoch's waters run,  
And Solway kindles into gold  
Beneath the setting sun.  
They speak it oft in Scotland's homes;  
'Tis told in far-off lands,  
How in the bloom of youth she died  
Upon the Solway sands.

And souls are thrilled, and hearts beat high  
To hear the story told,  
How nobly she maintained her faith  
In days that now are old;  
And how she kept her trust in God,  
And how she scorned the foe,  
And how she lived and how she died,  
So many years ago.

Note: Margaret MacLachlan, a widow aged 63, and Margaret Wilson, a girl of 18, were drowned in the tide at

Wigtown, Scotland, in the year 1685, because of their loyalty to Christ, His Crown and Covenant.



# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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## *Cleared and Approved by the Supreme Court!*

By J. G. Vos

In the United States, what the Supreme Court says is legal is legal. No matter what lower courts or individuals may say, when the Supreme Court has issued a decision the case is closed. No one can be treated as guilty when the Supreme Court has pronounced him not guilty. No one can be regarded as having failed to discharge his obligations when the Supreme Court says that his obligations have been fully discharged.

The Supreme Court of the universe is the Judgment Throne of God, the supreme Judge of all. When the supreme Judge of the universe issues a decision the case is closed for all eternity. When the supreme Judge declares a person righteous, that person is regarded and treated as righteous by the highest authority of the universe. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" (Romans 8:33,34).

Someone has aptly said, "Justified means just-as-if-I'd." This is not the derivation of the word, but it is good theology all the same. When I am justified it is just as if I had never sinned, it is just as if I had always lived a perfect life, it is just as if I had done all possible good works. All this is received as a free gift — credited to my account — by God's act of justification. The supreme Judge of the universe declares that it is just as if I'd always been perfect and just as if I'd never sinned.

It is basic to an understanding of Justification as set forth in Scripture, that we recognize that justify and justification are legal terms; they concern the Christian's relation to God as Judge. Justification concerns the Christian's standing in relation to God's act of judging.

In the Bible, the term justify means to declare righteous or to pronounce righteous. It does not mean "to make righteous." This important distinction is obscured by some modern translations of the Bible. To understand justification as "making a person righteous" is to confuse justification with sanctification. Sanctification is an inward change in character; justification is a change in relationship to the law of God. "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone" (Shorter Catechism, Q. 33).

Justification includes pardon, but it is more than pardon. It includes (1) the pardon or forgiveness of all

our sins, plus (2) the pronouncement that we are positively righteous. Mere pardon would only cancel guilt without crediting positive righteousness to the person's account. This would be like paying a man's debts for him, but leaving him "flat broke" without a penny to his name. He would not owe any money but he would also not have any money. This would be a sort of neutral condition, neither guilty nor righteous. But no one can enter heaven who is not positively righteous. It is not enough to be "not guilty." You have to be righteous too. When God justifies a person, he credits ("imputes") the good deeds and perfect life of Jesus Christ to that person. When I am justified, every good deed that Christ did is counted as if I had done it myself. God regards me as perfect, so far as the requirements of His law are concerned.

Many people are confused about the ground of justification. Some say faith is the ground of justification, but this is wrong. The only ground of justification is the finished work of Christ — His blood and righteousness. This is the basis on which God can pronounce us righteous: "To declare . . . his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:26). Because Christ lived a perfect life and shed His blood on the cross, God can impute or credit this to you and me, and on this basis declare that we are righteous.

Faith is the means of justification, not its ground. We are justified by faith or through faith, but on account of the blood and righteousness of Christ. Faith is the channel of connection, the connecting link, by means of which we receive justification — it is not the reason why God can justify us.

Modern liberal theology, which abounds today on almost every hand and often goes unrecognized and unchallenged for what it really is, has given up the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Christ and also the Biblical doctrine of Justification. Liberalism teaches a do-it-yourself idea of salvation, on the idea that "God helps those that help themselves." Real Christianity, of course, proclaims that God helps those who can't help themselves — it proclaims a truly gracious salvation, a salvation which is a free gift of God's love and mercy to sinners.

Have you been cleared and approved by the Supreme Judge of the universe?

—The Goal Post

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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

Prepared by Dr. James A. Hughes

(Continued from last issue)

### Chapter XXI Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day

I. The light of nature shows that there is a God, who has lordship and sovereignty over all; who is good and does good to all; and who is therefore to be revered, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in and served, with all the heart and soul and might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Him and is so limited by His own revealed will that He may not be worshipped according to the schemes and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation or in any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.

II. Religious worship is to be given to the Triune God and to Him alone — not to angels, so-called saints or any other creature, and, since the Fall, not without a Mediator, nor through the mediation of any other: but of Christ alone.

III. Prayer, with thanksgiving, being a special part of religious worship, is required by God of all men; and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of His Spirit, according to His will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love and perseverance; and, if audible, in a known language.

IV. Prayer is to be made for lawful things and for all sorts of men who are living now or who shall be living later, but not for the dead, nor for those concerning whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin to death.

V. The reading of the Scriptures with godly reverence; the sound preaching and the conscientious hearing of the Word, in obedience to God, with understanding, faith and reverence; the singing of psalms with grace in the heart; and the proper administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God — and also religious oaths, vows and solemn times of fasting and thanksgiving upon special occasions (which are, upon various suitable occasions, to be used in a holy and religious manner) are parts of the religious worship of God.

VI. Neither prayer nor any other part of religious

worship is, now under the gospel, either tied to or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed or toward which it is directed, but God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth; and as He is to be worshipped in individual families daily and by each one by himself in private, so is He to be worshipped more solemnly in the public worship services, which are not carelessly or wilfully to be neglected or forsaken, when God, by His Word or providence, calls us to assemble publicly.

VII. As it is of the law of nature that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for worshipping God, so, in His Word, by a positive, moral and perpetual commandment, obligating all men in all generations, has He particularly appointed one day out of seven for a sabbath to be kept holy to Him (which from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ was the last day of the week and which from the resurrection of Christ has been the first day of the week, which in Scripture is called the Lord's Day, and is to be continued until the end of the world), as the Christian Sabbath.

VIII. This Sabbath is kept holy to the Lord when men, after properly preparing their hearts and putting in order their common affairs beforehand, not only observe a holy cessation all the day from their own labors, words and thoughts with reference to their temporal occupations and recreations but also are engaged the whole day in the public and private worship of God and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

(To be continued)



The modern rejection of the doctrine of God's wrath proceeds from a light view of sin which is totally at variance with the teaching of the whole New Testament and of Jesus Himself.

—Dr. J. Gresham Machen

The Church of God is as she is now because, since about 1840, men have been putting philosophy in the place of revelation, ideas before what God Himself has so graciously been pleased to reveal. It affects everything; it affects above everything else our view of the most glorious event in history — the Death of the Son of God upon the Cross on Calvary's Hill.

—Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

## *Studies in the Teachings of Jesus Christ*

This series of lessons is intended to familiarize the student with the principal teachings of Jesus Christ, to interpret these in relation to their background, and to relate them to present-day religious thought. The aim will be to gain an accurate knowledge of our Lord's teachings. Slipshod Bible study is common today. Many people are satisfied with a superficial skimming of the Bible. Many use terms without clear, definite ideas of what they mean; they deal in mere words without analysis of their content.

The following quotation from *HIS Magazine*, published by the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (June 1958 issue, page 44) is relevant in this connection:

"A writer or speaker constantly strives for clarity of expression. Although many seem unaware of it, increasing the number of words (particularly adjectives and adverbs) does not increase the reader's or listener's understanding of the thought being conveyed. Tight writing goes with tight thinking and tight understanding. And there is a corresponding trilogy of looseness . . . . As Christians, we must be honest in our inward thinking and outward expression. As Christians who desire to communicate with our generation (rather than a non-existent, earlier romantic one), we must be forthright and clear in outward expression, avoiding cliches. And our Lord was quite clear in saying that our yes should be yes, and our no should be no, without embellishment. Anything additional comes from the evil one."

The present series of lessons will attempt a basic rather than a superficial approach to the Biblical data. The superficial approach is very common; it merely skims the surface, citing texts on various subjects. Take, for example, the title "Son of man," which our Lord applied to Himself. Shall we merely quote this, or shall we really try to understand it? What does this title mean? What are its roots in the Old Testament? What possible alternatives to it existed in our Lord's day? Why did he choose this title for Himself in preference to the alternatives?

These lessons should also help the student better to discern real Christianity from the various kinds of religion current today which are either imitations or distortions of Christianity. It is hoped that the lessons may be helpful in showing how real Biblical Christianity can be intelligently held in the modern world.

We take the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God, and hold that all its parts fit together in perfect organic unity and harmony. We accept the historic Christian view of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and we adhere to the reality of the supernatural elements in the Bible.

Interpretations which make one part of the Bible contradict another part cannot be accepted. One part may go beyond another part in its teaching — certainly the New Testament goes far beyond the Old — but the relation is that of a less mature stage of revelation to a more mature stage, not that of falsehood to truth.

Besides the lessons printed in this magazine, the following books are recommended as aids in the study of this subject:

*Jesus of Yesterday and Today*, by Samuel G. Craig, 186 pages. Price \$2.75. Order from Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 185, Nutley 10, New Jersey or Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Michigan. See review in *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, July-September 1956, page 146.

*The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom and the Church*, by Geerhardus Vos. 105 pages. Price \$2.00. Order from William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan. See review in *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, July-September 1951, page 151. This book is now out of print. Some ministers have copies and sometimes second-hand copies can be found.

### LESSON 1

#### REGARDING THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS AS AN ISOLATED PHENOMENON

Quite often people have spoken of the teachings of Jesus as if Jesus were a solitary sage or thinker who appeared suddenly on the scene of history and uttered sayings unrelated to any background or previous development.

Those who speak thus of Jesus often tend to compare Him with Socrates, Gautama and other outstanding original thinkers of history. They tend to think of the teachings of Jesus as having little or nothing to do with the Old Testament, and little or nothing to do with the

New Testament Epistles. They regard Jesus as if He stood alone, and they would confine their attention to the teachings of Jesus alone.

Such an attitude, of course, not only misunderstands Jesus, but it also misunderstands Socrates and the other great thinkers of history who might be mentioned. Socrates, for example, did not stand alone; he had a background of previous thinkers who had prepared the way for him, and he was also related to those who came after him. The same is true of Gautama

(Buddha) and of all other great thinkers of human history. None of them can be understood if taken alone; each is part of an organic development. If this is true of Socrates, it is much more true of Jesus. For Jesus' place in history is not merely part of an organism of human development, but part of a great divine plan for the redemption of the world from sin. To understand Jesus, we must also have a true conception of the divine plan of redemption of which He was the most important part.

To regard the teachings of Jesus as an isolated phenomenon prevents one from doing justice to Him and His teachings. Those who regard Him in such a way can never grasp the true significance of His words and work. They may talk about the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule, but inevitably they will miss the true meaning and relevance of the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule. They will have a distorted view of them.

The teachings of Jesus do not stand alone. They are part of an organism and they must be studied in relation to that organism to be truly understood. Only the most superficial examination of the recorded sayings of Jesus can fail to see that they are closely related to the Old Testament. The Old Testament system was Jesus' background and environment. It was in that context, and as the fulfilment of that system, that Jesus' teachings were given. It is not too much to say that the Old Testament Scriptures formed the very warp and woof of Jesus' thinking. Actually, there is almost nothing in the teachings of Jesus that does not exist in germ form in the Old Testament. Jesus took up some Old Testament conceptions and carried them further. In the case of others, He brought out their true meaning, clearing them from the erroneous interpretations that had been placed on them by human tradition.

Moreover, to regard the teachings of Jesus in isolation is to involve oneself in contradiction. For it is perfectly clear that Jesus Himself regarded the Old Testament as divinely authoritative, and represented His own teachings as being in a relationship of organic continuity with it. Time and again He quoted the Old Testament, claiming that His own person and work constituted the true fulfilment of it.

Those who are in the habit of regarding Jesus' teachings as an isolated body of thought commonly also have erroneous ideas of the nature of Jesus' message and mission. Some think of Him as a social revolutionary; others regard Him as a humanistic teacher. The cause of these misapprehensions of His teaching, of course, lies in the failure to take into account the true background and context of His teachings.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Give a text from the sayings of Jesus in which He quotes from the Old Testament in such a way as to imply His own agreement with it.
2. Tell in your own words what is the true relationship between the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of the Old Testament.
3. Why can those who regard the teachings of Jesus as an isolated phenomenon in the history of religious thought never grasp the true meaning of His words?
4. What contradiction is involved in regarding the teachings of Jesus as existing in isolation from the Old Testament?

## LESSON 2

### REGARDING JESUS' TEACHINGS AS CONTRARY TO THE REST OF THE BIBLE

Among religious circles it was quite popular a few years ago to regard Jesus and His teachings as in opposition to the rest of the Bible. Not only were the teachings of Paul regarded as contrary to the teachings of Jesus, but it was common to regard the teachings of Jesus as contrary to the Old Testament. Such thinking still exists today.

With regard to the Old Testament, it was stated that the Old Testament presented the idea of a God of wrath, whereas Jesus presented the idea of a loving heavenly Father.

By selecting Old Testament passages which stress the holiness of God and his Wrath against human sin, and passages in the teachings of Jesus in which He speaks of the Fatherhood of God, it was possible to make this notion appear quite plausible. But a more complete induction of Scripture passages soon exposes the fallacy. The Old Testament also speaks of the Fatherhood and love of God, and Jesus also speaks of the holiness of God and His wrath against human sin. This is not to say that there is no difference between the teaching of Jesus and

that of the Old Testament. The teaching of Jesus constitutes a later, and therefore a more complete, stage of divine revelation. But the one is not contradictory of the other.

With regard to the relation between Jesus' teachings and the rest of the New Testament, it was popular a few years ago to use the slogans "Not Paul but Jesus" and "Back to Christ." The idea was that Jesus preached a "simple gospel" of the love and Fatherhood of God, a message in which His own person and work had no place, and in which there was nothing about a substitutionary atonement for man's sin. Then — so it was claimed — the apostles, and especially Paul, came on the scene and spoiled this "simple gospel" by adding a lot of complicated doctrines about God and man, sin and salvation.

Often it was held that Paul obtained his leading ideas from Greek philosophy or from the Hellenistic "mystery religions." So it was advocated that the Church forget about Paul and his Epistles, and go back to the "simple gospel" of Jesus. Thus — it was hoped —

all the emphasis could be placed on such ideas as the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, while such undesirable doctrines as the incarnation, the substitutionary atonement, etc., could be avoided.

This "Back to Christ" idea, however, was subjected to criticism by competent New Testament scholars, who soon showed that no such antithesis between Paul and Jesus could be maintained. For the great themes of Paul's Epistles are also found — not fully developed, but in germ or essence — in the teachings of Jesus Himself.

There is no basic theological doctrine in any part of the New Testament that is not found in germ form in Jesus' own teachings. Indeed, we can go back even of this, and say that the great themes of the New Testament Epistles are deeply rooted and imbedded in the Old Testament. It comes as a surprise to many people to learn that the great keynote text of the doctrine of Justification by Faith — "The just shall live by faith" — occurs first in the Old Testament (Habakkuk 2:4), and is found in the New Testament in several places as a quotation from the Old Testament.

