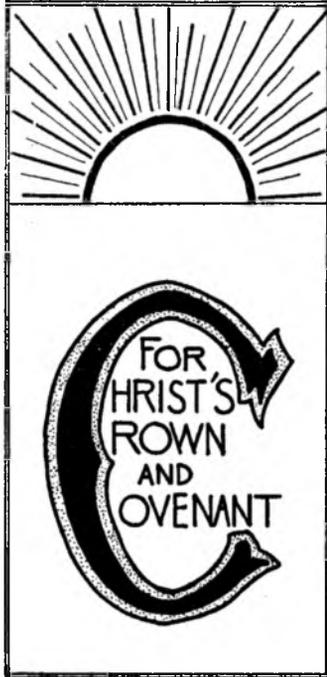

BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

J. G. VOS, Editor and Manager

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**BLUE
BANNER
FAITH
AND
LIFE**

VOLUME 2

JANUARY - MARCH, 1947

NUMBER 1

“The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.”

The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.6.

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

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J. G. VOS, Editor and Publisher

R. F. D. No. 1

Clay Center, Kansas

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.

From THE STRANGER

By JOHN CLARE

His presence was a peace to all,
He bade the sorrowful rejoice.
Pain turned to pleasure at his call,
Health lived and issued from his voice.
He healed the sick and sent abroad
The dumb rejoicing in the Lord.

The blind met daylight in his eye,
The joys of everlasting day;
The sick found health in his reply;
The cripple threw his crutch away.
Yet he with troubles did remain
And suffered poverty and pain.

Yet none could say of wrong he did,
And scorn was ever standing by;
Accusers by their conscience chid,
When proof was sought, made no reply.
Yet without sin he suffered more
Than ever sinners did before.

NO SCAR? NO WOUND?

(Author Unknown)

Hast thou no scar?
No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land,
I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star:
Hast thou no scar?

Hast thou no wound?
Yet I was wounded by the archers, spent,
Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent
By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I
swooned:
Hast thou no wound?

No wound? No scar?
Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,
And pierced are the feet that follow Me;
But thine are whole; can he have followed
far
Who has nor wound nor scar?

“We are God’s; therefore let his wisdom and will preside in all our actions. We are God’s; towards him, therefore, as our only legitimate end, let every part of our lives be directed. O, how great a proficiency has that man made, who, having been taught that he is not his own, has taken the sovereignty and government of himself from his own reason, to surrender it to God!”

John Calvin, “Institutes of the Christian Religion,” Book III, Chap. 7.

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Sketches From Our History

THE SCOTTISH COVENANTERS

Their Origins, History and Distinctive Doctrines

(Selections from the book with the above title, by J. G. Vos, published by the author in 1940)

PART I THE ORIGINS OF THE COVENANTERS

CHAPTER II

STRUGGLES BETWEEN PRESBYTERY AND PRELACY, 1567—1637

1. Introduction of Tulchan Bishops, 1572.

The great scarcity of ministers at the beginning of the Reformation in Scotland, and the then condition of the Church throughout Scotland, influenced the General Assembly, under the leadership of John Knox, to provide for the offices of "readers" and "superintendents". Neither was intended to be more than a temporary expedient to meet the existing extraordinary situation. The emergency, created by the abolition of the Church of Rome in Scotland, had to be met. The "superintendents" were not really prelates at all in the ordinary sense of that term but extraordinary officers responsible to the judicatories of the Church.

In 1572, the Convention of Leith, a private assembly, unwittingly laid the foundations of prelacy in Scotland. The Convention proposed a compromise by which certain Episcopal titles would be permitted under the control of the General Assembly. The real motive for this proposal was the desire of the nobility to obtain for themselves the revenues of the Episcopal offices. The proposed bishops were to be members of Presbyteries, equal and not superior to their brethren in voting power, but holding

the title of "Bishop." It was the custom at that time in the Highlands of Scotland to stuff a calf's skin with straw, and to place this before a cow while being milked, to induce the cow to give more milk. The stuffed calf was called a "tulchan", whence the new order of bishops created in 1572 were called "tulchan bishops".

When the proposal was under consideration in 1572, Patrick Adamson opposed the plan. James Melville said that Adamson opposed the proposal because he was disappointed at not getting one of the bishoprics himself. Adamson, who later reversed his position, said that there were "three sorts of bishops; my Lord Bishop, my Lord's Bishop, and the Lord's Bishop. My Lord Bishop was in the papistrie; my Lord's Bishop is now, when my Lord gets the benefice, and the bishop serves for nothing but to make his title sure; and the Lord's Bishop is the true minister of the gospel".

Knox opposed the tulchan bishops, and refused to assist at the installation of one of them. He even pronounced an anathema against the new bishop and against the giver of the office, and when the General Assembly met Knox openly opposed the whole plan of tulchan episcopacy. Nevertheless he was unsuccessful and the tulchan bishops remained.

2. Andrew Melville, leader against Prelacy.

It has been held by some that it was not Knox, but Andrew Melville, who first taught in Scotland the doctrine of the divine right of Presbytery. While this may be unfair to Knox, at any rate there can be no doubt that Andrew Melville was the great champion of the divine right of Pres-

bytery and the great opponent of Prelacy. In 1575 Melville, lately returned to Scotland from Geneva, spoke before the General Assembly, and argued on the basis of the Greek New Testament that the title of "Bishop" belonged to every minister of the gospel. Melville was sustained by the Assembly in this proposition.

Andrew Melville was not only a man of great courage, but a man of great learning. His boldness and uncompromising spirit caused him to be summoned, in 1584, to appear before the Privy Council to answer for what were alleged to be treasonable speeches and prayers. Melville appeared before the council, protested against their summons, and boldly claimed the right of freedom of speech and the autonomy of the Church in spiritual matters.

Melville's most famous saying is his admonition to King James VI in 1596. Melville was one of a group of ministers sent to confer with the monarch. The king had a mind of his own about the government of the Church and was not inclined to make any concessions. Melville took the king by the sleeve and told him to listen to what the ministers had to say, and addressed him thus: "Sir, there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is King James the head of this commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member. We will yield to you your place, and give you all due obedience; but again I say you are not the head of the Church; you cannot give us that eternal life, which we seek for even in this world, and you cannot deprive us of it. Permit us then freely to meet in the name of Christ, and to attend to the interests of that Church of which you are a chief member". Another account of the same conversation contains the following straightforward statement: "Sir, when ye was in your swaddling-clothes. Christ reigned freely in this land, his ministers and servants did then freely in his name what they ought to do; and now, when ye are come to the kingdom, will ye take it upon you to make encroachments?"

3. Anti-Prelatic Actions of the General Assembly.

Andrew Melville was Moderator of the General Assembly of 1578. That Assembly, under Melville's leadership, adopted the Second Book of Discipline. It was never ratified by the civil magistrate, but was regarded as a lawful ecclesiastical standard of the Church of Scotland. This standard

sets forth pure Presbyterianism as the Scriptural form of Church government. The Second Book of Discipline was sworn to in the National Covenant in 1581. It was revised by the General Assembly of 1638, and although the book as a whole was never ratified by the civil power, its most important provisions were incorporated in civil legislation in 1592 and again after the Revolution in 1690.

In 1580 the General Assembly met at Dundee. This Assembly condemned the office of bishop as without warrant in Scripture. In 1582 the General Assembly passed an act declaring that no man can be admitted to ecclesiastical office by any civil magistrate or patron. In the same year the General Assembly protested against the attempted enforcement of Episcopacy by the State.

In 1584 matters came to a crisis with the enactment of the "Black Acts" on May 22. Parliament sat behind closed doors. All the anti-prelatic acts of the General Assembly were declared to be treason. Parliament confirmed the king's "royal power over all states and subjects within this realm". It was declared unlawful for the General Assembly to meet without the royal consent. The ministers must acknowledge the bishops as their superior officers. The nobility and gentry yielded to these measures, but the ministers opposed them.

During the next eight years, from 1584 to 1592, Church government in Scotland was confused. A few ministers left the country rather than submit to the new legislation. The greater part submitted but felt wronged. Prelacy and Presbytery were mixed together, the one existing by authority of the King and Parliament, and the other by authority of the General Assembly, that is, the authority of Scripture as recognized by the General Assembly.