This doctrine of Justification by Faith may serve as an example of the relation between Jesus' teachings and (a) the Old Testament; (b) the New Testament Epistles. The idea of Justification by Faith occurs very early in the Old Testament. It is clearly seen, for example, in the life of Abraham. In Genesis 15:6 we read: "And he (Abraham) believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness. This idea is developed further in the later parts of the Old Testament. Then in the teachings of Jesus we see the Old Testament conception taken up and carried further. In numerous places Jesus speaks of faith as the means or channel by which we

obtain salvation; we can easily think of instances where He said "Thy faith hath saved thee," or something similar. Still later, the conception of Justification by Faith is taken up by the New Testament Epistles, especially those of Paul, and carried to its full logical development and conclusion. Justification by Faith is only one of the theological doctrines that can be traced in this way, starting with the Old Testament, being carried further by Jesus, and finally stated in full logical form in the New Testament Epistles.

It is only by adopting an artificial — and really dishonest — "pick and choose" method of dealing with the teachings of Jesus that it can be maintained that they are out of harmony with the teachings of the rest of the Bible.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. What difference concerning the idea of God has been alleged to exist between Jesus and the Old Testament?
2. Why is this alleged difference between Jesus and the Old Testament a fallacy?
3. What ideas were involved in the popular slogans "Not Paul but Jesus" and "Back to Christ?"
4. Give a brief outline in your own words of the development of the idea of Justification by Faith in the Bible.
5. What text may be regarded as the keynote text of the doctrine of Justification by Faith?
6. Where in the Bible is this text first found?

### LESSON 3

#### REGARDING THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS AS HIS PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE

Even more common than the erroneous tendencies already mentioned is the notion that Jesus was primarily a teacher and therefore the most important thing about Him is His teachings. This idea seems to pay high honor to the teachings of Jesus, but in reality it results in distorting them and destroying their real effect.

As represented by the New Testament, the teachings of Jesus are subordinate to His deeds. Jesus came not primarily to say something to men, but to do something for men. His teachings are subordinate to His acts and they are interpretive of His acts.

We are saved from sin, not by the teachings of Jesus in themselves, but by His perfect life and His vicarious (substitutionary) sufferings and death. Although Jesus is the supreme teacher of truth, His teaching function is subordinate to His redemptive function.

Consider, for example, such a text as Mark 10:45, "For the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but

to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Here the purpose of Christ's coming is stated to consist in (a) His deeds, and (b) His substitutionary sufferings and death.

In Christian theology the work of Christ as Redeemer is commonly divided into His three offices of prophet, priest and king. These three, of course, are organically inter-related. They can be distinguished, but they cannot be separated. This threefold classification fits the Biblical data better than any other classification that has been proposed.

According to the statements of the Bible, Christ's office of a priest — by which He offered Himself on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of men — is the central one of His three offices. Without that sacrifice of Himself, neither of His other offices (prophet and king) would even exist.

The tendency to think of Jesus as primarily a teacher, therefore, makes His prophetic office — His function as a teacher of truth — central, to the

disparagement of His offices of a priest and a king. It is therefore a wrong tendency and can only result in distortion and misapprehension of His teachings. It takes what is really subordinate in the career of Jesus and regards it as the main thing, while leaving what is really the main thing out of consideration altogether.

The reason why such doctrines as the substitutionary atonement are found in their full development in Paul's Epistles, while in the teachings of Jesus they are found only in essence or germ, is that these doctrines could not be fully and adequately revealed to men until the historical facts of which they are the interpretation had taken place.

Before the crucifixion of Christ and His resurrection could be fully presented to men, and their meaning explained, it was necessary that they first take place as facts of history. In Europe during the 16th century many books were written about the New World and its importance, but only after Columbus had discovered America. Before his discovery could be interpreted, it had to take place as a fact of history.

The great doctrines of the New Testament are divinely revealed interpretations of historical facts. Although Jesus on various occasions before His death on the cross referred to His death and its significance, still the full truth could not be properly revealed until the crucifixion and resurrection had actually taken place.

Consequently we should not expect to find the full statement of these doctrines in the teaching of Jesus, but only in the later revelation — the New Testament Epistles. This consideration shows how wrong and foolish it is to attempt to set up an antithesis between Jesus and Paul. An oak tree is much larger than an acorn, and different in appearance, but there is organic continuity between the two. Everything in the oak tree has developed from the acorn; everything in the oak tree was present in the acorn in germ form.

The fact that the great Biblical doctrines could not be fully presented until the historical facts — Jesus' death and resurrection — had taken place, also shows what a great mistake it is to regard Jesus as primarily a teacher.

Christopher Columbus said some remarkable things which are sometimes quoted, but the important thing about him is the fact that he discovered the New World. Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is an immortal gem of literature, but it is not the most important thing about Lincoln — the most important thing about Lincoln is the fact that he was President of the United States during the critical years of the Civil War.

Those who think of the teachings of Jesus as the most important thing about Jesus nearly always also have a false view of the Christian religion. They regard Christianity as exclusively a matter of ideals, and hold that historical facts are of no importance whatever, or

only of very minor importance. The novelist Pearl Buck said in a published article (*Harper's Magazine*, January, 1933; *The Cosmopolitan*, May, 1933.) that she could be a Christian just the same even if it could be proved that Jesus Christ had never lived. That was just another way of saying that to her mind religion was only a matter of ideals, not of historical facts. We have in the Four Gospels the portrait of a beautiful life, accompanied by beautiful and wonderful teachings. What does it matter whether the person portrayed is or was historically real or not? We can still try to mold our lives by the ideal of the teachings found in the Gospels. Such is the thinking of people like Mrs. Buck. They think of religion in terms of ideals, not in terms of historical facts. They think Christ came to show men something or to tell men something, not to do something for men. And they think that what Christ came to tell men, was not something about Himself and His own deeds, but general abstract "principles" or ideals — concepts which need not be anchored to any point in history.

The teaching of the Bible, of course, is quite different. Jesus said that the Son of man must be lifted up (John 3:14). This being "lifted up", of course, is to be literally understood; it refers to His being crucified on the cross. Paul said that if the literal resurrection of Christ from the dead is not a historical fact, then the Christian religion is foolishness ("vain") — I Corinthians 5:14-17. The Bible represents the historical facts as the main thing. The teachings are subordinate to the facts, and they are important just because they are interpretations of the facts — they tell the meaning of the facts.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. According to the New Testament, what is the relationship between the teachings of Jesus and His deeds?
2. In Christian theology, into what three categories is the work of Christ as our Redeemer commonly divided?
3. Which of these three functions of Christ is the central one?
4. When we think of Jesus as a Teacher, which of His three functions or offices do we have in mind?
5. Why do those who think of Jesus as primarily a Teacher fail really to understand Jesus?
6. Why could such doctrines as the Substitutionary Atonement and Justification by Faith not be fully set forth in the teachings of Jesus?
7. What view of the Christian religion was set forth by the novelist Pearl Buck in a published article?
8. According to the Bible, what is the relationship between Christianity and historical facts?

#### LESSON 4

#### THE TEACHING OF JESUS CONCERNING THE SCRIPTURES

It is very clear that Jesus regarded the Old Testament Scriptures as having divine authority, and therefore as certain to be fulfilled in all their predictions, and as binding in all their commands, as well as true in all their statements. Over and over again He stated that the Scriptures must be fulfilled.

It is noteworthy that while the Scribes and Pharisees tried very hard to find things in Jesus which they could criticize, and on the basis of which they could bring charges against Him, they never accused Him of having a wrong attitude toward the Old Testament Scriptures. There were many matters concerning which the religious leaders of the Jews disputed with Jesus. They accused Him of breaking the Sabbath, of a wrong attitude toward the Temple, and even of being demon-possessed. But there is no evidence that they ever accused Him of a wrong attitude toward the Old Testament.

The reason, of course, is obvious. On this matter, Jesus and His critics were in complete agreement. Like them, Jesus held the high view of the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament Scriptures. On this matter, Jesus was the most orthodox of the orthodox, from the standpoint of the Pharisees themselves. He did indeed differ with the scribes and Pharisees concerning the interpretation of certain things in the Old Testament; sternly He accused them, too, of making the Word of God void through their human traditions which they had added to God's Word. But Jesus agreed with His critics and opponents concerning the divine authority of the Old Testament writings themselves.

We may now examine some sayings of Jesus which bear this out. "I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not; but the Scriptures must be fulfilled" (Mark 14:49). "And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21).

Moreover, Jesus held the Old Testament Scriptures to be the infallible rule of faith. In answering the Sadducees, He said to them: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures . . ." obviously implying that a correct understanding of the Scriptures would have prevented their error concerning the resurrection — an implication which rests, in turn, upon the view that the Old Testament is an infallible rule of faith. (Matthew 22:29).

Again, Jesus appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures to establish a point in His teaching addressed to the chief priests and scribes and elders: "And have ye not read this scripture, The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" (Mark 11:27; 12:10).

We shall consider one more saying of Jesus which bears on his view of the Old Testament Scriptures. This saying is recorded in the Gospel of John, not in the Synoptic Gospels. The saying is: "And the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35b). In the tenth chapter of the Gospel of John we have the record of a dispute between Jesus and the leaders of the Jews. He made the statement, "I and my Father are one" (verse 30). This

was rightly understood by the Jews as amounting to a claim to Deity. Thereupon they accused Him of blasphemy, and were on the point of stoning Him to death.

In replying to them, and defending Himself against their charge, Jesus appeals to the Old Testament. He cites an expression from Psalm 82:6, "I said, ye are gods." This was spoken to the judges of Old Testament times. Because as judges they were servants of God — representatives of God in administering justice — and to that extent were clothed with authority from God, they could, in that sense, be called "gods" (small "g").

Jesus' argument is as follows: It cannot be blasphemy to apply the term "God" to anyone to whom it can properly be applied. If it was proper to use the term "god" or "gods" in speaking of the Judges of Old Testament times — which Jesus' opponents could not and did not deny — then how much more proper it must be to apply the term "God" or "Son of God" to the One whom the Father had consecrated and sent into the world!

If the Jewish leaders did not object to the ancient judges being called "gods" — and they did not — then how could they claim that it was blasphemy for Jesus to say "I am the Son of God"?

This argument Jesus enforces by the statement: "And the Scripture cannot be broken." This is stated as an axiomatic truth, something which did not need to be proved — something concerning which both Jesus and His accusers were in complete agreement. Both they and He agreed without dispute that "the Scripture cannot be broken."

Not only did the Jewish leaders not accuse Jesus of a wrong attitude toward the Old Testament Scriptures; He did not accuse them of a wrong attitude toward the Scriptures. The Jews of Jesus' day regarded the Scriptures so highly that it would be practically impossible to overemphasize their high regard for them. Yet all the evidence indicates that in this matter, Jesus and they were agreed. Like them, Jesus accepted the verdict of the Scriptures as final.

Jesus accused the Jewish leaders of His day of such sins and faults as hypocrisy, religious formalism, too-high regard for mere human tradition, misunderstanding of the purpose of the Sabbath — but He did not accuse them of thinking too highly of Moses and the prophets. The implication is plain. Jesus shared the high view of Moses and the prophets which was characteristic of the Jews of His day.

Jesus also saw clearly the organic character of the Old Testament as a prediction of and preparation for Himself. This is well brought out by such a passage as Luke 24:25-27 and Luke 24:44-47. Jesus taught that He Himself was the heart of the Old Testament — a truth which should be grasped by those who today glibly tell us that there is nothing about Christ in the Old Testament. Not only is the Old Testament full of truth about Christ, but without the Old Testament neither Christ nor the New Testament can be adequately understood.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What did Jesus assert concerning the predictions contained in the Old Testament Scriptures?
2. What was Jesus' teaching concerning the commands found in the Old Testament?
3. What did Jesus believe concerning the statements of fact of the Old Testament?
4. What were some of the matters concerning which the Jewish religion leaders criticised or accused Jesus?
5. Why did the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day never accuse Him of a wrong attitude toward the Old Testament Scriptures?
6. Give a text from one of the Synoptic Gospels

(Matthew, Mark, Luke) which shows Jesus' attitude toward the Old Testament Scriptures.

7. Give a text from the Gospel of John which shows that Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders alike accepted the absolute authority of the Old Testament Scriptures.

8. Where and how in the Gospel of Luke do we find proof that Jesus taught that He Himself was the great theme and subject of the Old Testament?

9. How does Jesus' answer to the Sadducees concerning the resurrection show Jesus' acceptance of the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures?

10. What is the point of Jesus' argument based on His quotation from Psalm 82:6? How does this show His acceptance of the authority of the Scriptures?

### LESSON 5

#### THE TEACHING OF JESUS CONCERNING GOD

**Note:** The treatment of the subject in this lesson follows, in general, the discussion of Jesus' Doctrine of God in *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, by Geerhardus Vos, pages 389-397. Published 1948 by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502. Price \$2.95. Those interested in a fuller and more detailed study of the matter are referred to this book.

There is a common notion that Jesus brought the world a new doctrine of God, something quite different from anything previously held or known. This notion however is without foundation in fact. Jesus did not present an essentially new doctrine of God, though He did make some contributions to the Bible revelation about God.

It will not do to say that the Old Testament contains a false or inadequate doctrine of God; to say that involves making God misrepresent Himself.

That Jesus adhered to the Old Testament doctrine of God appears from His dialogue with the Sadducees about the resurrection. "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showeth at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him" (Luke 20:37,38).

Here Jesus recognizes the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as His own God, the God in whom He Himself also believed, the God upon whose character and promises the resurrection from the dead of all people depends.

The central element in Jesus' doctrine of God is His teaching on the Fatherhood of God. This is often regarded as Jesus' unique contribution to the Biblical doctrine of God. But as a matter of fact the idea of the Fatherhood of God is set forth in various passages of the Old Testament. However there is a difference between

the Fatherhood of God as set forth in the Old Testament and the Fatherhood of God as taught by Jesus. This difference appears in two ways:

(1) In the Old Testament God is regarded as the Father of Israel collectively considered, whereas in Jesus' teaching God appears as the Father of individual believers.

(2) In the Old Testament the Fatherhood of God is limited to the single nation of Israel, whereas in the teaching of Jesus it breaks over all national boundaries to every nation and country where the Gospel is preached and Christian believers exist.

Neither the Old Testament nor Jesus taught the popular present day doctrines of the universal Fatherhood of God and universal Brotherhood of Man. These are products of an unBiblical liberalism in theology. Jesus taught that God is the Father (in the religious sense) of Christians, those who are in a special religious relationship to God.

This is evident from the regular addition by Jesus of the possessive pronouns "your" and "yours" or "their" to the word "Father" in speaking of God. For example, note Matt. 6:32: "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." This is a part of the Sermon on the Mount, which was addressed, not to the public in general, but to those who already were disciples of Jesus (Matt. 5:1, 2). Nor is this an isolated case. The same usage occurs regularly in the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels.

Where these possessive pronouns are not used, and the simple definite article is found ("the Father"), the term "Father" is used as a correlative to Jesus as the Son; the reference therefore is not to all men in general. Note, for example, Matt. 11:27, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the

Father, save the Son." But where God is spoken of as the Father of believers, the usage is uniformly "your Father" or "Their Father," not simply "Father" or "the Father." Even where Jesus is speaking of the birds of the heaven (Matt. 6:26), He says "Your heavenly Father feedeth them" — not "the heavenly Father" nor "their heavenly Father."

It is true that in the Gospel of John Jesus speaks of "the Father" where the reference is to God as the Father of the disciples. This, however, is not really contrary to what we have noted in the preceding paragraph about the usage in the Synoptic Gospels. In the Gospel of John Jesus regards His disciples as coming to share in His own religious relation to God. Consequently, this use of "the Father" in the Gospel of John really means "He who is my father, and through me now also yours" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 392).

Some have attempted to maintain that Jesus taught nothing about God except His Fatherhood. According to this theory, Jesus held that God is nothing but love; love is the totality of God's character. This theory however breaks down when we examine the actual data in the Gospel records. In addition to the Fatherhood of God, Jesus clearly and emphatically taught two other truths about God.

The first of these other truths is the **majesty** of God. In theology this aspect of God's nature is summed up as His transcendence and His incommunicable attributes. By "transcendence" is meant the truth that God is not only present in this world, but also far above and beyond the created universe. "Transcendence" is correlative to God's immanence in the created universe. God is both transcendent and immanent. God's incommunicable attributes are those attributes of God which cannot be imparted to created beings; specifically, God's eternity, infinity, unchangeableness, omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. All these we may regard as included in the general term **majesty**.

It is true that this side of God's nature is not stressed in Jesus' teaching as much as is God's Fatherhood. The reason for this doubtless was that the Jews of Jesus' day already emphasized the majesty and greatness of God so strongly that it was not necessary for Jesus to say very much on this subject. On the other hand, the Jews of Jesus' day practically ignored the Fatherhood and love of God, so Jesus emphasized that aspect in order to correct their one-sided view of God.

However, the idea of the majesty and greatness of God is definitely present in the teaching of Jesus. We find it, for example, in the Lord's Prayer, where the disciples are taught to address God as "Our Father," but only with the added words "Which art in heaven." Similarly in the next clause of the Lord's Prayer ("Hallowed be thy name") we find the majesty and greatness of God emphasized.

At the present day the situation is exactly the reverse of that which Jesus faced when He was on earth. In His day people ignored God's Fatherhood and love, while they strongly emphasized God's transcendent majesty and greatness. But today it is just the other way around. Today people emphasize God's Fatherhood and

love, while they tend to ignore God's majesty, His transcendent greatness. So if we are to be true to the real teachings of Jesus about God, we must emphasize the majesty and greatness of God, to correct the one-sided view of God which prevails at the present day. We have heard of a minister who speaks of God as his "Pal." Concerning this it should be observed that religion is something more than merely feeling friendly toward God.

Besides the Fatherhood and majesty of God, there is another element which is prominent in Jesus' teaching about God. This is His teaching about God's **justice** or **retributive righteousness**. It is by reason of this attribute of God that He is the moral Ruler of the universe and must punish sin.

Some have attempted to subordinate God's justice to His love, holding that God is nothing but love, and that justice is only a manifestation of love. According to this idea, God punishes sin only because He loves the sinner. This idea became popular in the "New England theology" of the last century. But it cannot be substantiated from the teachings of Jesus. Jesus spoke of the eternal punishment of the wicked. If Jesus had spoken of the temporary punishment of sinners, perhaps such temporary punishment might be regarded as a manifestation of God's love, for the benefit of the persons punished, with a view to leading them to repentance and reformation. But eternal punishment cannot be regarded as a manifestation of God's love for anyone — least of all for those who suffer this eternal penalty of sin.

From the many sayings of Jesus dealing with this subject, we may consider one or two. Matt. 25:46, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Mark 14:21 (concerning Judas, who betrayed Jesus), "The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him. But woe unto that man, by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born." Mark 9:43,44, "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

#### Questions for Discussion

1. What does Jesus' statement to the Sadducees about the resurrection (Luke 20:37,38) show concerning Jesus' view of God?
2. What is the central element in Jesus' teaching about God?
3. What two differences exist between the Old Testament teaching about the Fatherhood of God and Jesus' teaching about it?
4. How can it be shown that Jesus did not teach the popular present-day doctrines of the Universal Fatherhood of God and the Universal Brotherhood of man?
5. Besides the Fatherhood of God, what two truths about God are found in Jesus' teachings?

6. What is meant by the Majesty of God?

7. Why did Jesus not need to stress God's majesty as much as God's Fatherhood and love?

8. What is meant by the retributive righteousness of God?

9. How can it be shown that God's retributive righteousness (or justice) is not just an expression of God's love for men?

10. How does the Lord's Prayer bring out the idea of the majesty of God?

#### LESSON 6

#### JESUS' TEACHING CONCERNING HIS OWN PERSON AND WORK

##### (1) The Messianic Title "Son of man" and its Meaning

In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus' favorite designation of Himself is by the title "Son of man." In modern times this phrase has most often been regarded as a designation of Jesus' humanity, or as referring to His human nature over against His divine nature which is designated by the title "Son of God." A study of the usage of the title "Son of man" in the Gospels, however, will reveal that this title is never used as a correlative of "Son of God." Nor is there any real reason for regarding it as a designation of Jesus' human nature in distinction from His divine nature. Rather, the title "Son of man" refers to Jesus as a person, with no special emphasis on His humanity.

A key to the meaning of this title "Son of man" may be found in Daniel 7:13, one of the great Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament:

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him."

Here the title "Son of man" is associated, not with the humanity of the coming Messiah, nor with His humiliation and sufferings, but precisely with His heavenly glory. He is seen in the vision coming with the clouds of heaven. This vision of Daniel is really a prophecy of the second coming of Christ in glory at the end of the world.

Jesus, of course, was thoroughly familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures. And it seems highly probable, to say the least, that He took the title "Son of man" from this prophecy in Daniel, and used it in the sense which it has there. Accordingly, we may understand the title "Son of man," not as a designation of Jesus' human nature, but as a designation of Him as the Messiah, the Lord of glory. The meaning of the title "Son of man," then, appears to be something like that involved in the expression "the second Adam" or "the last Adam."

In applying the title "Son of man" to Himself, Jesus claims to be the Messiah, the one seen by Daniel in the vision as coming on the clouds of heaven. Probably Jesus chose this Messianic title in preference to the more common "Son of David" in order to avoid the nationalistic and political ideas which the Jews of His day attached to the title "Son of David."

##### (2) Jesus Claims to Fulfill the Old Testament Prophecies.

We find that Jesus claimed to be the fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures — the Law and the Prophets. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17).

In Luke 24:27 we find Jesus expounding the Old Testament Scriptures to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and telling them that He Himself was the fulfilment of those Scriptures:

"And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Later the same night He addressed the assembled disciples in Jerusalem, saying in Luke 24:44, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me."

This claim of Jesus to be the fulfiller of the Old Testament Scriptures is really a tremendous claim. It means that Jesus claims to be the One who fulfills every prophecy of a coming Redeemer, from the prophecy spoken just after the fall of man, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15), down to the prophecy given through Malachi, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings . . ." (Mal. 4:2). In other words, Jesus claims to be the One whom God's people had been expecting through the thousands of years since sin came into the world.

Dr. Campbell Morgan once said that the entire Old Testament can be summed up in three things: the longing for a prophet, the longing for a priest, and the longing for a king. Now Jesus has come, and He says that He Himself is the fulfilment of all the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus therefore says, in effect: "You have been expecting a prophet; you have been expecting a priest; you have been expecting a king. Now I have come. I am that prophet. I am that priest. I am that king."

##### Questions for Discussion

1. What title is Jesus' favorite designation of Himself in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke)?

2. What passage in the Old Testament is the probable source from which Jesus took this title?

3. In the Old Testament passage, what characteristic of the coming Messiah is connected with this title?

4. How is the title "Son of man" often misunderstood today?

5. What designation of Christ used by the Apostle Paul is approximately equivalent in meaning to the title "Son of man"?

6. How can it be shown that the title "Son of man" as used by Jesus is not a designation of Jesus' human nature in distinction from His divine nature?

7. What was the most common Biblical title of the Messiah in use among the Jews of our Lord's day?

8. What is the probable reason why Jesus preferred the title "Son of man" for Himself rather than the more

commonly used title "Son of David"?

9. Give a verse which shows that Jesus claimed to fulfil the Old Testament prophecies.

10. What is the first Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament? To whom were the words formally addressed? What is the meaning of the prediction?

11. What is the last Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament?

12. How did Dr. Campbell Morgan once sum up the entire Old Testament? How do our Lord's claims fit in with Dr. Morgan's summary?

## LESSON 7

### JESUS' TEACHING CONCERNING HIS OWN PERSON AND WORK, CONTINUED

(3) **Jesus Claims a Unique Relation to God the Father.**

In Matthew 11:27 Jesus claims for Himself a unique, reciprocal relationship with God the Father: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

Such a claim to a unique, special, reciprocal knowledge of the infinite God amounts to nothing less than a claim to deity on the part of Jesus. The finite cannot comprehend the infinite. Jesus in this verse claims to have a total knowledge of God. Jesus thus claims to comprehend the Infinite One. Therefore Jesus claims to be infinite Himself. And this is the same as claiming to be God.

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, and lived in Galilee and Judea. Men saw Him, heard Him, lived with Him, worked with Him, and afterwards testified that they had seen His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Yet they had seen only one side. For Jesus Christ is an infinite being. He lived among men; men saw one side of Him. But there is another side. And no human being has ever seen that other side. Christ is so great that only God the Father has ever seen the other side.

This infinite greatness of Christ is also brought out strongly by a text in the Gospel of John (John 8:58), where Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." The Jewish leaders had said to Jesus, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" (verse 57). Jesus replies, breaking the rules of grammar in order to teach the truth about Himself. Instead of saying, "Before Abraham was, I was," He says, "Before Abraham was, I am." That is to say, Abraham was a finite man, who lived in historical time. His earthly life had a beginning and it also had an end. So one could say "Abraham was." But Jesus is an eternal being, so he cannot be placed alongside of Abraham. The only tense that tells the real truth about

Jesus is the present tense. For he is the one who is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

How different the divine Christ of the Scriptures is from the merely human Christ of much modern theology! The Christ of the Scriptures is a great Christ, not a little Christ. He is so great that He absolutely transcends historical time, and exists in an eternal present.

(4) **Jesus Claims the Power to Forgive Sins.**

We find Jesus' claim to deity — His claim to be God — advanced again in His claim to have the power and authority to forgive people's sins. This claim of Jesus is recorded in Matt. 9:1-8. The scribes accused Jesus of blasphemy because He claimed the power to forgive men's sins. They reasoned that only God can forgive sins. And in this they were quite correct. Their error was not in holding that only God can forgive sins, but in denying that Jesus is God.

Jesus claimed and exercised the power to forgive sins, and He vindicated His power by performing a miracle, which could only be done by the power of God, healing the paralytic, that they might know that "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." In claiming the authority to forgive sins, Jesus claimed to be God.

There are only three possibilities concerning this claim of Jesus to forgive sins: (1) It was blasphemy; (2) it was the delusion of an insane person; (3) it was sober truth, in which case Jesus is truly God. Those modern religionists who deny that Jesus is truly God face a dilemma here. For if Jesus is not truly God, then He was either a wicked man (blasphemer), or He was insane. And those who deny that Jesus is truly God, and yet claim to be His disciples and preach His Gospel, are in a very inconsistent position.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. What is the real meaning of the claim which

Jesus makes for Himself in Matthew 11:27?

2. Who alone knows the full truth about the greatness of Jesus Christ?

3. How does the statement of Jesus in John 8:58 show His infinite greatness? How did Jesus break the rules of grammar to teach truth about Himself?

4. What is meant by saying that Jesus Christ transcends historical time?

5. What should be thought of the statement, attributed to a Liberal preacher: "I believe in the divinity of Christ because if I did not I could not believe in my

own divinity"?

6. It is sometimes said by religious Liberals that "Jesus is divine because He is so perfectly human". How does this type of statement differ from the truth as stated by Jesus Himself?

7. How does Jesus' claim of the power to forgive sins show who and what Jesus is?

8. What three possibilities exist for explaining Jesus' claim to have power to forgive men's sins? Which of these is the truth? How can the others be shown to be false?

## LESSON 8

### JESUS' TEACHING CONCERNING HIS OWN PERSON AND WORK, CONTINUED

(5) **Jesus Taught that He would Lay Down His Life as a Sacrifice for the Sins of His People.**

It has often been alleged that the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement (otherwise called the vicarious atonement) is not found in the teachings of Jesus, or at any rate not in the teachings of Jesus recorded in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke). This claim is however a false one, for the doctrine in question is certainly found in our Lord's recorded teaching, including the Synoptic Gospels. For a good reason it is not as prominent in the teaching of Jesus as it is in the New Testament Epistles.

By the substitutionary atonement is meant the truth that Jesus suffered and died, not merely as a martyr, nor merely as an example of self-denial, nor merely to impress men and move them to repentance, but specifically as a sacrifice to satisfy the perfect justice of God on account of human sin, thereby reconciling man to God. The atonement was necessary for God's sake; there was something in the nature of God which required this if man was to be forgiven and saved. Thus according to sound Biblical teaching the atonement terminates on God not on man. It satisfies a requirement of God's nature — the requirement of justice, that sin cannot go unpunished. Sinners can be forgiven only because Jesus Christ has borne the penalty for their sin. Although the so-called Apostles' Creed affirms "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," this must be carefully guarded against misunderstanding. Strictly speaking, God never does nor can forgive sins. He forgives sinners, but the penalty for the sin can never be omitted. It must be borne by someone — if not by the sinner personally, then by his Substitute. Since justice is part of God's nature, and He cannot deny Himself, it is impossible for Him to disregard the requirements of justice. If He were to do so He would instantly cease to exist — an impossibility, of course — and with Him the entire universe would in one instant vanish into nothingness. God cannot be God without being just; His absolute justice is inseparable from His nature. Therefore if sinners are forgiven the penalty must be borne by an acceptable Substitute.

The question we are facing is whether this doctrine of the substitutionary atonement is or is not found in the teachings of Jesus Christ recorded in the Gospels. First of all, it is sufficient for our purpose to show that the doctrine is included in Christ's teachings. We do not need to prove that it is as prominent in Jesus' teachings as in the Epistles. There is something seriously wrong with the faith of those people who demand that a doctrine shall be supported by many texts before they will accept it. For instance, it is objected against the doctrine of our Lord's virgin birth that it is recorded in only two of the Gospels (Matthew and Luke). Since the birth of Jesus is recorded only in these two Gospels, it should hardly surprise us that His virgin birth is found only in these two. But even if it were taught in only one of the Gospels, that should be ample warrant for believing it. One clear statement of a truth in God's infallible Word should be enough warrant for faith.