4. The Great Charter of Presbytery, 1592.

The General Assembly met May 22nd, 1592, at Edinburgh, and elected Robert Bruce as Moderator. King James had returned from a visit to Norway, and was pleased to note that the Church had promoted the peace of the country during his absence, so he assumed a less unfavorable attitude toward the Church than formerly. The Assembly thought it a good opportunity to press its matters, and accordingly drew up a list of requests and presented it to the King. The Parliament met soon after, in June, and took up the requests. The result was the passing of an "Act for Abolishing of the Actis Contrair the Trew

Religion". This act did not grant all that the Church desired, but it was a great improvement over the existing state of affairs and far more satisfactory than any previous civil legislation. The Act ratified and approved of General Assemblies, Synods, and Presbyteries, and the principal features of the Second Book of Discipline. It declared the "Black Acts" of 1584 to be "expired, null, and of none avail", This Act of Parliament has been known as "The Great Charter of Presbytery". The law appointed General Assemblies to be held annually, or oftener if necessary; the time and place of the next meeting to be appointed by the King or his commissioner, or if neither should be present, by the Assembly itself. Lay patronage was retained, but ministers could be ordained or installed only by Presbyteries, which were to judge of the qualifications of candidates presented by patrons. In case a Presbytery should refuse to install a qualified candidate, presented by a patron, the patron could retain the fruits of the benefice himself. It is interesting to note that the act of 1592 abolished the observance of Christmas and Easter, which had been a grievance to the Church of Scotland: "Thairfor his Hienes and Estaittis foirsaidis has abrogat, cassit, and annullis, and be the tenor heirof, abrogatis, cassis and annullis . . . Item. that pairt of the thirty-one Act maid be the Queene Regent, in the Parliament hadden at Edinburgh, the first day of Februar one thousand, five hundredth, fifty-ane zeirs, Geving speciall license for haldin of Pashe and Zule".

Like the legislation of 1567, that of 1592 did not confer new powers on the Church of Scotland, but gave due legal recognition to the intrinsic powers of the Church. The Church had already (1578), in the Second Book of Discipline, asserted and claimed these powers as belonging to her by divine right and Scriptural warrant, and the law enacted by Parliament in 1592 served to recognize these powers and to protect the Church in the exercise of them.

5. Introduction of "Perpetual Moderators", 1607.

Not many years passed after 1592 before King James again attempted to force Prelacy on the Church of Scotland. In 1598 the General Assembly met at Dundee, and in some way the King persuaded the Assembly to agree to the appointment of commissioners to consult with the King. These commissioners were not to have the title of "Bishop" but they were to sit and vote in Parliament as the Catholic Bishops had done before the Reformation. In 1599 the General Assembly agreed that the King

should nominate the number and members of the commission which those zealous for Presbytery called the "Woeful Commission". In the end even the Episcopal title was given to these commissioners, in order to add dignity to power.

The General Assembly of 1605 had been appointed by King James to meet in Aberdeen in July. During June the King sent out a circular notice postponing the meeting indefinitely. However nineteen ministers met at Aberdeen on July 2nd and constituted the Assembly, whereupon a messenger-at-arms appeared, who ordered the ministers to disperse upon pain of rebellion against the King. The Assembly agreed to dissolve on condition the King's representative would fix a date for the next meeting, but this was refused. Then the ministers appointed the next meeting to be held at the same place, on the last Tuesday of September of the same year. This act on the part of the ministers was held to be rebellion, and for it sixteen ministers were imprisoned, and six convicted of treason and ordered banished. Although Andrew Melville had not been present at the meeting, he afterward declared his approval of it, and for this expression of opinion or belief he was confined to the Tower for three years, and finally released to allow him to become Professor of Divinity at Sedan in France.

On July 1, 1606, forty-two ministers presented a protestation to the Estates convened in Parliament, against the attempted intrusion of Prelacy on the Church of Scotland. Andrew Melville's name was at the head of the list. This protestation put the ministers on record as opposing the King's policy, but had no other effect.

In 1607 "Perpetual Moderators" were introduced. The King recommended that each Presbytery have a perpetual Moderator. The Bishops were made Moderators of such Presbyteries as usually met at Episcopal seats. This introduction of "Perpetual Moderators" was one of the final steps in King James' plan to foist complete diocesan Episcopacy on the Church of Scotland.

6. Introduction of Complete Episcopacy, 1612.

In 1609 two Courts of High Commission were erected, one in Glasgow and the other in St. Andrews. The purpose of these courts was to enable the Bishops to enforce the powers which had been placed in their hands. Later the two courts were combined into a single tribunal with both civil and ecclesiastical powers. This court was not authorized by any act of Parliament, but

only by the royal prerogative. No appeal could be taken from its decisions. This move of King James was a piece of high-handed tyranny over the liberties, estates and even the consciences of his subjects.

When the General Assembly met in Glasgow on the 8th of June, it proved to be a packed court. King James had sent letters to the several Presbyteries directing them whom to send as commissioners to the Assembly. When the Assembly met, bribery was freely used to influence the members in the King's favor. The Earl of Dunbar came from London with a large quantity of gold coins called "angels", from which circumstance the Assembly of 1610 was called the "Angelical Assembly". These coins were distributed to the commissioners, ostensibly to defray their travelling expenses, as some had come from long distances. But Row records that "some neare Glasgow, who voted the King's way, got the wages of Balaam; while some gracious ministers in the North, who voted negatively, got no gold at all". In the end the King's prelatical proposals were carried, with but five negative votes. It was declared that the right of calling and dissolving Assemblies belonged to the royal prerogative; that Bishops were moderators of diocesan synods; that all presentations to benefices must be directed to the Bishops; that the Bishops possessed the powers of excommunication, absolution, and visiting the Churches in their dioceses.

The Parliament in 1612 ratified the acts of the General Assembly of 1610, and in the process of ratification changed the acts to make them even more favorable to the Bishops, especially Spottiswoode, who claimed that the Act of Parliament of 1612 repealed the "Great Charter of Presbytery" of 1592. The Parliament also declared that the King was the only lawful supreme ruler in Scotland, in all matters, both ecclesiastical and temporal. This Act of Parliament gave full legal sanction to diocesan Episcopacy in Scotland.

The men who held the title of "Bishop" in Scotland in 1612 had not been properly consecrated and therefore did not have what was regarded as the true apostolical succession. Spottiswoode, Lamb and Hamilton were accordingly sent to London and there consecrated by the English Bishops. After they returned to Scotland, they in turn consecrated others, so as to give legitimacy to the Scottish Episcopate. This consecration of the Scottish Bishops took place without any warrant of either Parliament or the General Assembly.

In 1617, fifty-six ministers, who hap-

pened to be in Edinburgh on the occasion of King James' visit to Scotland at that time, submitted a formal protest against the King's publicly proclaimed intention to abolish the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The independent spirit of the ministers of Scotland, though suffering from grievous wrongs, was still strong and eager to continue the conflict for the freedom and authority of the Church.

7. The Five Articles of Perth, 1618.

The General Assembly of 1618 met at Perth on August 25th, the time and place having been appointed by the King. This was a packed court and a very tame, subservient one. The Prelates were in full control from the start. The Prelates, with the nobility and gentry, took all the seats that had been provided, and left the ministers to stand in the rear. No Moderator was elected as Spottiswoode claimed that as the Assembly was held in his diocese, it was his right to preside without an election. When the famous "Five Articles of Perth" were about to be voted on, Spottiswoode even announced that the vote would be taken down and the names of all those voting in the negative would be sent to the King. Although in the vote that followed the Articles were carried by a majority of about two to one, still forty-five ministers voted against them.

The Articles thus adopted by the General Assembly provided for the following practices in the Church: Communion to be received in a kneeling posture; Private communion in cases of sickness; Private baptism in cases of necessity; Catechising of young persons, and their being blessed by Bishops; and the observance of Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost, which were affirmed to be not merely Roman Catholic holy days but holy days of "the whole Kirk of the World".

The Articles were ratified by the Parliament in 1621, and thereupon enforced by the Court of High Commission by civil penalties. After Parliament had ratified the Articles, James wrote to the Prelates, telling them that now the sword was in their hands, and they should not let it rust. It was ordained that ministers read the Articles from their pulpits, but not many complied with this order. There was great indignation throughout Scotland on account of the Articles of Perth, which had been made not only the law of the Church but the law of the land.

8. The Controversy about the Book of Canons, 1636.

King James VI died in 1625 and was

succeeded by Charles I, who continued James' policy of coercing the Church and nation of Scotland. Charles was not content with enforcing the Articles of Perth; he wished to introduce further changes into the public services of the Church. In 1633 the anti-prelatic ministers of Scotland addressed a petition to Charles, craving redress of grievances, but Charles saw nothing to redress and took no action.

In September 1634 the Scottish Prelates decided to prepare a Book of Canons and also a Liturgy for Scotland, and to send these to England, there to be revised by Laud and his colleagues. The Scottish Bishops did what they could on the Book of Canons, and then sent it to Archbishop Laud in England, who made some changes, after which the book was confirmed under the Great Seal, May 23, 1635. It was then sent to Scotland to be printed and circulated by the Bishops in their dioceses. The book appeared in 1636, bearing the title "Canons and Constitutions Ecclesiastical for the Government of the Church of Scotland. Ratified and approved by his Majesty's royal Warrant", etc. The design of this book was to introduce into Scotland the high, semi-Catholic Episcopacy of Laud. The first canon decreed excommunication against all who should deny the King's supremacy in ecclesiastical cases. The second canon decreed excommunication against all who should say that the form of worship in the (Scottish) Book of Common Prayer (not yet published) was superstitious or contrary to Scripture. Excommunication was also decreed against all who should say that Prelacy was unscriptural. Any minister who should fail to adhere to the proposed Liturgy was to be deposed. The General Assembly could not meet except at the call of the King. Ecclesiastical business could be discussed in no meetings except ecclesiastical courts presided over by Bishops. Ministers were forbidden to hold any private meetings for expounding the Scriptures. Even extemporaneous prayer was out on the prohibited list. There were also rules of a ceremonial nature. Baptismal fonts were to be placed near the Church doors. The consecrated elements must be carefully handled. Ministers were asked to subscribe the Book of Canons, and by doing so they pledged themselves to accept the prayer book which was to follow. Burton says of the Book of Canons: "A complete code of laws for the government of a Church, issued by a sovereign without official consultation with the responsible representatives of that Church, is unexampled in European history".

The people of Scotland were extremely indignant about the Book of Canons. The Prelates tried to defend it, but the advocates of Presbytery attacked it outspokenly. Although the common people held the book to be popish, no riots took place. The book was only partially enforced, and the real test of strength between the two parties did not take place until the following year when the Liturgy appeared.

9. The Controversy about the Liturgy. 1637.

The Book of Canons was soon followed by the Liturgy. Even before the latter appeared, the Privy Council in December, 1636, ordered every parish in Scotland to have at least two copies. The book was published at Edinburgh, 1637, under the title: "The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Parts of divine Service for the use of the Church of Scotland". The book had been prepared by two of the Scottish Bishops and then submitted to Laud, who made many changes. It was printed in a fine artistic style. "The book never made a martyr. No Episcopalian ever stood prepared to die for it, and it never survived the tumult of 1637".

Some of the features of the book most objectionable to Presbyterian consciences were the following: in the communion service, the table is called the "altar"; in consecrating the sacred elements, the minister was to stand with his back to the congregation; the cloth used to cover the elements was called a "corporal", that is, a burial cloth; some portions from the Apocrypha were included in the lessons; and the calendar contained a number of days commemorative of mediaeval saints. These and similar features led the people of Scotland to conclude that the Liturgy was "popish", although modern Episcopal writers have maintained that it was more Protestant and less Roman than the English Prayer-book. But with the people of Scotland it was not a question of less popery or more; they did not want any at all. It is probably quite true that many features of the book would have been regarded as quite harmless by some of the Reformed Churches on the Continent, but the fact is that the Church of Scotland had taken higher ground, and made a cleaner sweep of corruptions in worship, than any of these, and what had been fairly won they did not wish to surrender. Several of the Continental Reformed Churches never repudiated the observance of Christmas and Easter, but these had been made unlawful in the Church of Scotland in 1592 and the people resented the fact that they had been restored by the

Articles of Perth in 1618. The Articles of Perth were bad enough, but when the Book of Canons was added in 1636 and the Liturgy in 1637, the country's patience neared the breaking point.

On June 13th, 1637, the Privy Council ordered all ministers to furnish themselves with two copies of the Service Book, within fifteen days, on pain of rebellion. This action did not however order the use, but merely the purchase, of the books. The crisis came on July 23rd, 1637, in St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, when Dean Hannay attempted to read the new Liturgy for the first time in Edinburgh. The people were tense with suppressed excitement. Suddenly a woman in the congregation took matters in her own hands and hurled the stool on which she was sitting at the Dean's head with the exclamation: "Villain, dost thou say mass at my lug?" This was the signal for a general, though certainly unpremeditated, tumult. Bibles and stools were hurled at the Dean from all sides and he was glad to make his escape from the building. Later order was restored by the authorities, the doors closed, and the service resumed without further interruption.

On August 25th the Privy Council decided definitely that it was compulsory to purchase the Service Book but not compulsory to use it. The same day the Privy Council addressed a letter to the King stating that the situation in Scotland was such that they would go no further with-

out his express command. The King's reply was dated September 10th. The King had been influenced by Laud, and reproved the Privy Council for suspending the compulsory use of the Service Book, and ordered its immediate resumption. This message was received in Scotland with great indignation; multitudes flocked to Edinburgh. A company consisting of a hundred ministers and a large number of noblemen and gentry, marched in a body to the Privy Council on September 20th to petition against the Service Book. The Council answered this petition on October 17th, by three proclamations in the King's name: (1) Strangers must leave the city, on pain of rebellion; (2) The Council and Supreme Court to be removed from Edinburgh; (3) A condemnation of a book entitled "Dispute against the English-Popish Ceremonies", by George Gillespie. By these proclamations the patience of the people was further tried. The following day, the "Noblemen, Gentry, Ministers, Burgesses, and Commons" filed with the Council another protest against the Service Book and the Book of Canons. The destiny of the Church of Scotland hung in the balances. Presbyterian government was gone; Presbyterian worship was about to be destroyed. If the constitution and worship of the Church of Scotland as by law established in 1592 was to be saved from total destruction, it was necessary that decisive action be taken by the friends of Presbyterian government and Scriptural worship. This action was taken and the Church was saved.

Jesus Christ: Divine, Human, Historical

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . ." John 1:14

The opening verses of the Gospel of John are remarkably similar to the opening verses of the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Both books open with the words "In the beginning". Both speak of God existing in the beginning. Both speak of God's work of creation in their opening verses. But the Gospel of John adds a truth not revealed in Genesis: the person and work of God the Son, the second Person of the divine Trinity, here called "the Word".

Note that a capital "W" is used for "Word", indicating that the Word spoken of is not a thing but a person. That the Word spoken of is a **divine** person, appears also from the statement in verse 1, "the Word was God".

"In the beginning was the Word": the

Word is eternal, existing before the creation, in the beginning. This Word is therefore not a part of God's creation, not a created being. "The Word was **with** God": here the word "with" indicates a **personal distinction** in the Deity, the distinction between God the Father and God the Son. But the expression which follows immediately afterwards, "And the Word was God", indicates that the Son, while a distinct person, is none the less truly God, truly divine. That the Word is a divine person is further indicated by the statement in verse 3: "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." Clearly the Word is the Creator of heaven and earth, therefore the Word himself is not a created being.

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (verse 4). Men have a **derived** life, a created life, a life received from God. Men have **received** life, but of the Son of

God it can be said, "In him **was** life". He did not receive his life as a gift from some outside source; he always had it; it was always in him, from all eternity.

The opening verses of the Gospel of John go on to tell us more about this Personal Word, the Son of God. In verse 11 we are told that he came unto his own, and his own received him not. The translation of this verse in the King James Version is not wholly clear; the Greek text may be literally translated: "He came unto his own things, and his own people received him not". He came unto his own things, that is, he came into this world, which was his own possession, since he had created it. And his own people, that is, the Jews or people of Israel, received him not. Instead

of receiving him as their Lord, they rejected and crucified him. Still there were some—a minority — that did receive him, those who believed on his name. These received power to become the sons, or children, of God. They were born again, not by natural means, but by a supernatural rebirth; not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Now let us consider our text, the first part of verse 14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." In discussing this text I shall state and expound three truths concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ: (a) Christ's Deity: "The Word"; (b) Christ's Humanity: "was made flesh"; (c) Christ's historical character: "and dwelt among us".

I. Christ's Deity: "The Word"

I have already said something about the opening verses of the Gospel of John. Now let us turn to the teachings of Jesus himself as recorded in the Gospel of John and see what Jesus himself had to say about his own Deity.

In the last verses of the eighth chapter of John we find Jesus engaged in an argument with the Jews. They accuse him of being not a real Jew, but a Samaritan, and add that he is possessed of a devil, or an evil spirit. This, of course, was slanderous language to use of any person, most of all to use concerning Jesus Christ. It was the worst kind of name calling and blasphemy.

With great composure and dignity Jesus proceeds to answer them, first of all rejecting the idea that he had a devil, and adding, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." This statement riled the Jewish teachers even more. They heap scorn upon Christ's words. Now, they say, we are sure that you have a devil. Why, Abraham died; all the prophets died; and you say that if a man keeps your saying he shall never taste of death! How absurd! Are you greater than Abraham? Are you more important than the prophets? "Whom makest thou thyself?" Just who do you claim to be?

Jesus answers again, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad." That is to say, Abraham, who lived some 1900 years before the birth of Christ, by faith looked forward to the time when the promised Saviour would be born, and by faith he saw that distant future day, and rejoiced in that hope and expectation.

Again the Jewish teachers scoff at Jesus' words: Why, you aren't even fifty years old yet. Have you seen Abraham? According to their ideas, such a thing was wholly impossible. For they regarded Jesus as just an ordinary human being. Abraham had lived and died nearly two thousand years before. How could Jesus have seen Abraham? Again Jesus answers: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." This time the Jewish teachers decided to answer another way. They took up stones to stone Jesus. But Jesus escaped their hands and went his way.

Notice those wonderful words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am". In the Bible every word and letter has its importance. Notice exactly what Jesus said. It does not seem to be good grammar but there is a reason for that. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am". Now according to the rules of grammar, a person would say, "Before Abraham was, I was". But Jesus didn't say that. He said, "Before Abraham was, I am". What is the explanation of this strange form of statement? Just this: Abraham was merely a human being. He had a beginning. He was a creature of time. He lived and died, and, so far as this world is concerned, he passed away. To Abraham, distinctions of time meant something. Past, present and future made a real difference in his life. Yesterday, today and tomorrow were not the same thing to him. So in speaking of Abraham, Jesus said, "Abraham **was**".