A key verse for the substitutionary atonement in the teachings of Jesus is Mark 10:45 with its parallel text Matthew 20:28, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." A ransom is a purchase price paid to buy something or someone back. In this text "to give his life" means, of course, to give it in death, that is, to give up His life as a ransom for many. It refers to the death of Christ. So then the death of Christ is a ransom-price paid for many. In the Greek the phrase "for many" means not merely "for the benefit of many" but more specifically, "in the place of many." The idea of substitution is explicitly set forth: Christ gives His life as a ransom instead of many. This text, summing up as it does Jesus' own consciousness of the nature and reason for His mission ("the Son of man came . . .") is very significant. It shows that Jesus taught that His substitutionary death was the reason for His coming into the world.

The substitutionary atonement is found, too, in connection with the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:28 and parallels) where Jesus said, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." The shedding of blood, of

course, is equivalent to death. The shedding of the blood of the animal sacrifices involved the death of the animals (see Levit. 17:11). Here, therefore, Jesus affirms that His death is for the remission of the sins of many. Just as in the Old Testament system the animal sacrifice was the offerer's substitute, suffering death that he might live, so the death of Jesus, signified by the shedding of His blood, constitutes a substitutionary atonement for the sins of His people. This of course is the central and perfectly obvious meaning of the Lord's Supper; all else in the Supper is incidental to this central meaning of substitutionary sacrifice, and without this central truth the rest would lack all meaning and relevance. It is a most amazing inconsistency, therefore, that people who no longer believe in the substitutionary atonement nevertheless continue to observe the Lord's Supper. This can only be attributed to the most callous formalism in religion and the tendency to perpetuate religious ritual apart from its real theological meaning.

In the Gospel of John the concept of the substitutionary atonement is taught in 6:52-56, where Jesus affirms that eating His flesh and drinking His blood is absolutely necessary for salvation. The implication is plain that Christ must suffer and die, for eating His flesh and blood means appropriating the benefits of His death. Without the death of Christ, there could be no such thing as eating His flesh and drinking His blood. The Jews realized this, for they asked, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" The reference of this passage is not directly to the Lord's Supper, but to obtaining, by faith, the benefits of Christ's sufferings and death.

Many objections are raised against the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement, which we cannot consider in detail here. One of the most persistent is the claim that it would be unjust on God's part to take the sins of guilty men and lay them on the innocent Christ. In reply to this we may say that this would indeed be unjust if Christ were compelled against His will to suffer the penalty for the sins of others. But of course the Bible represents Christ as doing this, not against His will, but willingly (note John 10:17,18).

Another common objection is that God must be a harsh, vindictive Judge if He will not forgive sinners unless the innocent Christ bear their penalty. In answer to this it may be said that the same God who required the atonement also provided the victim for the sacrifice. God's justice required an atonement; His love provided it. He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.

Still another objection is that we forgive others without requiring any atonement, so why cannot God do the same? In answer to this it may be replied that we have nothing to do with the judicial punishment of sin. What we forgive is really injuries, not sins. Only God forgives sins. We can injure our fellow men, and we can sin against God. Strictly speaking, we cannot injure God, nor can we sin against men. This is brought out by Psalm 51:4, where David says, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." David had most grievously injured Bathsheba and her husband Uriah the Hittite, but in doing so he had sinned against God. Injuries can be forgiven without any atonement, but the forgiveness of sin requires that the penalty be paid by someone.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. What is meant by the substitutionary atonement?
2. Why was an atonement necessary?
3. Why can God never really forgive sins?
4. How many clear statements of a truth in Scripture should be needed before we are warranted in believing it?
5. What does Mark 10:5 teach about the purpose of Christ's coming into the world?
6. What is the meaning of the word "ransom"?
7. What is the precise meaning of the phrase "for many" in Mark 10:45?
8. What is the bearing of the Lord's Supper on the substitutionary atonement?
9. How can we account for the fact that people who do not believe in the substitutionary atonement nevertheless observe the Lord's Supper?
10. How can we answer the objection that it was unjust for God to lay the sins of guilty men on the innocent Christ?
11. How can we answer the objection that God should forgive sinners without any atonement, since we forgive our fellow-men without any atonement?

### LESSON 9

#### JESUS' TEACHING CONCERNING HIS OWN PERSON AND WORK, CONTINUED

##### (6) Jesus' Teaching Concerning His Own Second Coming

Jesus repeatedly predicted His own second coming in glory, and He also predicted that He personally will sit as Judge to determine the eternal destiny of the entire human race.

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His

Father with his angels; and then shall he reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). See also Matt. 24:30; Matt. 7:22,23; 25:31,32; 26:63ff. Over and over again Jesus predicted His own coming again in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the whole human race. It is noteworthy that this teaching is found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:22,23) which is a favorite portion of Scripture with some people because they wrongly suppose that it sets

forth a non-theological message and presents purely ethical teachings without any doctrinal tenets about the Person and work of Jesus Himself.

Modern critics of the New Testament admit that Jesus made these predictions, but they hold that He was mistaken, and that He never will or can come again, for He is dead, according to their views, and His human body lies in the dust of Palestine. Other critics admit that these predictions of a second coming in glory are attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, but they deny that Jesus really said these things. They say that we have no way of knowing with any certainty what Jesus really said about such matters, because the only reports of His sayings which we have are colored by the faith of the early Church. This attitude of course assumes that the faith of the early Church determined beliefs about Jesus, rather than beliefs about Jesus determining the faith of the early Church. Is the Jesus of the Gospels a product of the faith of the early Church, or is the faith of the early Church a product of the Jesus of the Gospels? Unbelieving critics may hold the former of these alternatives, but the Christian who has experienced the new birth will hold the latter. He will hold that by infallible divine inspiration we have in the Gospels an objective and undistorted account of the life, deeds and words of Jesus Christ.

Those who have faith in Jesus know that He is sure to come again. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass away. He cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, even those that pierced Him (Rev. 1:7).

The time, circumstances, accompaniments and results of Christ's second coming are discussed by our Lord in His great Discourse on the Last Things in Matthew chapter 24, with parallels in Mark 13 and Luke 21. It is far beyond the scope of the present series of lessons to take up this great discourse in detail. We may however note some of the principal features of it here.

(1) Our Lord's second coming will be preceded by various signs, some of which are of a general nature and capable of occurring again and again (such as earthquakes, famines, pestilences, wars — Matt. 24:6-8) while others are of a more unique and specific character (preaching of the Gospel to the whole world, Matt. 24:14; appearance of the "abomination of desolation," Matt. 24:15; appearance of the sign of the Son of man in heaven, Matt. 24:30). The occurrence of all these signs will indicate that the Lord's coming is very near (Matt. 24:33).

(2) Our Lord's second coming will be at a time when men generally do not expect it and are not prepared for it (Matt. 24:36-42). Moreover the precise time will never be predictable (Matt. 24:42). The Christian should therefore be watchful, that is, spiritually alert and ready for the Lord's coming.

(3) When the Lord returns, it will be visibly "in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30). This is therefore not a merely spiritual coming but a visible, personal return with cosmic implications and effects.

(4) The Lord's second coming will be a coming unto Judgment (Matt. 25:31ff). The eternal destiny of men will be publicly determined by Him as Judge, on the basis of their relationship to Himself.

(5) The Lord's second coming is the true object of Christian hope in the deepest sense. "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Nothing short of the Lord's return can be the true object of Christian hope in the absolute sense.

(6) The Lord's second coming will be followed by the absolute, perfect, eternal kingdom of God, which is the fulfilment of religion and of human destiny in the most complete and absolute sense. Matt. 13:43, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

(7) Throughout all these discourses of our Lord, His second coming is represented as sudden and catastrophic. It is not merely in the spiritual sphere, but in the visible world of nature, in the field of time and space which we call "history". It is, in fact, the goal of world history and the conclusion of world history. It cannot be anything merely spiritual because it includes effects of cosmic significance — the resurrection of the dead, the transformation of all things, the shift from time to eternity. Much more could be said about these matters, but we shall pause at this point.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Where in the Sermon on the Mount is the teaching of Christ's second coming found?
2. Why is the occurrence of this idea in the Sermon on the Mount an embarrassment to some people?
3. Why do some critics say that Jesus was mistaken in His predictions about His coming again?
4. On what ground do some scholars say that it is impossible for us to know with certainty what Jesus said?
5. How can the viewpoint of these persons be answered from the Christian standpoint?
6. In what books and chapters is our Lord's great Discourse on the Last Things found?
7. What is the function of the "signs" predicted as preceding our Lord's second coming?
8. When Christ comes again, what will be the spiritual condition of the general population of the world?
9. What is the true object of Christian hope in the deepest sense?
10. What will be the character of the kingdom of God after our Lord's second coming?

11. What is meant by saying that the Lord's second coming is the goal of history?

12. What is meant by saying that our Lord's second coming is the conclusion of history?

## LESSON 10

### THE TEACHING OF JESUS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

#### 1. Introduction.

**Note:** The treatment of the material in this lesson and the following lessons on the teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God follows the development of the subject in *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom and the Church*, by Geerhardus Vos. Those who wish a more detailed and complete discussion in addition to the present series of lessons are referred to this book. Material on Dispensationalism, the Scofield Reference Bible and the Pilgrim Edition of the Holy Bible, not found in the book, has also been provided in these lessons. —Editor.

Our Lord opened His public ministry in Galilee with the announcement that the Kingdom of God was at hand (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43). He even made the statement that preaching the Kingdom of God constituted His mission. The idea of the Kingdom of God which thus opened our Lord's public ministry was also prominent at the crucial points in His career, such as the Sermon on the Mount and the great Kingdom parables. Jesus thus connected His own person and work with the coming of the Kingdom of God, which shows the importance of this idea in His thinking.

The Kingdom of God formed the subject on which Jesus especially instructed His disciples. Note Matt. 13:52, "Every scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven . . ." In fact, our Lord's teaching was largely connected with this great subject.

It is a remarkable fact that the Kingdom of God is mentioned by name only three times in the Gospel of John (3:3,5; 18:36). The reason for this is doubtless that in John's Gospel the emphasis is primarily on relation to Christ as a Person. The idea of salvation is broken down into such basic concepts as "grace," "truth," "life," etc. While the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke) emphasize Jesus' teaching and His work, John rather emphasizes Jesus' person as the Son of God. The Synoptics stress what Jesus said and did, while John stresses what Jesus was and who He was and is.

Although the term "Kingdom of God" occurs so rarely in the Gospel of John, there is no real contradiction between the teaching of the Synoptic Gospels and John on this subject. In John chapter 3 our Lord in speaking with Nicodemus taught that the new birth is the only way of entrance to the Kingdom. But the new birth is also obviously the entrance upon spiritual life. Therefore, since the new life and the Kingdom are both entered through the new birth, the Kingdom of God is equivalent to life in the highest sense.

In a similar manner, John 18:36,37 teaches that truth is equivalent to the Kingdom of God.

It is also true that in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) the term life is sometimes used as equivalent to the Kingdom. This will be seen by comparing Mark 10:17 with Mark 10:23. It is clear that in this passage life and kingdom are equivalent terms.

Important as the theme of the Kingdom of God is in the teaching of Jesus, it is still not the most important subject in His teaching. God Himself is the most important subject in our Lord's teaching. This is true even though more space is devoted to the Kingdom of God than is devoted to God Himself in the Gospel record. What we spend the most time on is not necessarily the most important thing in our lives. If it were, we should have to say that sleeping is more important than worship for we spend more hours in sleep. Again, the first concern of the Church is the salvation of souls, but the highest concern of the Church is the glory of God. In other words, we are to seek the salvation of souls precisely because the glory of God requires us to do this. Similarly, the glory of God (or God Himself) is a higher concern than the Kingdom of God. This is also shown by the fact that Jesus seldom spoke simply of "the Kingdom," but almost always of "the Kingdom of God."

Some theologians have attempted to organize the entire teaching of Jesus under the heading of the Kingdom of God. This cannot be done successfully. The attempt to do it involves distortion or artificial manipulation of the teachings of our Lord.

In Luke 12:32 Jesus calls the Kingdom a gift of the Father to His children, thus basing the Kingdom on the Fatherhood of God. The idea of the Kingdom, however, is not derived solely from the Fatherhood of God. Other aspects of God's nature and character are also involved.

Some of the subjects which Jesus linked with the Kingdom of God in His teaching are: the church, the end of history, the state of glory, righteousness, the love and grace of God, faith, repentance, regeneration, miracles and the relation of Jesus' own work to the Old Testament.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. What public announcement did Jesus make at the beginning of His public ministry in Galilee? Where is this announcement found?

2. How can we explain the fact that the term "Kingdom of God" occurs very seldom in the Gospel of John?

3. Give a verse from the Gospel of John which proves that in the mind of Jesus life and the Kingdom of God were equivalent ideas.

4. Give a passage in the Gospel of John which shows that Jesus regarded truth and the Kingdom of God as equivalent concepts.

5. Why would it not be correct to say that the

Kingdom of God is the most important subject in the teaching of Jesus?

6. What are some of the subjects which Jesus linked with the Kingdom of God in His teaching?

## LESSON 11

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In speaking of the Kingdom of God Jesus did not use this expression as if it were something absolutely new and previously unknown to His bearers. He assumed that they already knew something of the term and the idea represented by it. It is evident from the fact that He did not undertake to define the Kingdom of God for His hearers, but simply announced the fact that it was "at hand" (Matt. 4:17). The meaning of the term was already known to His hearers from their familiarity with the Old Testament.

The question has sometimes been raised whether Jesus should be regarded as the Founder of a new religion. While in a sense Christianity was new, yet in the deepest sense it was old. Jesus should not be regarded as the founder of a new religion, for He everywhere implied that His work was the continuation and true fulfilment of the Old Testament system. Jesus always subordinated Himself and His program to the program of the Old Testament — that revealed through Moses and the prophets. In His claim to be the Messiah Jesus of course implied that everything in the Old Testament found its focus and completion in Himself. Instead of starting something new, Jesus was bringing to fulfilment and completion something that had been in process since the days of Adam and Eve.

It is not difficult to show that the Old Testament prophesies the Kingdom of God as something future. But it can also be shown that the Old Testament recognizes the Kingdom of God as something already existing in Old Testament times. In the general sense of God as sovereign Ruler over all things by reason of His being the Creator and Preserver of all things, the Kingdom of God is of course as old as creation. But there is also a more specific Kingdom of God recognized in the Old Testament — a Kingdom of God within the sphere of redemption.

The most important passage for this idea is Exodus 19:4-6 where, following the formal establishment of the covenant relationship between God and Israel, Israel is to be unto God "a kingdom of priests" and "a holy nation." This kingdom exists within the sphere of redemption and is something unique and distinct from God's general rule over all the world. Israel is to be God's Kingdom in a sense above what can be said about the other nations; hence the passage adds the words: "For all the earth is mine."