But with Jesus Christ it is different. The Bible informs us that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He existed ages and ages before Abraham. He existed even before the creation of the

world. He is not a creature of time. He is not a creature at all. He is the Creator. To him, past, present and future mean absolutely nothing, except in relation to his creatures, including his own human nature, of course. As for himself, his life is an eternal present. So he could say, "Before Abraham was, I **am**."

Now let us turn to John chapter 17. There we have recorded Jesus' great high priestly prayer, his great prayer for his people, offered to the Father a short time before he was crucified. In verse 5 we read, in Jesus' prayer, these words: "And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Again in verse 24 we read: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." In these verses Jesus claims to have lived in glory with God the Father before the creation of the world, and to have been loved by the Father before the foundation of the world.

In these claims of Jesus, he spoke either truth or falsehood. If Jesus spoke falsehood, then he was either self-deceived, or a deliberate deceiver. But his majestic character as depicted in the New Testament makes these suppositions impossible. Jesus was not an unprincipled deceiver, nor was he a weak-minded person under the influence of delusions. Therefore we must concede that Jesus spoke the truth. And if he spoke the truth, what a stupendous claim he makes! For it means that he is literally God himself.

A baby was born in Bethlehem. This was the beginning of a new chapter in the life of the eternal Son of God, but it was not the beginning of his life. It was an event absolutely unique, for the One who was born was the Word, the Creator of all things that ever were created. As the prophet had predicted centuries earlier, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

A friend told me about an "evangelistic" tract which was being distributed by a supposedly evangelical church in a nearby town. In this tract Jesus was represented

as the son of Joseph, the carpenter, the husband of Mary. The tract cited the saying of Jesus, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," and explained these words as if they referred to Joseph, the husband of Mary! Now we ought to realize that that is the common, popular view of Jesus in liberal circles today. It is a view that has infiltrated the churches and will destroy Christianity unless it is stamped out. How different such a view is from Jesus' own claim, where he prays to the Father and speaks of "the glory which I had with thee before the world was"!

There is a story of a comparatively uneducated immigrant with a simple faith in the truth of God's Word, who while waiting for a train in a large railroad depot became involved in an argument about the Deity of Jesus Christ with a sophisticated adherent of modern "Liberalism". The latter advocated the typical "modern" view of Jesus Christ, according to which he was a great ethical teacher but only a human being. After the discussion has gone on for some time the immigrant quoted 2 Corinthians 8:9, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor; that ye through his poverty might be rich." Then he asked the advocate of "Liberalism" to explain, if he would, **when was our Lord Jesus Christ rich?** "Tell me", he insisted, "according to your view of Christ as a mere human being, when was he rich? He was not rich when he was laid in a manger because there was no room for him in the inn. He was not rich when he said 'The Son of man hath no place to lay his head'. Certainly he was not rich when he was nailed to the cross, nor when the soldiers cast lots for his garments, nor when he was buried in another man's tomb. Now tell me, when was he rich?" At this point, the other party remembered that it was almost time for his train to leave, and collecting his luggage walked away, as the humble immigrant said "I know when he was rich! I know when he was rich!"

Here are two views of Jesus Christ: Jesus the son of Joseph the carpenter, or Jesus the eternal Word that created all things and possessed life before the universe existed. We have to take our choice. If we believe in the Bible as God's infallible word, it will not be difficult to decide between the two.

II. Christ's Humanity: "Was Made Flesh"

Nearly one thousand years ago, in the year 1093, a great Christian scholar, Anselm of Canterbury, wrote an epoch-making

book in the Latin language, with the title "Cur Deus Homo", which means "Why God Became Man". In this book he dealt with

the subject we are considering, Christ's **incarnation**, his becoming a human being.

In Philippians 2:5-8 the apostle Paul writes of the same matter. He tells us that Christ existed in the form of God, and was equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Why did Christ, who was God, become man? It was for our redemption. It was in order to suffer and die. It was that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:14).

How did Christ, who was God, become a human being? He took to himself a human nature, composed of body and soul. He was born of the Virgin Mary. He assumed to himself an **impersonal** human nature. It acquired personality only in union with his divine nature. "The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever" (Shorter Catechism, 21). Christ, we must always bear in mind, **was not a human person**. He was and is a **divine person**, with two distinct natures, a divine nature and a human nature.

What is the difference between **nature** and **personality**? Human nature is that in which we all share, which all human beings possess in common. It is the same for every human being in the world. It is the same now as it always has been since God created Adam and Eve. Human nature never changes.

Personality, on the other hand, is different for every individual person. It is that which distinguishes each individual person from all others. There are millions of persons in this world, and no two are

alike. Just as it is true that in all the forests of the world there never were two maple leaves exactly alike, and in all the prairies of the world there never were two blades of grass exactly alike, so it is true that there are no two human personalities alike. All are different. Each is an individual personality. Human nature, then, is what human beings share in common; personality is what each has in distinction from all others.

Now Christ was and is a divine Person, and he took to himself a human nature, composed of a human body and a human soul. In this he was like all the rest of humanity, except for one thing. We are born with a sin-tainted nature; Christ, on the other hand, took to himself, by divine power, a **sinless** human nature. Note Luke 1:35-37. The angel Gabriel is speaking to Mary, the mother of Jesus: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also **that holy thing** which shall be born of thee shall be called the son of God." The result was a totally unique being, God-man, in two natures and one Person, for ever.

Christ's two natures, divine and human, are always clear and distinct. They were not mixed or blended. Though they were united, yet they remained clear and distinct. Christ is not **half God and half man**; he is wholly God and also wholly man; he is both God and man at the same time. At one point in the Gospel record his divine nature shines out. He speaks of his divine power, his glory, his pre-existence, his unique unity with the Father; he works mighty miracles by a word of divine power. At another point his human nature is seen. He suffers hunger, thirst, weariness, sorrow. He sleeps on a pillow in the ship. He sheds tears of sympathy for the distressed and sorrowing.

Other religions deify and worship men as if they were divine. Christianity, the true religion, is just the reverse; it does not represent men as becoming divine, but rather **represents God as becoming human**: "the Word was made flesh."

III. Christ's Historical Character: "And Dwelt Among Us"

The brilliant popular novel writer and ex-missionary to China, Mrs. Pearl Buck, has stated publicly that she could be a Christian just the same if someone could prove that Jesus never lived! Mrs. Buck holds that it would still be possible to follow the beautiful ideal portrayed in the Gospels, even if someone could prove that

the beautiful picture is just the work of the imaginations of men. In presenting this viewpoint, Mrs. Buck simply gave voice to the popular religious "Liberalism" of our day which represents Christianity as independent of historical facts. Few "Liberals" are so outspoken, but many hold the same point of view.

The apostle Paul thought otherwise. It made some difference to him whether Jesus Christ ever lived or not. It made some difference to him whether Christianity is a matter of historical facts, or only of poetic imagination. We find Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 15: 12-19. The apostle speaks there of Christ's resurrection from the dead, and emphasizes that it is not just a beautiful idea, but **an actual fact of history**. It is not just a legend; it is a solid, substantial fact; and if it were not, Paul says, then our faith would be "vain", that is, foolish, and we would be yet in our sins, and of all men most miserable. So it is Mrs. Buck versus the apostle Paul. It is modern "Liberalism" versus the Word of God. For the whole Bible represents the Christian religion as being a matter of historical facts.

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. The eternal Son of God became a human being. That happened at a particular time and in a particular place. At a definite year, day, hour and moment, the Word became flesh. In the definite geographical location of Bethlehem of Judea, the Saviour of the world was born as a human being. He lived in a certain particular town of the country of Palestine. People associated with him, heard his words, witnessed his deeds. Christianity is a matter of historical facts. Prove the facts untrue, and Christianity is destroyed.

Many people today are saying that the Bible was given to teach us religion and ethics, but it is not always true in matters of science or matters of history. But we object: the Bible represents Christianity as being founded on historical facts and events, therefore we must hold that the history presented in the Bible is a reliable and true account.

The great purpose of Christ's coming into this world was a **transaction**. He came primarily not to teach us something, but to do something for us, to act on our behalf, to accomplish our redemption. His teaching is definitely subordinate **to his work**. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, **and to give his life a ransom for many.**" (Mark 10:45). Christ came to accomplish certain acts. When they were accomplished, he said, on the cross, "It is finished". If we would be true to the Bible we must maintain the **transactional** charac-

ter of Christianity at all costs, and this means that we must always insist on the **historical** character of the Christian religion.

In this respect Christianity is unique among the religions of the world. All other religious systems rest on the **teachings** of their founders. Buddhism rests on the teachings of Gautama Buddha; Mohammedanism rests on the teachings of Mohammed, and so on. But Christianity is different from all other religions; it is unique in that it rests not primarily on the teachings of Jesus Christ, but on **his acts**. In the case of Christianity, the teachings are supplementary to the acts. The facts of Christianity, divinely interpreted, are its doctrines. Christ came primarily to transact our redemption; his teachings are supplementary to that great historical transaction.

Buddha was the first Buddhist. Mohammed was the first Mohammedan. But Jesus was not the first Christian. No one ever ought to say that Jesus was the first Christian. Jesus was not a Christian at all. Jesus could not possibly be a Christian. He was the founder of the Christian religion, but he was not a Christian. Christianity is God's method of salvation from sin. A Christian is a person who believes in Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord. But Jesus himself had no sin. He did not need to be saved, for he was sinless. He could not be a Christian, for he was **the Christ**.

Now the incarnation of Christ, his becoming a human being, is one of the basic historical facts of our religion. At a particular time and place the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. At a definite historical moment and in a definite geographical location, the eternal God took a human body and soul to himself and became a real human being, that he might accomplish our redemption.

What is our relation to the Son of God, the eternal Word? He came unto his own, and his own received him not. The majority rejected him, crucified him. May we be among that other group, of whom it is written, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

A Summary of Christian Experience

(Read Ephesians 1:1 to 2:10)

The subject of this sermon is "A Summary of Christian Experience". I do not propose to discuss the **background** of Christian experience—what God has done in times past to make Christian experience possible, how he sent his Son to suffer and die as our Saviour; how Jesus came and lived among men, suffered and died on the cross, was buried, rose again the third day, ascended into heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit to draw his people to him and to dwell in their hearts. All of this I shall take for granted, and go on to consider the elements of Christian experience itself.

Christian experience, if it is real, is an experience of **salvation**. This implies a **need for salvation**—that is, it implies that we are in an abnormal condition and need to be saved from this condition by the grace of God. We know it is true that "the fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery". The misery, of course, is the result of the sin. So we see that our condition, apart from God's salvation, is a **condition or state of sin**. This is called "original sin" because it is our original condition when we are born into this world. All our "actual transgressions"—our own words, thoughts and deeds—flow from this condition of original sin in which we are born.

Many modern definitions of sin make the mistake of trying to define it in human terms only, such as "sin is selfishness"; "sin is lack of socialization"; "sin is what interferes with the greatest good of the greatest number"; "sin is antisocial conduct", etc., etc. But the Bible always speaks of sin **in relation to God**, as David did in the 51st Psalm: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight". We may **wrong or injure** our fellow-men, but we can really only sin against God, who is our Judge, to whom we are morally responsible.

We shall consider the idea of sin, as taught in the Bible, under five heads, to show what it is and how it affects human life. When we say that the human race exists in a state of sin and misery, this means at least five different things, as follows:

1. Man is helpless. He cannot save himself. Unless God brings about his salvation, he is hopelessly lost. Scripture tells us that by nature we are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). Man is helpless

to save himself, because sin is **spiritual helplessness or inability**.

2. Man is Guilty. The sinner is a moral debtor to a righteous God. He has broken the moral law of God. We are told in Romans 3:19 that God's law declares every man to be guilty before God. Man is guilty, because the very nature of sin is **guilt before God**.

3. Man is estranged. He is far off from God, a disinherited child. Our first parents had no sooner sinned than they realized their alienation from God, and were afraid of God's presence. In Eph. 2:12, we read, "Ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Man is estranged from God, because sin is estrangement or alienation from God.

4. Man is Defiled. By nature the sinner is polluted, unclean in his heart and inner character. In Jeremiah 17:9 we read, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (RV, "exceedingly corrupt"): who can know it?" Man is defiled in heart and character, because sin is defilement, corruption, or uncleanness.

5. Man is Unhappy. In spite of a life-long quest for pleasure and happiness, like the gold at the end of the rainbow in the old legend, happiness is always just beyond his grasp. Much of his so-called pleasure is mere anaesthesia to lull his guilty conscience and troubled heart to sleep. In Romans 8:22 we are told that "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now . . .". Mankind is miserable or unhappy, because sin is misery and results in unhappiness.

Because the human race is helpless to save itself, guilty before God, estranged from God, defiled in heart, and unhappy, man needs God's remedy for sin—God's salvation—which includes the five truths of the Christian life which we shall consider.

These five truths of the Christian life are:

1. Regeneration, God's remedy for our helplessness.

2. Justification, God's remedy for our guiltiness.

3. Adoption, God's remedy for our estrangement.

4. Sanctification, God's remedy for our defilement.

5. Glorification, God's remedy for our unhappiness.

We shall consider each of these truths

I. Regeneration, God's Remedy For Our Helplessness

This experience is called by various names in the Bible, such as **the new birth, begetting anew, regeneration, washing of regeneration, the new creation, creating a new heart, a new man, quickening or making alive**, etc. These various terms and others that are used all describe the same thing—what we commonly call **regeneration or the new birth**.

Why do we need to be born again? Because by nature we are dead in trespasses and sins, and totally unable to take even the first step—even to **want** to take the first step—toward home. The person who is not born again doesn't even **want** to return to God. He just wants to do as he pleases about his life.

Jesus said, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him".

Again, he said, "Ye must be born again". The Bible tells us that those who receive Christ are "born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God".

This does not mean that we do not have free will. We are always **free agents** in what we do. We are always **free** to return to God, but we are not **able** to return to God unless we are born again.

A bird with a broken wing is free to fly, but not able. A bird in a cage is able to fly, but not free. The unsaved human being is not like a bird in a cage; rather, he is like a bird with a broken wing. He is free, but he just cannot make up his mind to return to God.

II. Justification, God's Remedy For Our Guiltiness

We need something more than a new life in our soul. We need to have the **righteousness** which God requires of us. By nature, we are guilty. Righteousness is just the opposite of guilt. We need to have our guilt taken away and righteousness provided for us.

Justification, in the Bible, is a legal term. It means a legal pronouncement that a person is righteous in God's sight.

presently. But first I shall say something about them in general.

Four of them are **acts of God**, and the fifth is a **process in which God and man cooperate**, namely, Sanctification. God is the source and author of all five of these experiences and all the power in them is of God, not of ourselves.

Into this condition of spiritual helplessness comes the power of God—the mysterious, miracle-working power of Almighty God, God the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Deep in the depths of our being, down in the depths of our soul, far below the level of our consciousness, the Holy Spirit works a miracle. He performs a mighty, mysterious work of divine power. It is a supernatural, creative work of the Spirit of God upon the human spirit. The person who was dead in trespasses and sins now becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Such a person is said to be **regenerated or born again**. He is still the same person as before, of course; his identity has not been lost. But a vital change has taken place in the depths of his soul. His sinful heart has been changed, and pointed in a new direction; it has been pointed away from sin and toward God.

The effect of this is that our natural helplessness is removed. The person begins to show signs of spiritual life. He loves to hear the Gospel which was a burden and a weariness to him before. He believes on Jesus Christ as his Saviour. He repents of his sins. He has received a new life from God, a life which is called in the Bible **an incorruptible seed**—something which cannot die, but will live and grow on and on throughout the person's life, overcoming all obstacles, until finally, someday, it will become the whole of that person's life, not here in this world, but in the life to come.

Justification, in the Bible, does not mean to **make** a person righteous; it means to **declare** a person righteous. It is God's remedy for our guilty condition.

When God justifies a person, he pardons all that person's sins, and **imputes**, or, reckons, the perfect righteousness of Christ to that person's account, so that, for Christ's sake, that person is regarded as righteous in God's sight.

In Justification, God acts as a **Judge**. Man is in the position of a person whose case is being tried in a court of law. Because of Jesus Christ, the person is acquitted and declared to be perfectly righteous in God's sight.

The Bible says we are justified by faith and then have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Adoption, God's Remedy For Our Estrangement

Regeneration is a change in our spiritual life; justification is a change in our legal standing. But adoption is a change in our **personal** relations.

Justification makes us citizens of God's kingdom. But Adoption makes us **children in God's family**.

A person is adopted into God's family at the same time as he is justified by God's grace. Adoption is God's remedy for our condition of alienation or estrangement from God. It brings us back home, and makes

When a person is justified, God says that all the claims of his law have been satisfied, for ever and ever. It includes all our sins, past, present, and future. It makes a person **reconciled to God and a citizen of God's kingdom**, and guarantees that that person can never be condemned. (Rom. 8:1).

us children of God. In Justification, God is our Judge. But in Adoption, God is our Father, and we are his wandering children, brought home and restored to the family circle again.

Adoption makes us members of God's family and gives us a right to all the privileges that go with that membership. We enjoy the privilege of access to God's presence in prayer, and the eternal inheritance that belongs to God's children. We can truly call God "Our Father in heaven" because we have been adopted into his family.

IV. Sanctification, God's Remedy For Our Defilement

Unlike regeneration, justification and adoption, Sanctification is not an act, but a **process**. It begins when we are born again, and it will continue all our life long.

Sanctification is a gradual change in our inner character and outward life.

Justification pronounces us righteous, but sanctification makes us holy. It is God's remedy for the defilement of our sinful condition.

By justification we are reconciled to God, so that we are no longer at war, but have peace with God. But by sanctification we are changed to God's image, so as to be made actually **like God**.