As one of the benefits of the covenant relationship God gave Israel His laws. Through His rule over them through the centuries, He proved Himself their King in the special, redemptive sense. This was true even after the establishment of the monarchy in the days of Samuel

the prophet, for the human kings were not kings in any absolute sense — they were only representatives of Jehovah. Israel was to be a nation in which all parts of life were to be subordinated to religion. In other nations of the ancient world religion was a function of the State, but in Israel the State was a function of religion — that is, it existed for a religious reason and purpose. Israel's real king was to be the Lord.

The question may be raised whether Jesus Himself ever spoke of the Kingdom as existing before His ministry. Did He merely announce the Kingdom as "at hand" or did He regard it as previously existing in some sense? One text that might seem, on the surface, to indicate that He did not regard the Kingdom as previously existing is Luke 16:16, "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." This text however must be taken along with others which certainly imply that Jesus regarded the Kingdom as, in some sense at least, previously existing. For example, note Matt. 8:12, "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This text speaks of the Jewish people as "the children of the kingdom," therefore the Kingdom must have been in existence. Another text which implies the same thing is Matt. 21:43, "Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given unto a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Still another text is Matt. 5:35, where Jerusalem is called "the city of the great king." The "great king" of course, is God; therefore this text implies that the Kingdom existed in Old Testament times.

But if Jesus recognized that the Kingdom existed in Old Testament times, why did He almost always speak of it as "at hand" — that is, soon to appear, hence still future? It is of course out of the question that Jesus could have been ignorant of the teaching of the Old Testament on this subject. Besides, we have seen that certain statements of our Lord clearly imply recognition of the existence of the Kingdom in Old Testament times. Also, it will not do to attribute Jesus' usage to accommodation to the Jewish ideas of His day, for the Jews of our Lord's day already recognized that the Kingdom of God is both present and also future, in different aspects.

No doubt the true explanation is that Jesus desired to emphasize very strongly the absolute and perfect character of the Kingdom of God, and the great superiority of its New Testament form to its Old Testament form. Therefore, although what was "at hand" was not to be something in the strict sense absolutely new, but rather a new stage or development of something which had long existed, yet the new was going

to be so much better than the old that Jesus preferred to keep the name "Kingdom of God" almost entirely for the new.

The Bible often states relative matters in absolute terms for the sake of emphasis. For example, it is stated that no one can be Christ's disciple unless he hates his father and mother. This obviously does not mean that a Christian is really to hate his earthly parents, but only that he is to love God more than he loves his parents. Similarly, we may say, Jesus practically limits the name "Kingdom of God" to the new development in God's program of redemption because that new development pre-eminently deserved this name, even though strictly speaking the Old Testament system was also a stage of the Kingdom of God.

Not only the Jews of our Lord's day, but the Old Testament itself regarded the Kingdom of God as both present and future. Three main causes contributed to the development of the concept of a still future Kingdom of God. These three causes may be set forth as follows:

(1) There were prophecies in the Old Testament which predicted that at some future time the Lord would perform mighty acts of deliverance for His people, which would make Him their King in a new and fuller sense. An example of this type of prophecies is found in Isaiah 24:21-23.

(2) The Babylonian Captivity in the sixth century before Christ interrupted the visible kingship on the throne of David in Jerusalem. The last king, Zedekiah, was captured by the Babylonians and led away to a Babylonian prison where he languished until he died. This tragic end of the visible kingship, coupled with the fact that God had promised by an unconditional covenant that the line of David would reign for ever, naturally led to the idea of a resumption of the kingdom at some future time (after the end of the Captivity).

(3) The many Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament projected the concept of the kingdom into the future, that is, into the "latter days" — the times when the promised Messiah would appear and carry on His work. This meant that the idea of a future kingdom became equivalent to Israel's hope for the Messiah. Note, for example, Mark 15:43, where it is said of Joseph of Arimathea that he "waited for the kingdom of God" — that is, that we waited for the coming of the Messiah, the King of the Kingdom of God.

If we ask whether Jesus used the phrase "the kingdom of God" in precisely the same way as the Jews of His day used it, the answer must be that He did not. As a matter of fact the Jewish literature of the time of Christ rarely uses the term "Kingdom of God" to designate something still future. The Jewish idea of the Kingdom was man-centered rather than God-centered; they were more interested in the kingdom of Israel than in the Kingdom of God.

The Jews of our Lord's day also used other ex-

pressions, such as "the coming age," in place of "the kingdom of God." When they did speak of the Kingdom their thought of it was almost entirely on a legalistic plane. They thought of the Kingdom as the reign of the Law, neither more nor less. The idea of grace as complementary to law was foreign to their thinking. In Jesus' teaching, however, the Kingdom is first of all a matter of grace, and only subordinately to this a matter of law. The gracious character of the Old Testament system, which had been lost and forgotten by the Jews of Jesus' day, was restored in the teaching of our Lord. Jesus' seldom referring to the Old Testament system as the Kingdom of God may have been due, in part at least, to a desire on His part to avoid seeming to endorse the perverse Jewish distortion of the Old Testament system. And of course Jesus never in any way sanctioned the popular Jewish idea of a national earthly political kingdom intended to make Israel great and important in a worldly sense.

Jesus linked the expression "the Kingdom of God" with the whole body of Israel's Messianic hopes. In this way Jesus gave the Messianic hope "the highest ideal character, a supreme religious consecration." He avoided the Jewish nationalistic or secular idea of the Messiah, and promoted a truly religious concept of the Messianic hope, by linking His own Messiahship to the idea of the Kingdom of God.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Why is it incorrect to speak of Jesus as the Founder of a new religion?
2. Where does the Old Testament clearly speak of a Kingdom of God (within the sphere of redemption) as something existing in Old Testament times?
3. Give a text from the sayings of Jesus which implies that the Kingdom of God existed in Old Testament times.
4. In view of the fact that Jesus recognized that the Kingdom of God existed in Old Testament times, what is the probable reason why He almost always spoke of the Kingdom as something new — "at hand" — or about to appear?
5. What three reasons can be assigned for the occurrence in the Old Testament of the idea of a future Kingdom of God?
6. What was probably the reason why the Jewish literature of Jesus' day rarely speaks of "the kingdom of God"?
7. What difference existed between the Jewish idea of the Kingdom and Jesus' idea of the Kingdom, concerning the relation between the Law and the Kingdom?
8. What may have been the reason why Jesus almost always spoke of "the kingdom of God," not simply of "the kingdom"?

#### LESSON 12

#### THE TERMINOLOGY OF THE KINGDOM

The Greek word translated "kingdom" in the English Bible is *basileia*. This word occurs 161 times in the Greek New Testament and is always translated "kingdom" in the King James Version. In the Hebrew Old Testament we find the words *Malkuth* and *Mamlakhah*, with related Aramaic words in the Aramaic parts of the Old Testament. *Malkuth* is translated in the King James Version: empire 1, kingdom 49, realm 4, reign 21, royal 14 times. *Mamlakhah* is translated in the King James Version: kingdom 106, reign 2, king's 1, royal 4 times.

These various Greek and Hebrew words express two related but distinct ideas, namely: (1) the idea of kingship or reigning as a function of kings, which we may call the abstract sense of the terms; and (2) the idea of that domain, territory or body of people which the king reigns over, which we may call the concrete sense of the terms.

Our English word "kingdom", it will be noted, is ambiguous and may have either of these meanings where it occurs in the King James Version of the Bible. In modern English, however, the word "kingdom" is no longer used in the abstract sense of "kingdom" or "reigning", but only in the concrete sense of "the realm" over which the king reigns. Because of this ambiguity of the word "kingdom" in the English Bible, it becomes necessary, wherever we meet the word, to inquire into the sense in which it is used.

In the Old Testament "kingdom" was used in the abstract sense wherever the Kingdom of God is spoken of, with the single exception of Exodus 19:6 ("a kingdom of priests"). Everywhere else in the Old Testament "the Kingdom of God" means God's function of reigning rather than that over which God reigns.

This sense of reign or kingship is also illustrated by the question asked by the disciples of the risen Christ in Acts 1:6, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" In this question "kingdom" certainly means "kingship," "rule," "function of reigning," rather than that which is reigned over.

Jewish literature outside of the scriptures almost never uses the phrase "the kingdom of God." The Jews' hearts were set on Israel reigning, not on God reigning. But Jesus was concerned that God be acknowledged as supreme. His ideal was religious whereas theirs was secular and nationalistic.

Following the prevalent Old Testament usage, Jesus certainly must have started with the idea of "kingship" or "reign". But He did not stop with this, for

the idea led on to His speaking of God's realm (the concrete sense of the term "kingdom"). There are places in Jesus' teaching where the concrete sense is required to give an intelligible meaning. In other places the abstract sense of "kingdom" — the function or act of reigning — is required by the context. When Jesus said "the Son of man shall come in his kingdom", the meaning clearly is "kingship" or "activity of reigning." But on the other hand where our Lord speaks of people "entering" the Kingdom, or being "shut out" of it, or "inheriting" it, or "receiving" it, or "seeking" it, or "possessing" it, etc., the concrete sense is necessary. These places cannot refer to God's function of reigning; they must refer to something objective over which He reigns.

The term *sovereignty* has been proposed as a possible translation for the Biblical terms for "kingdom." While the sovereignty of God is a Biblical concept, it is not satisfactory as a translation for the Hebrew and Greek words in question, chiefly because it cannot express the concrete sense of "kingdom" — God's realm, that which God reigns over. It may also be questioned whether "sovereignty" expresses the abstract sense satisfactorily, for as often used "sovereignty" means a potential rather than an actual reign — a right to reign rather than the fact of reigning. Britain held sovereignty over the territory of Hong Kong even during the years that that territory was occupied by the Japanese army, but British rule was not exercised there, as a matter of fact, during those years.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. What is the Greek word which is translated "kingdom" in the English Bible? How many times does it occur in the Greek New Testament?
2. What is the difference in meaning between the abstract and the concrete sense of the term "kingdom"?
3. Which sense of the term "kingdom" is predominant in the Old Testament? What exception exists to this predominance?
4. Give a verse in which Jesus uses the word "kingdom" in the abstract sense.
5. Give a verse in which Jesus uses the word "kingdom" in the concrete sense.
6. Why is the term "sovereignty" not a satisfactory translation of the Greek term *basileia* in connection with the Kingdom of God?

#### LESSON 13

##### THE TERMINOLOGY OF THE KINGDOM, CONTINUED

On reading the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) we are at once struck by the fact that Matthew almost always speaks of the kingdom of heaven, whereas Mark and Luke speak of the kingdom of God. Matthew uses "kingdom of heaven" exclusively except

for six places (6:33; 12:28; 13:43; 21:31, 43; 26:29). "Kingdom of heaven" occurs 30 times in the Gospel of Matthew. On the other hand, "kingdom of heaven" does not occur even once in Mark, Luke or John — these three Gospels use the term "kingdom of God" exclusively.

We must remember, of course, that Jesus spoke the Aramaic language, and the New Testament writers by divine inspiration translated His saying into Greek as they wrote them in our Gospels. The same Aramaic phrase could be correctly translated into Greek in more than one way. Probably Jesus ordinarily used an Aramaic phrase meaning "kingdom of heaven." Mark and Luke, by divine inspiration, translated the Aramaic word for "heaven" by a Greek word meaning "God," as they were writing primarily for Gentile readers and the phrase "kingdom of God," would be more meaningful than "kingdom of heaven" to Gentiles. Matthew, on the other hand, writing primarily for Jewish readers, translated the Aramaic phrase for "kingdom of heaven" literally into Greek, so that (with six exceptions) we find "kingdom of heaven" in the Gospel of Matthew. It is also possible, or even probable, that Jesus used both "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God", but Matthew alone has preserved "kingdom of heaven" in his Gospel. The two expressions are used in parallel passages, that is, they are used in reporting the same utterance of Jesus, as will be seen by comparing Matthew 4:17 with Mark 1:15. A glance through a standard harmony of the Gospels, such as Burton & Stevens, will show many more instances where in reporting the same utterance of our Lord, Matthew uses "kingdom of heaven" while Mark and Luke use "kingdom of God."

Among the later Jews there was a tendency to avoid uttering the name of God. Various substitutes were used, including the word "heaven." This tendency to avoid speaking the name of God arose from a Jewish desire to emphasize the infinite majesty of God. Though this was a wrong tendency, it did contain a good motive — the desire to honor God. But with this good motive there was mixed an element of Jewish superstition which Jesus certainly did not share. Without sharing the Jewish superstition about uttering God's name, Jesus wished to speak of God in a way that would call attention to His greatness. The word "heaven" was a suitable term for this, for it would draw men's thoughts upwards toward God's dwelling in heavenly glory.

The term "heaven" also tells something about the kingdom that can be called "the kingdom of heaven." It suggests the mysterious, supernatural character of that Kingdom, as well as its ideal perfection and supreme value. In Jesus' thinking "heaven" and the supernatural were closely connected ideas (note Matt. 16:17 and Mark 11:30).

The idea of perfection associated with the term "heaven" is brought out by the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." That is, Thy will be done perfectly. Heaven is the ideal fulfilment of religious life and hope — the goal and destiny of the Christian (Matt. 5:12; 6:20).

In Jesus' teaching there is a deep contrast between the earthly and the heavenly sphere. This makes it unlikely that the phrase "kingdom of heaven" was intended by Jesus as a mere alternative to "kingdom of God." Rather, it is probable that Jesus used "kingdom of heaven" deliberately because of the positive content of the term, and then later Mark, Luke and John by divine inspiration translated this in their Gospels by "kingdom of God." To Jesus "heaven" was not just a substitute for

the name "God." Rather, to Him "heaven" meant God "as known and revealed in those celestial regions which had been our Lord's eternal home." Thus our Lord's reason for using "kingdom of heaven" was different from the reasons why the Jews of His day preferred to say "heaven" rather than "God."

#### Notes on the Dispensationalist Distinction Between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven.

The following material is not based upon the textbook, but is provided as additional material dealing with the question of the meaning of the usage of the terms "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven" in the Gospels.

The Scofield Reference Bible (1917 edition) on page 1003 holds that the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God are distinct and contrary ideas. In the note on Matthew 6:33 the Scofield Bible states that the Kingdom of God is distinguished from the Kingdom of Heaven in five different ways.

This elaborate distinction cannot be maintained. The usage in parallel passages proves that the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven are one and the same kingdom. E.g., the Parable of the Sower, found in Matt. 13:11, Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10. Here in one and the same utterance of Jesus, Matthew uses "heaven" while Mark and Luke use "God."

Cf. the Index of the Scofield Reference Bible, page 1359, under the heading "Kingdom of Heaven."

In Scofield's note on Matt. 3:2 (page 996), the Kingdom of Heaven is identified with the millennium. In Scofield's note on Matt. 4:17 (page 998) the postponement idea of the Kingdom occurs.

The Pilgrim Edition of the Holy Bible likewise maintains a radical distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. Cf. Pilgrim Bible, note on Matt. 3:2 (page 1224); note on Matt. 6:33 (page 1232); note on I Cor. 15:24 (pages 1509-1510). The Pilgrim Bible distinguishes between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, identifying the latter with the Millennium.

The system of Bible interpretation known as "Dispensationalism", as exemplified by the Scofield Reference Bible and the Pilgrim Edition of the Holy Bible, makes an elaborate distinction and contrast between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. But neither Dr. Scofield nor the editors of the Pilgrim Bible take any account of the important fact that the term "Kingdom of Heaven" is limited to the one Gospel of Matthew, and is never found in Mark, Luke or John.

Also, Dr. Scofield and the editors of the Pilgrim Bible fail to take account of the fact that Mark and Luke use "Kingdom of God" in reporting the same utterances of Jesus where Matthew has "Kingdom of Heaven."

In the face of these facts, the elaborate Dispensationalist distinction breaks down. The usage of "Kingdom of Heaven" in Matthew and "Kingdom of

God" elsewhere, must be explained in some other way.

The simplest and certainly quite adequate explanation of the facts is the hypothesis that:

(1) Jesus, speaking Aramaic, used "Kingdom of Heaven" only, or at any rate primarily.

(2) Matthew, writing primarily for Jewish readers, keeps "Kingdom of Heaven", with a few exceptions.

(3) Mark, Luke and John, writing primarily for Gentile readers, have by inspiration of the Holy Spirit translated Jesus' Aramaic phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" by the Greek phrase "Kingdom of God," which is an equivalent but not a strictly literal translation, yet one that would be more readily understood by Gentile readers than "Kingdom of Heaven" would be.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. What is the usage of the Gospel of Matthew as to the terms "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven"?

2. How many times does the expression "kingdom of heaven" occur in Mark? in Luke? in John?

3. What was probably the reason why Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of heaven?

4. What specific meaning was attached to the word "heaven" in the phrase "Kingdom of heaven" as used by Jesus?

5. What view is set forth concerning the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven by the Scofield Reference Bible and the Pilgrim Edition of the Holy Bible?

6. What criticisms may be brought against the view advocated by the Scofield Bible and the Pilgrim Bible?

7. How can we account, in a simple but adequate way, for Jesus' usage of the terms "Kingdom of heaven" and "Kingdom of God" as recorded in the Gospels?

(To be continued)

## *The Corporate Testimony of the Church of Christ*

By the Rev. Robert A. Milliken

The principle we will discuss in this article is that of the Church as a witnessing body. In the last study we set forth and established the truth that the Church is corporate in nature rather than atomistic in nature.

In this study we shall consider the great duty of testimony-bearing that is laid upon the church corporate. That the individual Christian is to be a witness for Christ is seen and appreciated by most evangelicals. But that the church corporate, the church qua church, is to be a witness to the Truth is not so generally seen or appreciated in our day of rugged individualism. This truth, neglected and denied as it is in our day, therefore calls for attention. The writer of this article is convinced that this is the teaching of Holy Scripture.

The main text on this subject that we will seek to expound is I Timothy 3:15-16a. In the New American Standard Bible (1960) the passage, together with its immediate context, reads as follows:

"I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory." —vss. 14-16 (all New Testament quotations throughout this article are from this same translation).

The doctrine taught here is that the visible church, as such, has been invested with the responsibility of holding the truth of God aloft to the world — it, the church, has a testimony-bearing responsibility. The Declaration and Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America expresses this doctrine in the following words: "Christians are witnesses for God among men; and, having in their possession the testimony of God in the Holy Scriptures, it is the duty of the Church to apply the doctrines of inspiration in stating and defending truth, and in condemning all contrary errors, bearing witness against all who maintain them." (33:1). It will be noted that the duty of witness-bearing as stated in this document is not only the responsibility of Christians as individuals, but "it is the duty of the Church;" that is, it is a corporate responsibility.

Looking now at the Biblical text, we note two facts set forth there:

#### **THE CHURCH'S DUTY TO BE A WITNESSING BODY** (vs. 15)

It is the visible, organized church to which Paul refers here. This fact is evident from the nature of the epistle as a whole — instructions to a minister of the church about many matters of practical concern in the management of the organized society of believers. It is also evident from the context of chapter three — instructions as to how one ought to conduct himself in the church. Paul obviously has in mind a visible, organized society of persons governed by certain rules of behavior.

Paul calls this visible, organized society, "the pillar and support of the truth." Consider the meaning of this particular phrase. Fairbairn, commenting on the passage, says, "If it (the church) was worthy of its name, it was God's house, a living community of saints pervaded by the presence of the living God; and hence, 'the pillar and basement of the truth': for, as so connected with God, it necessarily holds and bears up in the world that with which His name and glory are peculiarly identified — the truth as it is in Jesus." "To regard them (the word quoted above) as a description of the church in her destination to maintain and exhibit before the world the testimony of divine truth committed to her keeping, is in itself a perfectly natural representation, and in accordance with what we elsewhere read of the calling of the church. Was it not the special calling of Christ Himself to bear witness to the truth, and by so doing to become the Light of the World? But in this Christ was only in a preeminent degree what in a measure His people, individually and collectively, should also be found. They should be, and they are, while steadfast to their profession, a basement whereon the truth may securely rest amid all the fluctuations of the world, and a pillar to bear it aloft, that all may know and consider it." Rev. C. K. Cummings has captured the idea picturesquely and simply in his words, "Paul in this verse also reminds Timothy of the high and holy calling of the church; it is 'the pillar and ground of the truth.' More magnificent than the stately columns that uphold the glistening marble roof of Diana's temple are the living pillars of the church which hold aloft the truth of God's Word. Observe, Paul does not say the church is the truth; no church is infallible. The church is simply the pillar and ground that sustains the truth to the salvation of sinners and the strengthening of believers."

The visible, organized church then has the duty of being a witnessing body, a testimony-bearing collective person. In this connection, two matters call for special attention:

This is a **corporate** duty. It is the church corporately ("the household of God") that is called the pillar and support of the truth, not the members of the church considered atomistically and individually. That the individuals who make up the church (and its ministers in particular) are implied is obvious; but Paul speaks here of them in their corporate capacity as the household of God, rather than in their individual capacities as component members of it. To use another of Paul's analogies: he speaks here of the living Temple of God as a whole rather than of the individual living stones that go into making it up. The church then, as a corporate body, is duty-bound to support, defend and hold forth the Truth of God to the world.

This is also an **important** duty. The solemn importance of this can hardly be over stated. There are at least three reasons that make this duty one of the gravest importance: (1) Because of the nature of the church's God. The church is "the church of the living God," who is a God of truth. God's church, therefore, must have a passion for truth, especially that body of truth that the God of truth has been pleased to reveal. "When we speak, therefore, of the sanctity of truth, we must recognize that what underlies this concept is the sanctity of the being of God as the living and true God.

He is the God of truth and all truth derives its sanctity from Him." (Professor John Murray). A church that bears the name of the God of truth has no choice but to bear the truth of God faithfully.

(2) Because of the greatness of the church's Trust. The revelation of God's truth to man has been deposited in the church. It was so in Old Testament times (Romans 3:2); it is true in New Testament times (1 Timothy 3:14-16). The unspeakable dignity and worth of the deposit shows plainly the profound nature of the church's duty to cherish, guard, defend and use it.

(3) Because of the command of the church's Lord. Christ declared in Luke 24:46-48 and Acts 1:8: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations — beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Usually the duty of individual Christians being witnesses for Christ is drawn from these texts and it is undoubtedly a true implication of them. But what is frequently overlooked is that this charge was not laid upon the apostles as individuals but as the foundation of the Christian church (Ephesians 2:20), and thus He laid it upon the whole church as such. Evangelism is not the duty of individuals as such merely, but of these individuals as part of the corporate church of Christ and the apostles. The fact that it is her Lord and King who thus lays this charge upon the corporate church makes it a matter of unquestionable importance to the church — qua church.

In summary, it may be said that according to verse 15 of our text, it is the clear duty of the visible, organized church as such to be, in its corporate capacity, a testimony-bearer of the truth of God — the faith once for all delivered to the saints. It is absolutely true that individual Christians as such are to bear a witness for Christ; but the text is saying more than this. The truth of God, the whole counsel of God, has not been lodged with any individual, but with the church corporate. There, in this capacity, the church is under the mandate to be a testimony-bearer of divine truth.

#### **THE CHURCH'S METHOD OF BEING A WITNESSING BODY (verses 16 and 15)**

The visible church bears its witness by its confession (16). Paul, having portrayed the church corporate as a bearer of divine truth, then adds a brief summation of the content of this truth in verse 16, which he calls "the mystery of godliness." The interesting thing for our purposes here is the fact that he says that this body of truth (the mystery of godliness) is held "by common confession" (Greek: *homologoumenos*). Thayer translates the word, "by consent of all." It is the adverbial form of *homologeō* which he renders, "to say the same thing as another." Historically, the way in which the church has specifically spelled out what it, by the common consent of all its members, holds forth to the world as the truth of God, has been to produce written statements that express the church's un-

derstanding of Biblical teaching on various subjects. These are called variously, Confessions, Articles of Faith, Canons, Subordinate Standards, etc.

Concerning such written statements, Thomas Sproull writes, "These mark the lines by which she is distinguished as witnessing for Christ. In these, the truths professed are clearly stated, the opposite errors specified and condemned, and a testimony directed against those that maintain them. To these symbols of her faith, all who enter her communion are to declare their adherence and thus proclaim to the world their position, on Christ's side, in the great issue that concerns His glory and the welfare of the human family." In essence, this is what the church did at the Jerusalem synod in Acts, chapter 15. Verses 23-29 form a written document expressing the mind of the church, arrived at through its delegated representatives. Thus has and does God grant the members of the church to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, that with one accord the Church might with one mouth (corporately) glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:5-6).

The visible church also bears its witness by its conduct (15). Paul expresses his concern for the church as a corporate witness to the truth by writing to instruct "how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God," etc. Thus the conduct of its members is one means by which the corporate church bears its testimony to divine truth. The church's confession is its "formal" testimony; its conduct is its "living" testimony. The two are inseparable and must agree with one another. When the church's living testimony is at odds with its formal testimony, its total testimony is confused and, to that extent, negated. It has been illustrated in this way: "What value was the testimony of the church against slavery, while slave holders sat at her communion table?"

The way by which the church seeks to have its living testimony conform to its written testimony is the process of church discipline. Sproull writes, "Discipline is the safeguard of the church both in doctrine and practice. . . . A church is efficient in doing the work assigned to her by her Head just as she is diligent in applying His law to the profession and practice of her members. By her faithfulness in the administration of discipline the church preserves her purity and promotes her efficiency in accomplishing the work assigned her."

The church corporate, therefore, in concern for her great duty to hold aloft the truth of God must not only look well to her confession, but also to her conduct. What she has printed she must confirm by her practice.

According to this text then, we may say that the visible church, as such, in its corporate capacity is duty-bound to be a faithful testimony-bearer to divine truth in the world. This she does principally through her formal written confession and through her daily conduct. We close with these words of warning from Fairbairn, "And if she (the church) should anyhow corrupt or lose hold of this truth, she so far ceases to be the house of God . . . the grand test is, does she hold by the truth of God? Is she in her belief and practice a witness for this? Or does she gainsay and pervert it?"

"And yet a banner Thou hast giv'n  
To them who Thee revere,  
That for the sake of truth by them  
Displayed it may appear."

#### A FOOTNOTE:

The teaching we have found here in I Timothy 3:14-16 finds powerful expression in another New Testament passage, Revelation 1:20. In this text and its context, each of the seven churches (congregations or "presbyteries") spoken to in Revelation chapters 2-3 is called a lampstand. Each church, as a church, is considered a light-bearer in the world; each lampstand conveys a corporate, rather than merely individual, concept of testimony-bearing. The concept here is not one of each church being composed of many individual light-bearers, but rather of each church, as such, being a light-bearer.

This concept becomes even more arresting when we recall that the type of lampstand familiar to John, and probably the type he describes here, was a single unit containing seven lampstands — a kind of seven-fold candelabrum. The Expositor's Greek New Testament, commenting on Revelation 1:12 observes, "The seven golden lampstands are cressets representing the seven churches (20), the seven-fold lampstand of the Jewish temple having been for long used as a symbol (Zechariah 4:2,10). The function of the churches is to embody and express the light of the divine presence upon earth, so high is the prophet's conception of the communities; their duty is to keep the light burning and bright, otherwise the reason for their existence disappears (2:5). Consequently, the primary activity of Jesus in providence and revelation bears upon the purity of those societies through which his influence is to reach mankind. . ." (V:343). This being the case, the concept conveyed by the symbolism is even more significant. The whole church, composed of a number of local congregations, is corporately and indivisibly a single light-bearer in the world. The idea of the church in its corporate capacity being a testimony-bearer could hardly be more clearly and forcefully portrayed!

It is important also to note that the lampstands refer to the church visible and organized, as indicated by the place name, faults and virtues of each. Albertus Pieters in *Studies in Revelation* says, "It is most important to notice that when Christ is said to walk among the golden candlesticks (2:1) the reference is to the churches, not as purely spiritual groups of those whom He has redeemed, but as organizations existing visibly in the world, composed of regenerate and unregenerate members, full of faults, meriting in many respects the most severe rebuke; and yet acknowledge by the heavenly and exalted Christ as His own. He walks among them, there He is to be found, and they form the object of His constant solicitude. There is a tendency among some, in the supposed interest of a purer and deeper spiritual life, to think lightly and speak disparagingly of the visible church organization, to care nothing for its discipline, to point eagerly to its faults, and to separate from it on very light and insufficient grounds. Not so our exalted Lord. He makes its condition His unceasing care, and clasps in His right hand the stars that are the symbols of its inward life." (pp. 96-97).

These passages in Revelation, then, teach that the visible, organized church, as such, has a corporate testimony-bearing function. And this is true whether the church be considered as a single local congregation (as probably was the case in some of the cities mentioned in

Revelation, chapters 2-3), as a group of single local congregations (as was the case in Ephesus), or as all together in one presbyterial body (as indicated by the single, seven-fold candelabrum).

## *Atonement By Shed Blood*

By J. G. Vos

The central theme of the Bible is atonement for sin by the shed blood of a Substitute acceptable to God. A key Bible verse is Leviticus 17:11, "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Another is Hebrews 9:22, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Blood shed means life given up. When animals were offered in sacrifice, all their blood was shed, and their whole life was given up in death. Thus atonement by shed blood means atonement by the death of a Substitute.

The word *atonement* means at-one-ment, that is, reconciliation between two parties formerly at enmity with each other. These two parties are the holy God and sinful man. Man's sin has separated him from God, who cannot look with favor on any sinful being. God's holiness is part of His nature, which even God cannot change or overlook. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). "Wrath" does not mean petulant anger or loss of temper; it means the absolute reaction of God's nature against all that is sinful and unholy. Because of sin, the human race is under the wrath of God. (John 3:36).

Many people today tell us that God does not need to be reconciled to the sinner; it is only the sinner that needs to be reconciled to God. This is, for example, a basic idea of the new Presbyterian Confession of 1967. Such people hold that a blood atonement is unnecessary, for God is always ready to forgive sinners who turn to Him — the obstacle is said to be only in the mind of the sinner. According to this notion all people are already children of God, and only need to be reconciled to God by coming to realize His Fatherhood of all men.