Sanctification is a work of the Holy Spirit, a cleansing, purifying, renewing work of God's Spirit in our hearts. The Holy Spirit was purchased for us and sent to us by Jesus Christ, who redeemed us to himself.

The Holy Spirit is not just a force or influence like magnetism or electricity. The Holy Spirit is a Person, He is God, one of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Because the Holy Spirit is God, he is Almighty. His work cannot fail. It is certain to go on to completion until each and every one of God's children is made perfect in the likeness of Christ. This work is not completed in this present life. "The souls of

believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory . . .".

Sanctification is a process in which we can and should co-operate. In this process we are workers together with God.

In Phil. 2:12 we are commanded to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling". This does not mean that we can earn our salvation by our good works or good life of good character—far from it; we cannot.

We have to receive our salvation as a free gift from God first, and then after that we can work it out.

It does not say "Work for your own salvation with fear and trembling"; it says, "Work **OUT** your own salvation with fear and trembling".

After we receive our salvation we are not to wrap it up in a napkin and hide it away; we are to work it out, to work out the meaning and fruits of it in our daily lives.

The next verse explains the real source of this kind of experience, for it says: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure". (Phil. 2:13). In other words, both the **desire** to be holy, and the **ability** to live a good life, are the

result of God's working in our hearts by his Holy Spirit.

Salvation is wholly of God. All the power involved in our salvation is from God, not from ourselves. Some things God has done for us, long ago, such as giving his Son

Jesus Christ to suffer and die for our sins on the cross. Some things God does IN us here and now, and sanctification is one of these. Even our working out our own salvation with fear and trembling is really the fruit of God's Spirit working in our hearts to will and to do of his good pleasure.

V. Glorification, God's Remedy For Our Unhappiness

This is the last truth of the Christian life which I shall discuss in this sermon. For the most part, glorification is still in the future for all of us. However we do get some samples here on earth from time to time, in the form of joys and blessings which God gives to us here and now, together with the boundless hope for eternity which we have in Christ.

Regeneration delivers us from the helplessness of our sin, Justification delivers us from the guilt of our sin, Adoption delivers us from the estrangement of our sin, Sanctification delivers us gradually from the defilement of our sin. And finally, **Glorification will deliver us from all the effects of sin.**

I said before that sin is misery and results in unhappiness. Sin has caused a dreadful weight of suffering to the human race. Even the saved Christian must suffer a great deal, in this life, because of the effects of sin. The Christian may have joy in the midst of sorrow, but still the sorrow is there. He cannot get entirely away from it. He may even glory in tribulations, but still the tribulations are there and have to be gone through; we cannot hope to escape them. The final deliverance of the Christian is still future.

There are five reasons why the Christian cannot have perfect happiness in this present world:

1. The remaining power of sin in our hearts, which distresses us with doubts and temptations.
2. The weakness of our mortal body causes us pain and physical suffering.
3. That last enemy, death, still looms ahead as a river to be crossed.
4. We still live in an environment of sin, and see its wickedness and injustice on every hand.
5. We cannot see our Saviour face to face so long as we are on this side of the veil.

The Bible teaches us that we are not going to be entirely delivered from these

effects of sin, from this environment of sin, during the present life. In Romans 8:22-25 we read about this:

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it".

Even we who are Christian people "groan within ourselves", waiting for something which we cannot receive now, but which is reserved for the future. Paul calls it "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body". In other words, the resurrection, when we shall rise in glory and be forever with the Lord.

Glorification is God's complete, final remedy for all the remaining effects of sin. It is God's deliverance of his people from the environment, the very sight and presence of sin. It is the last act in the great plan of salvation. It is that great completion of redemption which God has reserved for the future.

We shall receive it in two instalments; first, at death; and second, at the resurrection at the end of the world.

At death we shall be made perfect in holiness, and immediately pass into glory. The Bible teaches that those who die in the Lord enjoy perfect rest, perfect peace, and are "at home with the Lord".

But there is still something lacking. They are still waiting for something. Their personality is still incomplete, because this human body is still laid away in the grave under the awful power of death. God made us with a body and a soul. Without the human body, our personality is incomplete. The hymn which says, "I want to be an angel, and with the angels stand" is founded on the imagination, not on the teaching of Scripture. We can never be angels and

we could not be perfectly happy if we were like the angels.

There is one thing more needed to give us complete, perfect happiness and blessedness. That is what Paul calls "the redemption of our body". It is as sure as the promises of God. We do not know the time when this tremendous miracle will take place, for God has not revealed the time in his word. It is one of the secret things that have not been revealed to men. We only know that it is sure to come.

In 1 Cor. 15: 53-54, Paul tells us about this great future deliverance from the power of death:

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written,

The Observance of Days

"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."—Galatians 4:10, 11.

The day called "Easter" is observed as a holy day by many churches and also by multitudes of people who are not members of any church and who ordinarily show little or no interest in religion. Multitudes of people will attend religious services on Easter who rarely darken a church door on any other day of the year. Multitudes of people believe that it is a special sin to miss church attendance on Easter, even if they habitually absent themselves the other fifty-one weeks of the year. It is easy to see that Easter is generally regarded as of great importance.

It will not take long to discuss the question of Easter in the Bible. The King James Version of the Bible uses the word "Easter" just once, in Acts 12: 4, "Now at that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church . . . and he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And when he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread). And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people."

That is the one and only occurrence of the word "Easter" in the Bible, and it is an incorrect translation of the original Greek. The American Revised Version gives the correct meaning of the word:

DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY".

We are only partly delivered from the effects and misery of sin during this present life, but we shall be, completely and finally, at that great day. This is our Christian hope.

We often become so absorbed in the affairs of our life here and now that we quite forget the marvellous deliverance that God has reserved for his own appointed time in the great, unseen future.

These five elements of Christian experience are all of them gifts of God's free grace. We cannot attain any of them by our own efforts, but we can have them all as gifts of God. If we are travelling on this great highway of salvation, we are indeed rich and happy. If not, then it is time to seek the Lord and believe on Jesus Christ as our divine Saviour and Lord.

Passover. So we see that the Bible, correctly translated, never even mentions Easter.

Practically all Christian denominations throughout the world make a great occasion of Easter. Reformed Presbyterians or Covenanters are in a very small minority of Christian bodies in opposing the observance of Easter for reasons of principle. Because of this opposition we are regarded as peculiar, and this makes us more or less unpopular. Nobody likes to be different and nobody likes to be considered "queer". However we need not be afraid to be different, provided we can give a good, substantial reason for the difference. So I propose to discuss the subject of "The Observance of Days," and in particular to set forth some reasons for not observing Easter and other special religious festival days.

I once heard of a minister, many years ago, who was so strongly opposed to the observance of Christmas and Easter that he made a point of preaching a Christmas sermon on Easter and an Easter sermon on Christmas! Certainly we need not go that far, but at the same time we should understand the principles involved in this question. In former times the Reformed Presbyterian Church was solidly opposed to the religious observance of Christmas, Easter and other special days of the same kind. But in recent years this opposition has begun to weaken and here and there a Coven-

anter congregation is beginning to copy the big denominations and do more or less as others do in this matter of observing days.

Three hundred years ago the Westminster Assembly of Divines met in London, England, to compile the Confession of Faith, Catechisms and other standards that have become the heritage of all churches of the Presbyterian family throughout the world. Let me quote what the Westminster Assembly said about the observance of holy days. It is found in the Appendix to the Directory for Worship which they prepared. This is what they said: "There is no day commanded in Scripture to be kept holy under the

gospel but the Lord's Day, which is the Christian Sabbath. Festival-days, vulgarly called 'holy-days', having no warrant in the Word of God, are not to be continued." 300 years ago that was the accepted belief of all Presbyterians. Since then, the majority have gradually adopted the customs of the Episcopalians and Catholics, and today they observe a variety of special days in their religious services. But we should realize that we Covenanters, in opposing the observance of Easter and other "holy" days, are only holding to the original principle which was once held by **all** Presbyterians everywhere. It is not the Covenanters that have changed.

I. The Apostle Paul On Observing Days

The apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, reproving them for observing days: "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."

The error of the Galatian Christians was that they confused law and grace. They thought that they could be saved by faith in Christ plus human works. And among the human works that they stressed was the scrupulous observance of special days. The days, and months, and times, and years that they insisted on observing were, of course, those appointed by God in the ceremonial law for observance during the Old Testa-

ment dispensation. The Galatians as New Testament Christians were seeking to revert to the ceremonial worship of the Old Testament, so they observed these days as if that were necessary for salvation.

Note that the apostle Paul regards this observance of days as a **bad tendency**: "I am afraid of (for) you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." Further on, in verse 20 of the same chapter, he adds: "I stand in doubt of you." Paul wondered what was wrong with their religious knowledge and experience, that they should have become so zealous for the observance of days.

II. The General Principle Regulating Divine Worship

The general principle taught in the Bible as regulative of the worship of God is that every element of worship must be appointed in Scripture, and that any element which is not appointed in Scripture is to be regarded as forbidden in the worship of God. It is not necessary to prove that the Bible positively forbids the use of musical instruments in New Testament worship, nor is it necessary to prove that the Bible positively forbids the use of ordinary, uninspired, man-made hymns in singing praises to God. The mere fact that the Bible does not command these practices, that they are not appointed in Scripture, is sufficient to show that they are not to be introduced into the worship of God. This same general principle also applies to the question of the observance of days. These special days, and in particular Christmas and Easter, are not commanded in the Bible. Therefore they are forbidden as elements of religious worship and not to be observed as such.

When the average church member or

even minister in the large, popular denominations is asked to give a text of Scripture that warrants the religious observance of Christmas or Easter, he is of course unable to do so. But in most cases he will reply: "Well, of course the Bible does not command us to observe Christmas and Easter; but, you see, the Bible does not forbid it either." And that is the prevalent attitude on this question. But we should note well that on that basis all kinds of new and strange things could be introduced into the worship of God, such as holy water, bells, incense, pageants, theatricals, for the Bible does not actually forbid any of them. In fact there would be almost no limit to the changes that could be made on such a basis. As over against the attitude described above, we hold that the question of the observance of days is a **matter of principle and not a mere matter of expediency**. And we believe that the principle involved is revealed in the Bible with unmistakable clarity.

III. Men's Holy Days and God's Holy Day

There is one day that God has really set apart as a holy day: the Lord's Day or the Christian Sabbath. It comes once a week, 52 times a year. And it is peculiarly a commemoration of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead on that early morning, the first day of the week, nearly nineteen centuries ago.

I shall now speak of a prevalent tendency in the religious life of our times. A parallel development is taking place; two things are going on side by side. On the one hand, we observe the multiplication of special holy or religious days, not only Christmas and Easter, but a great many others as well. And as the years pass, the tendency is to add more and more of these special days.

On the other hand, there is an increasing carelessness and disregard for God's holy day, the Sabbath. Who would venture to maintain that the Sabbath is observed as conscientiously today as it was 25 years ago? Oh, no! It is just the other way around. A quarter of a century ago most Christian people were conscientious and strict about observing God's day, but at present there is a

prevalent carelessness about God's day, while a great deal of attention is paid to all these other holy days that have been invented by men.

These tendencies are parallel: more and more emphasis on special days, and less and less stress on conscientious Sabbath observance. People are substituting human ideas for God's appointed plan and way.

Some people are astonished at Covenants, and exclaim in their surprise: "What! Do you mean to say that you don't believe in celebrating the resurrection of Christ? How could any Christian be opposed to that?"

Oh, yes, we believe in celebrating the resurrection of Christ, and we do it 52 times a year, for we commemorate our Lord's resurrection every Sabbath day, and not just once a year. That is a Scriptural commemoration of our Lord's rising from the dead. We believe firmly in Christ's resurrection, but we also believe in celebrating it only in God's appointed way, by a faithful observance of the Christian Sabbath each week.

IV. Men's Holy Days and the Gospel of Christ

I have shown how the increase in the observance of special days is paralleled by a decrease in the observance of the Sabbath. Now let me mention two other tendencies that also run together in parallel fashion. One is defection from the truth of the Gospel, and the other is a tremendous increase in ritualism. These two tendencies go hand in hand just as surely as night follows day.

During the past 150 years there has been a general breakdown of belief in the truth of Christianity. Men everywhere have been coming to doubt the doctrines of the Christian religion and to question the truthfulness of the Bible. Such fundamental doctrines as the inspiration of the Bible, the Deity of Christ and his substitutionary atonement for sinners are frequently doubted or denied outright. This is not only true of worldly people, but even of church members, ministers and professors of theology in large and prominent institutions.

Now you would think that when people come to the conclusion that the Bible is not true, and that an intelligent, educated person can no longer accept it at face value, they would just say "Christianity is a fraud" and then give up all profession of the Christian religion. But that is very far from

what most of them do. On the contrary, they stay right on in their churches and go right on preaching and attending church, but they neither believe nor preach the "old-fashioned" Gospel any more. They sometimes use the old words and phrases, but they employ them with new and strange meanings.

At the same time such people feel the need of something to satisfy the hunger of their souls, so they take refuge in **ritualism**, the multiplication of forms and ceremonies. This is the result of a desperate attempt to find reality and soul-satisfaction in religion, on the part of those who have come to believe that modern science has made it impossible to retain the supernatural Christianity of the Bible. So, many churches are going in for vested choirs; some are burning incense in worship, and some are doing even stranger things. And one part of this tendency is the multiplication of special religious days. We should realize, too, that no churches are plunging into ritualism so fast as those that have departed from the old Gospel of the Word of God. As men lose their faith in the truth of God's Word, and in Christ as truly God, they seem to try to make up for their spiritual loss by putting on a great deal of religious ritual and pag-

eantry. This tendency can be observed in churches large and small across our country.

"Doran's Minister's Manual" enumerates over 30 special or holy days that are regularly observed by Catholics, Episcopalians and some Lutherans. In addition to listing these the book provides materials for sermons or addresses for twenty special days, which are the following: New Year's Day, Lincoln's Birthday, Every Member Canvass Day, Washington's Birthday, Palm Sunday, Easter, Memorial Day, Ascension Day, Children's Day, Whitsunday, School Commencement, Missionary Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Reformation Sunday, International Temperance Sunday, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas, Old Year's Day, Armistice Day.

To these we might add others that are

V. The Real Origin of Easter Observance

"Easter" is defined in my dictionary as "A Christian festival commemorating the resurrection of Christ." But the interesting thing is the **derivation**, rather than the **definition**, of the word "Easter". According to Funk and Wagnalls, it is derived from an Anglo-Saxon word spelled "Eastre", the name of the old heathen **goddess of spring** whom our ancestors worshipped before Christianity came to the British Isles.

Philip Schaff's "History of the Christian Church", a standard work on Church history, states that "the transfer of the celebration of . . . the old German divinity of the rising, health-bringing light, was easy and natural . . .". Have you ever wondered why fresh flowers, newly hatched chicks, and so forth, are regarded as connected with Easter? It is from the old heathen nature worship of ancient times. These things were symbols of returning life and vitality in the spring season of the year. So our heathen ancestors in pre-Christian times observed

coming to be commonly observed, such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, Red Cross Day, Go-to-Church Day, etc. One organization after another comes forward calling for a special day or week to be devoted to its interests. When we once begin to add other special days to God's Holy Sabbath day, we start on a long, long trail, and no one can tell where the end will be.

Of course there is no objection to observing a day like Thanksgiving Day, to which we are duly called by the civil authorities, nor to observing such days as the preparatory days before the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, these being appointed for a special purpose by the officers of the church. That is quite different from the tendency to set apart certain days as special or holy **in themselves**, thereby adding elements not appointed in Scripture to the worship of God.

"Easter" as a religious celebration, before they ever heard of Jesus Christ. And after their conversion to Christianity, they went right on observing Easter, only they gave it a Christian dress and a Christian explanation. Instead of just worshipping the goddess of spring-time, they worshipped the true God; and instead of just celebrating the general awakening of nature to new life in the springtime, they began to celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead. But it was still called "Easter" after the name of the old heathen goddess.

It is not easy to be different from the majority. It is not easy to hold unpopular convictions. It costs to stand with a minority and bear witness for an unpopular truth or principle. But it is worth-while, and, what is far more important, **it is right**. Let us not be afraid to be different, so long as we can give a valid reason, based on the Word of God, for our conscientious convictions.

Some Noteworthy Quotations

"Men bewail the divisions of the Church of Christ, and propose that we shall stop thinking, so that we may no longer think differently. This is the true account to give of many of the phases of the modern movement for 'church union'. Men are tired of thinking. They are tired of defending the truth. Let us all stop thinking, stop believing, they cry, and what a happy family we shall be!"

B. B. Warfield

"The reading of the Scripture as such, without more, will never be able to bring one single soul from death unto life. The Scripture by itself is as dull as a diamond in the dark; and as the diamond glistens only when entered by a ray of light, the Scripture has power to charm the eye of the soul only when seen in the light of the Holy Spirit. Christ lives, and by His Holy Spirit He still works upon the heart and in the consciousness of God's elect."

Abraham Kuyper

"I go to your God and my God. Death to me is as a bed to the weary. Now, be not anxious, the Lord will maintain His cause and own His people; He will show His glory yet in Scotland; farewell."

James Renwick

"Look well, then, to your faith, that it be a faith growing out of regeneration, and the new creature, and that it have Christ for its righteousness, hope and rejoicing, and be sealed by the Spirit of God."

Donald Cargill

"There is a great and wide difference between a name of godliness and the power of godliness. That is hottest when there are fewest witnesses; The deadness upon many, and the defection of the land, is great. Blessed are they who seek the Lord and His face."

Samuel Rutherford

"Great art Thou, O Lord, and greatly be praised; great is Thy power, and Thy wisdom is infinite. And Thee would man praise; man, but a particle of Thy creation; man, that bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, the witness, that Thou resistest the proud: yet would man praise Thee; he, but a particle of Thy creation. Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee."