The truth is, however, that the wrath of God against the sinner needs to be removed. "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psalm 7:11). The obstacle to

reconciliation is not just the sinner's stubbornness; it is also God's righteousness.

God never really forgives sins. He forgives sinners, but the penalty of the sin is always borne by someone. God's righteousness demands that the penalty be paid; His love impels Him to provide a perfect and acceptable Substitute, Jesus Christ, His Son. At Calvary, God's justice and His love meet. The penalty is fully paid; justice is not mocked; yet the sinner can be forgiven. This is the pride-humbling doctrine which keeps many from becoming Christians.

Against this idea it is objected that God must be a very harsh and vindictive judge if He will not forgive sinners without His Son suffering and dying on the cross for them. But the God who requires payment of the penalty also provides the Substitute, whose blood is shed. Suppose I am arrested for speeding. I have no excuse, so must plead guilty. The judge says, "Fifty dollars fine." As I do not have the money, I will have to go to jail. Then the judge steps down from the bench, extracts a wallet from his pocket, hands the clerk of the court \$50.00 and says, "Give this man a receipt showing the fine paid in full."

Now suppose a newspaper reporter in the court room reports this incident, commenting, "That harsh, vindictive judge would not let a poor motorist go free unless someone paid every penny of the fifty dollar fine." No one would call a judge harsh or vindictive who himself paid another man's fine, yet there are people who speak thus about the Bible doctrine of substitutionary atonement. They fail to realize that while God's justice demanded that the penalty be paid, His love provided the Substitute who paid it all.

—The Goal Post

## *The Delusion of Faith in Faith*

By J. G. Vos

Almost everyone is in favor of having faith, but much modern talk about faith is completely aside from the Biblical concept of faith. Many today consider faith in the psychological sense only — the act or attitude of believing. It is said that it does not matter so much what you believe as that you believe. The believing is said to be the important thing. This is often what is meant by "positive thinking."

It may be quite true that the mere attitude of believing is good for a person — better than to be completely without faith — still this is very different from the Biblical concept of faith. The Bible never deals with faith as a psychological attitude. In the Bible the important thing is always the object of faith — what you believe, or in whom you believe. According to the Bible, even the demons have the attitude of faith (James 2:19),

but it only fills them with fear, it does not save them.

A person with a counterfeit ten dollar bill in his pocket will have a comfortable feeling of not being "broke" so long as he believes the bill to be genuine. But the counterfeit bill will be exposed as false and without value in the end. A person with faith in a false religion may have a comfortable feeling that all is well and he is on the way to heaven, so long as he continues to believe that his religion is true. He may even die with this comfortable feeling, only to find himself in hell for all eternity.

A person's faith may even be the major obstacle to his eternal salvation. If he believes he is a good person and that his good works will save him, then his faith will prevent his salvation. Christian faith means renouncing faith in oneself and in all false ways of salvation and placing faith in Jesus Christ, the true Way of salvation (John 14:6).

The popular American idea about faith can be called "faith in faith." Not faith in Christ, nor faith in the Gospel, nor faith in God, but faith in faith. A belief, that is, that faith as such will save a person, regardless of the object of that faith. This notion of "faith in faith" is often accompanied by talk about "the power of faith." Some people say "Faith has more power than dynamite," or "Faith has more power than the atom bomb." But according to the Bible, faith has no power at all. Faith is completely devoid of power. Rightly regarded, faith is a channel not a force. It is a link connecting us with the power of God. The power is in God, not in faith. Anything which takes our attention away from God and focuses it

on our own faith is wrong and actually irreligious.

Properly speaking, the object of faith is always a Person. To have faith in the Bible really means to have faith in God who is the Author of the Bible. Many people speak of having faith in abstract ideas — "faith in democracy" or perhaps "believing in honesty." Faith in democracy really means faith in the country's citizens as able to run the country wisely. Belief in honesty really means belief in persons (God, my fellow-men or myself) who expect or require me to be honest. Faith is always faith in some person or persons (God, men or self).

Saving faith is specifically faith in Christ and Him crucified as our personal Saviour. This carries with it, of course, the obligation to believe all that the Bible presents as fact and to obey all that it presents as duty. Any other kind of faith than this is false and cannot bring salvation.

The person who talks about "the power of faith" and "faith in faith" is not really a Christian. This person talks about "religion" rather than about God. He speaks of "believing in religion" rather than about believing in Jesus Christ. He is interested in religious psychology or religious experience rather than in salvation from sin. His outlook is man-centered and even self-centered. Instead of looking in faith to Jesus, the Lamb of God that takes away human sin, he looks at himself as a "religious" person. He expects to gain benefit, not from Christ as his Saviour but from his own attitude of believing or "positive thinking."

—The Goal Post

## *A Simple Gospel?*

By J. G. Vos

The term "simplicity" occurs four times in the King James Version of the Bible. It never has the sense of elementary as meaning the opposite of complex; it is used to describe people, but never to describe the Gospel.

There is a true sense in which we can describe the Gospel as "simple." It perfectly suits human need, and by the work of the Holy Spirit uneducated people and even young children can grasp its truths for their salvation. But as the term "simplicity" is often applied to the Gospel, it is an illusion and a false ideal.

Truth is inherently complex, because God is complex. The mysterious truth of the three-one being of God reveals something of this complexity. Truth comes from God, whether it is in nature or in Scripture. Clearly truth in the realm of nature is exceedingly complex. Once men talked about atoms as the ultimate, irreducible particles of matter. The very word "atom" means literally "indivisible." But modern physics has disclosed that every atom is an amazingly complex universe in itself, and the farther the physicists push their research the more amazing complexity they discover within the atom, which itself is so small that it baffles the imagination to conceive of it.

Christian truth, which comes from the same God, is complex, too. The Bible which reveals Christian truth to us is complex. A very large book, written over a period of 1400 years by some 40 different writers, it not only deals with many subjects from many angles, but it contains insoluble mysteries and unexplainable paradoxes (apparent contradictions). The person who thinks the Bible is a simple book is merely naively unaware of the depths it contains.

Too often the plea for "simplicity" in religion is only an excuse for mental laziness, an alibi for not thinking, an evasion of the depth and richness of divine truth. We should realize that we are commanded to love the Lord our God, not only with all our heart and soul and strength, but also with all our mind.

"We do not want any deep theological doctrines," many people say; "Just give us the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that will satisfy our souls." This sounds very pious, but really it involves an irreligious contempt for a large portion of the truth which God has revealed in His Word. The person who rejects "theology" and says he wants only "the simple Gospel" only deceives himself. What he calls "simplicity" is really only vagueness. He is really saying that precise

knowledge of truth does not matter.

We do not insist on such "simplicity" in any other field of life. Suppose a man goes to a drug store and says "Please give me a package of sulphate." The clerk asks, "Sulphate of what?" Copper sulphate, aluminum sulphate, magnesium sulphate, ammonium sulphate — some of them are used as medicine and others are deadly poisons." But the customer replies, "Let's not be technical. I only want to buy some sulphate. That's perfectly simple. Just give me the sulphate, without raising technical questions."

Or suppose some person goes to buy a set of piston rings for his car. The salesman asks, "Make? Year? Model? Serial number?" Can you imagine the customer replying, "Why be technical? I am not interested in little measurements of thousandths of an inch. I believe in the simple life. My philosophy is that piston rings are piston rings."

But in religion, it seems, many people have the idea that evasion of exact questions of Christian truth is somehow more "spiritual" than facing the questions and seeking out sound answers. Someone has commented that in religion many people seem to prefer to carry on their discussions in an atmosphere of low visibility.

There is no virtue in vagueness. Vagueness and ambiguity in Christian doctrine mean, at best, ignorance and lack of adequate Bible study; at worst, a perverse, deliberate evasion of the truth. God's judgments are a great deep (Psalms 36:6).

"O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day . . . How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:97,103,104).

—The Goal Post

## *Religious Terms Defined*

**GENTILES.** Literally, "nations"; used in the Bible to designate all people who are not Jews.

**GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT.** The capacities or aptitudes for various forms of Christian service which are bestowed upon true Christians according to the sovereign disposition of the Holy Spirit. (I Cor. 12).

**GILEAD.** A mountainous district east of the Jordan River, occupied by the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. In later times it was called Perea.

**GLORIFICATION.** The final stage of the salvation of God's children, by which they are (at death) removed from an environment of sin, and (at the resurrection) delivered from all the consequences of sin, (Rom. 8:23,30).

**GNOSTICISM.** The general name given to the teachings of a number of sects, in the time of the early Church, which claimed possession of a deeper knowledge of truth than was possessed by the orthodox church and its members. Gnosticism was largely derived from heathen religion and philosophy. It taught that the God who created the world was not the Supreme Being, and that evil is identified with matter.

**GOAL.** The end or purpose for which something exists, or toward which it should move.

**GOAL OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS.** The Kingdom of God, as man's highest good and purpose of life. "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever" (S.C. 1).

**GOD.** "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth" (S.C. 4).

**GOOD WORKS.** Those acts of a Christian which are commanded by the law of God, and performed as a matter of obedience to the will of God, from a motive of love and devotion to God.

**GOSPEL.** The good news of salvation provided for sinners through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ the Mediator. (I Cor. 15:1-4).

**GRACE, MEANS OF.** "The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption are, his ordinances, especially the Word, Sacraments and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation. (S.C. 88).

**GRACE OF GOD.** The favor of God bestowed on human beings who deserve His wrath and curse on account of sin.

**GRACE OF GOD, COMMON.** That grace of God which is bestowed on all mankind alike, both the elect and the reprobate, bringing certain benefits in this life, but not bringing about eternal salvation.

**GRACE OF GOD, SPECIAL.** That grace of God which is bestowed on His elect only, and which brings about their eternal salvation.

**GUILT.** Liability to the just wrath and punishment of God.

## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

**WHAT IS FAITH** unless it is to believe what you do not see?

—Augustine of Hippo

**TRUTH WILL ULTIMATELY PREVAIL** where there is pains taken to bring it to light.

—George Washington

IF RELIGION be made independent of history, there is no such thing as a gospel. For "gospel" means "good news", tidings, information about something that has happened. A gospel independent of history is a contradiction in terms.

—J. Gresham Machen

DO WE REALLY BELIEVE that Christ is the only way to heaven? Then act and live as if we believed it! Be not content if anyone is kind, courteous, gentle, generous, patient: only be content when they come to Christ, and not until then! Anything is better than a quiet indifference.

—J. C. Ryle

WE ARE OFTEN MOVED with passion, and we think it zeal.

—Thomas a-Kempis

OH THAT OUR LORD would come this day and knock at the door of your hearts. But the devil perhaps may say, "You and I shall not part so soon." But when Christ gives an irresistible knock he must come out by authority; He can command him immediately to come forth.

—Richard Cameron

WHATEVER IS ATTEMPTED by man, or by Satan himself, God still holds the helm, to direct all their efforts to the execution of His judgment.

—John Calvin

MANY PROFESS to admit the doctrine of Christ in general, and yet will neither believe the truths of Christianity nor submit to the laws of it further than they please. Christ shall be their teacher, provided they may choose their lesson.

—Matthew Henry

THE WORD OF GOD is not yea and nay, but yea and amen; what He hath said He will abide by, whoever saith against it; nor will He retract any of His sayings for the ignorance and mistakes of men.

—Matthew Henry

HEAVEN IS A PREPARED PLACE for a prepared people. And this is the very nature of the case. An unregenerate man who has no relish at all for spiritual things, who is bored by the conversation of believers, who finds the Bible dull and dry, who is a stranger to the Throne of Grace, would be wretched in heaven. Such a man could not spend eternity in the presence of God.

—Arthur W. Pink

## *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 FAITHFUL SAYINGS IN THE PASTORAL LETTERS, by Dr. George W. Knight III. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., P. O. Box 185, Nutley, N. J. 07110, 1970, paperback, pp. 162. \$3.50.

This is one of the Biblical and Theological Studies which forms part of the series entitled "An International Library of Philosophy and Theology" and is written from a Reformed perspective. Dr. Knight concludes that the faithful sayings summarize Christian doctrine and facilitate both evangelism and growth in the Christian life. The range of diversity of these sayings "reminds us that the early church was interested in edification as well as evangelism, in sanctification as well as conversion, in church government as well as preaching." (p. 148). Dr. Knight's exegesis is very thorough, his conclusions are fairly stated, but his applications are almost nonexistent. It would seem that the book is incomplete — needing another section on the practical value of his study to the life of the church today. Otherwise, as it now stands, the book is too academic.

—Donald Weilersbacher

A SHORTER LIFE OF CHRIST, by Donald Guthrie. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49506. 1970, paperback, pp. 186. \$2.45.

Here is a fresh evangelical approach to the background, sources, and historical outline of the life of Jesus. It includes a brief, but adequate critique of the various attitudes of modern theologians toward the historical Jesus. There is an excellent summary of the methods Jesus employed in teaching as well as the contents conveyed. His discussion of the Kingdom and its relationship to the Church leads one to conclude that he takes an amillennialist position. A section on the authenticity of miracles makes stimulating reading.

—Donald Weilersbacher

WORD PICTURES FROM THE BIBLE, by E. M. Blaiklock. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1969, pp. 95. \$2.95.

Dr. Blaiklock is a professor of Classical Literature and has written extensively where Classics and New

Testament studies overlap. Herein he takes up twelve words, discussing their meaning and relevance to the Christian life. The book includes appropriate photos as illustrations. His consideration of the rock, the shepherd, and the shield of faith were impressive. His section on fishing includes some practical principles for evangelism. But most of all I benefited from his study of the olive tree. Although the price is high, this is a very readable book that could be of profit to anyone.

—Donald Weilersbacher

**THE MIRACLE OF TIME**, by Eric W. Hayden. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1969, pp. 123. \$2.95.

The sermons contained in this book bring before us anew the story of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, but with a freshness and a challenge born of the author's own conviction that the cross has relevance for men in all generations.

The doctrines that lie at the heart of the Gospel are set before the reader in a manner that is simple, yet compelling, and we make bold to say that nothing but benefit can be derived from its perusal.

—D. Gillies

**LOVE IS NOW**, by Peter E. Gilquist. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 32, paperback. 75 cents.

This book has all the freshness of a young man's testimony of the dealings of God with his soul. The writer was typical of many young people who thought that Christianity had little to offer them.

For this very reason we believe it has a special message for young people, as the writer witnesses to the satisfaction he found in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. While the book may, for some people, have too much of the jargon of the campus, there is no mistaking the note of gracious Christian experience that pervades the whole work.

(Editor's Note: The Editor regrets that through a clerical error a brief notice of this book was published in a previous issue, although the book had been sent to Mr. Gillies for review. J. G. Vos).

—D. Gillies

**CANNIBAL VALLEY**, by Russell T. Hitt. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970 reprint of 1962, pp. 254, paperback. \$1.95.

As an adventure story among the heathen this book would be worth reading. However it deals with the adventures and temptations endured by missionaries who worked in Dutch New Guinea preaching the Gospel. The work was in some respects made easier of late as transportation to New Guinea was provided.

The writer brings us into close touch with the natives, living with them and observing their customs such as feasts and funerals and even a cannibal feast.

New Guinea is said to be one of the most remote, dangerous, mysterious and primitive regions left on earth!

By reading this book much information about the customs of primitive people can be gleaned, and it would make a good instruction book for would-be missionaries. The author provides us with several photographs of natives in their primitive state. Mr. Hitt showed his goodness and wisdom in his dealings with the natives.

—Wallace Nicholson

**CHRIST ALL IN ALL, OR WHAT CHRIST IS MADE TO BELIEVERS**, by Philip Henry. Reiner Publications, Swengel, Penna. 17880. 1970 reprint of 1691, pp. 380. \$3.95.

Philip Henry was father of the famous commentator Matthew Henry. Philip Henry became Master of Arts in 1652 and was publicly commended for his great learning by Dr. John Owen. "He adapted his method and style to the capacities of his hearers and spoke to their hearts in close and lively applications." Henry's preaching was according to the manner of the time.

On the subject Christ is our Dew, he points out the likeness between Jesus Christ and the dew. "The dew hath six properties all fitly applicable without straining to the Lord Jesus Christ. The dew is heaven-born; the dew comes down; the dew descends silently; the dew softens; the dew moistens; the dew makes fruitful." On Christ our Righteousness Henry remarks, "It is by Him alone that we are justified, that is, acquitted from guilt and accepted into favour."

The book is theological, deeply devotional, and experimental, full of the marrow of the Gospel. A book full of sermons for busy preachers. Reiner Publications has done well in sending out this volume which is a tonic not only to weak believers but to strong believers.

—Wallace Nicholson

**OUR CHILDREN ARE OUR BEST FRIENDS**, by Mark W. Lee. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 221. \$4.95.

This is one of the best books written on marriage which is oriented to the present time. It is written by a professor at Whitworth College, Spokane, Washington. Mr. Lee has now been named President of Simpson Bible College.

The author has done great service to the American public in producing this book, and we hope it will have a good sale. Such a book, which is based upon Biblical considerations, supplies a great need.

"A general decline in idealism and faith in marriage has taken place: less and less does society expect sexual purity in the partners, less and less do we expect to invest ourselves to assure success for our marriages. And when one enters the marriage contract with the stipulated understanding that if he or she finds the relationship unsatisfactory it may be terminated, the chances are increased that alienation, separation and

divorce will occur" (p. 16). "Had we not accepted the Christian concept there were times when our marriage would have collapsed" (p. 17). Ministers as well as others should get this book. It could be a means of grace to them.

—Wallace Nicholson

**FIRE IN MY BONES**, by John W. Alexander. Inter-Varsity Press, Downer's Grove, Ill. 60515. 1970, pp. 60, paperback. 75 cents.

The author says we sin in two ways — by doing what God has forbidden, and by failing to do what He has directed. Mr. Alexander has evolved a plan whereby we are to memorize God's Word in our minds and hearts. There are three ways of doing so: Bible teaching, Bible study, and Bible memorization. The first is given in Bible classes, meetings, etc., the second in the individual study of the Bible, and the third in the memorization of Scripture. This is an interesting book, especially for young Christians and Bible students, and they cannot help but profit from it.

—Wallace Nicholson

**AN EXHORTATION TO MINISTERS**, by Isaac Watts. Reiner Publications, Swengel, Pa. 17880. 1970, pp. 51, paperback, reprint. 75 cents.

This is a book for students and ministers. It deals with many aspects of a minister's life, his private studies, public ministry and manner of life. "Remember that you have to do with the understanding, reason and memory of man, with the heart and conscience, with the will and affections; and therefore you must use every method of speech which may be most proper to engage and employ each of these faculties, or powers of human nature, on the side of religion, and in the interests of God and the Gospel (p. 26).

This is just one of the many precious statements of the author in his exhortations to ministers. A reading and a study of this little book would make all the difference in the preaching of some ministers.

—Wallace Nicholson

**THE DAY GOD DIED**, by Lehman Strauss. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 112, paperback. \$1.50.

This book deals with the seven sayings of Christ on the cross. It should be read and re-read. Mr. Strauss has made an earnest study of his subject. It is as the author says, sermons to be preached to the common people. The teaching is Biblical and clear and is backed up by eminent commentators. The attention paid to the interpretation of each saying is praiseworthy. His reference to the sufferings of Christ being voluntary deserves to be heeded (p. 96). The Scriptural index is very full, and Mr. Strauss has brought forth the proof texts to support his teachings. Every minister should have a copy of this book in his library.

—Wallace Nicholson

**BEYOND THIS GOD CANNOT GO**, by Creath Davis. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1971, pp. 148. \$3.95.

The reviewer wishes to state that he does not like the title. Is there any beyond where God cannot go? The book might have a better sale among those who believe God's Word if the title were changed.

The second criticism is that, like a number of books which one has reviewed, there is too much emphasis on ourselves and too little on God. We are living in a homo-centric age. If we are to be strong and true and loyal to Christ, then our thoughts and words must be more on the objective. What we are interested to hear about is the sufficiency, power and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the nature and effects of His passion at Calvary. The author speaks of the difficulties involved in living for Christ, and he has sounded his own failures. This is our experience too. Mr. Davis is scholarly and earnest and has brought out a number of good points from his observation and experience. His subject on marriage should be of use to those who are in danger of leaving their first love.

—Wallace Nicholson

**THE CURE OF SOULS**, an anthology of P. T. Forsyth's practical writings, edited and appraised by Harry Escott. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1971, pp. 138, paperback. \$1.95.

Dr. P. T. Forsyth has been considered by many as a theologian and a brilliant scholar. Underlying all his thinking was a deep faith based on a real experience of Christ's redeeming grace, and a most passionate devotion to Jesus Christ.

If this was so — which in the judgment of charity we accept — it is a pity he did not give himself more justice in his writings. His devotions and practical writings can only be properly understood by mystics like himself. Ordinary readers as themselves, Just what does he mean?

One has to remember, however, that Mr. Forsyth was enamored with the German theologians. Hegel, Ritschl, Kierkegaard and others like-minded were his favorite authors. I question therefore if we can recommend him. Mr. Forsyth takes his stand as a true mystic, and if that means making vague statements that ordinary writers cannot understand he is probably right.

For example, he says, "It is the death of Christ that is the chief condition of modern progress" (p. 37). What does he mean here by "the chief condition" and "modern progress"? There are certainly some brilliant thoughts in P. T. Forsyth's practical writings, but not for ordinary Christian readers or those searching for the way of life in Christ.

—Wallace Nicholson

**ALL ONE BODY WE**, by John Kromminga. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502. 1970, pp. 227, paperback. \$3.95.

Substantially this is a plea for ecumenicity, and some of us will not agree with this aim, nor have we any sympathy with the World Council of Churches. At the same time we have an opportunity here to read the other side; and we should be reminded that whether we agree with Dr. Kromminga or not, he is a foeman worthy of our steel, who has studied his subject thoroughly.

The difficulty placed before us is, how can we all enter into one church and become unified into one doctrine? Our answer is that we cannot, and we need not. To have one super-church would mean not only lords over our freedom of speech and action, but lords who would punish us if we did not obey; besides which the one doctrine imposed by a super-church would be too general to get us all agreed. How could Trinitarians and Arians agree with one another? "This book", according to Prof. H. Berkhof, will help the WCC to understand better the doubts and . . . in conservative evangelical circles." Perhaps we should, as President Kromminga says, make a fresh start.

—Wallace Nicholson

**THE STORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**, by Jesse Lyman Hurlbut. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, reprint of 1918, pp. 254. \$3.95.

The author has written a worth-while book which will not only meet the need of students but others who are desirous of obtaining a concise one-volume book of Church History.

"The Reformers also insisted upon a spiritual as against a formal religion. The Roman Catholics had overloaded the simplicity of the Gospel with a mass of forms and ceremonies which completely obscured its life, and religion consisted in external services rendered under priestly direction and not in the attitude of the heart toward God. . . . But throughout the Church in general, religion was of the letter and not of the Spirit. The Reformers emphasized the inward rather than the outward traits of religion (page 161).

This is an example of the author's grasp of his subject. The style is clear and the aim practical. We highly recommend this book to students of Church History.

—Wallace Nicholson

**LIFT-OFF!** by James C. Hefley. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1970, pp. 159. \$3.95.

Is faith opposed to science, or can we believe in God even if we do not see Him? Mr. Hefley answers these questions by listing the names of scientists and space engineers who see no barrier between science and Christianity. For example Peter Stoner, who has studied the heavens for 70 years, says "You don't find God by working into space; you see evidences of His handiwork there. You only find Him through faith in His flesh-and-blood revelation, Jesus Christ."

Mr. Hefley records the life and witness of seventeen

scientists or engineers beginning with Wernher von Barun and ending with Peter Stoner who profess faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him as His will is revealed in the Word of God.

This book will appeal to some who are intellectually minded, and should dispel the idea that intellectual people cannot accept Christianity.

Space exploration will not help to fill the American churches, but the faithful preaching of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Ghost will do it.

—Wallace Nicholson

**ALONE AT HIGH NOON**, by Emile Cailliet. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1971, pp. 94. \$2.95.

Mr. Emile Cailliet, M.A., Ph.D., Th.D., is Professor Emeritus of Christian Philosophy, Princeton Theological Seminary. We might expect from the title and the qualifications of the author that he would be quite capable of sounding the good and bad aspects of the solitary life. He speaks of the loneliness of the unwanted child, problem teenagers, and the Hippie world. He also deals with the solitude of old age. In speaking of our Lord the author says, "He asks that the bitter cup may pass away from Him, but He does so with utter submission to the will of God. The impression is left that there is something eternally unique about such an ordeal of sore amazement, great heaviness of spirit, and bloody sweat." And so there was, when we remember that Christ was about to suffer death, to die and bear the burdens of sin for His people.

—Wallace Nicholson

**EVANGELISM**, by James A. Stewart. Reiner Publications, Swengel, Pa. 17880. 1966, pp. 141, paperback. \$1.95.

Reiner Publications deserves credit for placing such valuable books on the market — and this is one of them. The author, who is an experienced preacher and evangelist, mentions some of the techniques used in the evangelism of the present day. He points out that some of these methods are defective. "Don't forget the children. A well-known evangelist was asked how many souls were saved that evening. 'Two and a half' was his answer. 'You mean two adults and a child?' 'No, two children and one adult. A little child has not only a saved soul but a saved life.'" Get this book for yourself for things new and old pertaining to the Gospel of Christ.

—Wallace Nicholson

**THE REIGN OF GRACE**, by Abraham Booth. Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, Pa. 17880. 291 pages. \$2.50.

Abraham Booth was born in Derbyshire in May 1734 and his *Reign of Grace* was published in 1768. It is a masterly production and no reader can fail to profit from it whether young or old.

"Hence it appears, that the sinner who is effectually called of God, is not led by the Holy Spirit to

believe in a dying Redeemer under a persuasion of his being now distinguished from his ungodly neighbours and former self; or, in other words, of his being a much better man than he was before, in virtue of any good habits or qualities; nor does his comfort arise from any such supposed alteration. No: the Divine Spirit does not bear witness to our spirits, concerning our own inherent excellencies, or inform us how much we are superior to others; but concerning the all-sufficiency, suitableness and absolute freeness of Christ, and of all the blessings included in his mediation" (p. 109).

There is a long introduction to this book by the famous Thomas Chalmers which is a treasure in itself. In *The Reign of Grace* we have a volume which we can read and re-read to our spiritual profit.

(Editor's Note: We regret that by a clerical error a review of this book was published in a previous issue, although the book had been sent to Mr. Nicholson for review. J. G. Vos.)

—Wallace Nicholson

**ELECTION**, by Charles H. Spurgeon. Reiner Publications, Swengel, Penna. 17880. 31 pages, paperback. 35 cents.

One lesson which we could all learn from Spurgeon is not only that he was sound in his preaching, basing his statements on the Word of God, but that he was orderly and clear in his teaching, so that whether one agreed with him or not, he could not be misunderstood.

"The elect of God are holy. They are not pure, they are not perfect, they are not sinless, but, taking their life as a whole, they are holy persons. They are marked, and distinct from others; and no man has a right to conclude himself elect except as his holiness. . . If you are walking in the fear of God, trying to please Him, and obey His commandments, doubt not that your name has been written in the Lamb's book of life from before the foundation of the world" (p. 23).

—Wallace Nicholson

**PROFITING FROM THE WORD**, by A. W. Pink. The Banner of Truth Trust, 78b Chiltern Street, London W1M 1PS, England. Puritan Publications, Inc., P. O. Box 652, Carlisle, Penna. 17013. 1970, pp. 124, paperback. \$1.00.

Mr. Pink is well-known as a sound interpreter of Scripture. Many writers and preachers are difficult to understand — Mr. Pink cannot be misunderstood.

Here the author speaks of Scripture under such headings as: *The Scriptures and Sin*, *The Scriptures and Christ*, *The Scriptures and Obedience*, etc. For example in the section on *The Scriptures and Christ* Pink writes as follows: "An individual is profited from the Scriptures when they make Christ more real to him. The great men of the Israelitish nation saw nothing more than the outward shell in the rites and ceremonies which God gave them, but a regenerated remnant were privileged to behold Christ Himself — 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day'" (p. 36).

—Wallace Nicholson

**HIS STUBBORN LOVE**, by Joyce Landorf. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1971, pp. 144, \$3.95.

This is an account of a young couple who almost made shipwreck of their marriage and lives, and were delivered by the grace of God. This cannot be said to be a religious book; it is really a story, well-written, which takes up some of the problems of married life, and which would make profitable reading for those who have left their first love.

Joyce Landorf is the daughter of a minister, and she felt that too much religion was siphoned into her by the church members, and so she grew to avoid church and its associations. This just goes to show us that ritual in itself is not saving faith in Christ, nor is it living such faith. Less religion and more piety and practical Christianity in some homes would be better for the parents and the children.

—Wallace Nicholson

## *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:

June, 1971. No. 2272, \$3.50.

July, 1971. No. 2273, \$100.00. No. 2274, \$5.00. No. 2275, \$5.00.

August, 1971. No. 2276, \$15.00.

Less than half 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 world-wide ministry of this magazine by contributing as the Lord enables you. All contributions by donors in U.S.A. are deductible from your taxable income. The substantial increase in U.S. postage rates which went into effect in May 1971 will mean that we will need more money than before to publish and circulate the magazine.

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

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## PSALM 119, Part 13

PERFECT WAY. C. M. D.

J. H. Tenney

1. O how I love Thy law; it is My stud-y all the day.

It makes me wis - er than my foes; Its pre - cepts with me stay.

More than my teach - ers or the old Thy serv - ant un - der - stands;

For in Thy truth I med - i - tate And fol - low Thy com - mands.

2. I stayed my feet from evil ways  
 Thy precepts to observe.  
 I have been taught by Thee and from  
 Thy judgments will not swerve.  
 How sweet Thy words are to my taste;  
 Than honey far more sweet.  
 Thy precepts understanding give;  
 I therefore hate deceit.

*THE BOOK OF PSALMS WITH MUSIC.* Available from the Board of Publication and Education of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of N.A., 738 Rebecca Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15221