Augustine of Hippo

"Christ gives peace to the most sinful and miserable that come to him. He heals the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds. But it is impossible that they

should have peace, that continue in their sins (Isaiah 57:19-21). There is no peace between God and them; and as they have the guilt of sin remaining in their souls, and are under the domination of sin, so God's indignation continually burns against them, and there is reason why they should travail in pain all their days . . .

"I invite you now to a better portion. There are better things provided for the sinful miserable children of men. There is a surer comfort and more durable peace; comfort that you may enjoy in a state of safety and on a sure foundation: a peace and rest that you may enjoy with reason and with your eyes open; having all your sins forgiven, your greatest and most aggravated transgressions blotted out as a cloud, and buried as in the depths of the sea, that they may never be found any more; and being not only forgiven, but accepted to favor; being the objects of God's complacence and delight; being taken into God's family and made his children; and having good evidence that your names were written on the heart of Christ before the world was made, and that you have an interest in that covenant of grace that is well ordered in all things and sure; wherein is promised no less than life and immortality, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, a crown of glory that fades not away; being in such circumstances, that nothing shall be able to prevent your being happy to all eternity; having for the foundation of your hope that love of God which is from eternity unto eternity; and his promise and oath, and his omnipotent power, things infinitely firmer than mountains of brass. The mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed, yea, the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, yet these things will never be abolished."

Jonathan Edwards

Religious Terms Defined

A few definitions of important religious terms will be given in this department in each issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life." The aim will be conciseness without the sacrifice of accuracy. Where possible the Westminster Shorter Catechism will be quoted.

Rationalism. The doctrine that the human faculty of reason is the supreme authority for faith and life.

Mysticism. The belief that God and his will can be known by a direct intuition of the human soul, and that religion therefore is independent of historical facts, and both historical revelation and historical redemption are unnecessary.

Revelation. An activity of God by which he communicates truth to men.

Natural Revelation. God's communication of truth to men through the world of nature, including the human heart and conscience. Also called **General Revelation**.

Supernatural Revelation. God's communication of truth to men directly, apart

from his natural revelation. Also called **Special Revelation**.

Inspiration. An activity of God the Holy Spirit by which the writers of the books of the Bible were so influenced that the product of their writing is truly the Word of God.

Verbal Inspiration. The doctrine that the actual written words of the Bible, in the genuine text of the original Hebrew and Greek, are themselves all truly the Word of God. Also called **Plenary (Full) Inspiration**.

Inerrancy of Scripture. The doctrine that the Bible is free from errors.

Infallibility of Scripture. The doctrine that it is impossible for the Bible to contain any errors.

Rule of Faith and Life. "The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him" (S.C. 2).

Canon of Scripture. The list of the books which are recognized as Holy Scripture.

Illumination. An activity of God the Holy Spirit in the mind of a human being, by which the latter is enabled to understand the true meaning of the Scriptures.

Exegesis. Drawing out the meaning of a text or portion of Scripture by a painstaking, accurate study of its words, context and historical setting.

Analogy of Scripture. The teaching of the Bible as a whole, on any subject, considered as a key to the interpretation of a particular portion of Scripture.

Textual Criticism. That science which, by a methodical comparison of manuscripts, seeks to eliminate errors which have occurred in the process of copying, and thus to determine the genuine text of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures.

Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly

Lesson 53

For Week Beginning January 5, 1947

Q. 65. What special benefits do the members of the invisible church enjoy by Christ?

A. The members of the invisible church by Christ enjoy union and communion with him in grace and glory.

Scripture References:

John 17: 21. Ephesians 2: 5, 6. The Christian's union and communion with Christ in grace.

John 17: 24. The Christian's union and communion with Christ in glory.

Note: Question 65 is of the nature of a heading or summary of all the questions from No. 66 to No. 90. All these questions develop the doctrine which is summarized in No. 65.

Questions:

1. Why are the benefits mentioned in this question called "special" benefits?

Because they are not given to all members of the Visible Church, but only to such as are also true members of the Invisible Church.

2. What two words include all the benefits which believers receive from Christ?

Union and communion. The succeeding questions (66-90) will bring out the difference in meaning between these two words.

3. In what two spheres or states of existence do believers receive benefits from Christ?

In the sphere of **grace**, or the Christian life here on earth, and in the sphere of **glory**, or the life to come.

Q.66. What is that union which the elect have with Christ?

A. The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God's grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their head and husband; which is done in their effectual calling.

Scripture References:

Ephesians 1: 22. Ephesians 2: 6-8. The union which the elect have with Christ proceeds wholly from God's grace and is accomplished by his divine power.

1 Corinthians 6: 17. John 10:28. The elect are really and inseparably joined to Christ.

Ephesians 5: 23, 30. Christ is the head and husband of the elect.

1 Peter 5:10. 1 Corinthians 1:9. The elect are united to Christ by their effectual calling.

Questions:

1. What is meant by saying that the union of the elect with Christ "is the work of God's grace"?

This means that union with Christ is a gift of God, which is accomplished by the almighty work of His Holy Spirit; it is not something that we can achieve or do for ourselves.

2. What is meant by saying that we are "spiritually and mystically" joined to Christ?

This expression guards against the idea that we are literally joined to Christ as if he were an earthly person. The Church is the body of Christ, and Christians are the members of Christ, but only in a spiritual sense, not in a physical or material sense of the word.

3. Why does the Catechism add the words "yet really and inseparably"?

Because spiritual relationships, while

mysterious and invisible, are yet true and real. We naturally tend to regard that which we cannot see or understand as imaginary or unreal. Our spiritual union with Christ is both invisible and mysterious, but that does not mean that it is unreal. Spiritual things, in their own sphere, are just as real as material things. Moreover, our union with Christ is also unbreakable and permanent. The person who is once truly joined to Christ will always be joined to Christ; therefore the Catechism adds the word "inseparably".

4. What is meant by calling Christ the "head and husband" of the elect?

Two figures of speech are involved, both of which are prominent in the New Testament. The first is the figure of the human body. The human body has a head, and also members, such as hands and feet. According to this figure of speech, Christ is the head, and the elect are the members of his spiritual body. The second figure is that of marriage. In this figure Christ is represented as the husband or bridegroom, because he provides for, loves and defends his Church. The Church, or whole body of the elect, is represented as the bride of Christ, because the Church enjoys his protection, provision and care, and seeks to honor and serve him.

5. How are the elect joined to Christ?

By their effectual calling. This is explained in the next lesson.

Lesson 54

For Week Beginning January 12, 1947

Q. 67. What is effectual calling?

A. Effectual calling is the work of God's almighty power and grace, whereby (out of his free and special love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereunto) he doth, in his accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ, by his word and Spirit; savingly enlightening their minds, renewing and powerfully determining their wills, so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able freely to answer his call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein.

Scripture References:

John 5:25. Ephesians 1: 18-20. 2 Timothy 1: 8,9. Effectual calling is wrought by the grace and almighty power of God.

Titus 3: 4, 5. Ephesians 2: 4-9. Romans 9:11. Effectual calling proceeds from the free, unmerited love of God to his elect, and does not depend in any sense on their character or works.

2 Corinthians 5:20 compared with 2 Cor. 6:1-2. Those who are effectually called are united to Christ in God's accepted time.

John 6:44. The elect are not merely invited or led, but effectively drawn, to Christ.

2 Thes. 2: 13-14. The elect united to Christ by the Word and Spirit of God.

Acts 26: 18. 1 Corinthians 2: 10-12. In effectual calling, the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind so that the person can know and accept the truth.

Ezekiel 11:19. Ezekiel 36: 26, 27. John 6:45. In effectual calling the Holy Spirit effectively renews and determines the will so that the person wants to come to Christ.

Ephesians 2: 5. Philippians 2: 13. Deuteronomy 30:6. In effectual calling, those who of themselves are dead in sin are made both willing and able to respond to the call, so that they actually receive Christ and his salvation.

Questions:

1. In what two ways does God call sinners to come to Christ?

First, by the external call of the Gospel message, which is addressed to all men indiscriminately. This external calling alone is not sufficient to save men, for it is often resisted and rejected by sinners. Second, by the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men. This work of the Holy Spirit is called **effectual** calling because it always accomplishes its intended purpose of bringing the person to Christ. When the **effectual** calling of the Holy Spirit is added to the external call of the Gospel message, the person becomes a Christian without fail.

2. Is God's work of effectual calling directed toward all men?

No. If it were, all men without exception would be saved. As a matter of fact God's effectual calling is not directed toward everybody, but only toward the elect, whom God has chosen for eternal life.

3. Why does effectual calling always accomplish its intended purpose?

Because it is carried out not by limited power, but by God's **almighty** power.

4. Does God love all men equally and in the same way?

No. The Bible speaks of two kinds of divine love. First, there is a **general** love of God which is bestowed on all men. This general love of God conveys many blessings, but it does **not** bring about their eternal salvation. Second, there is a **special** love of God which is not given to all, but is reserved for the elect. This special love of God carries with it the eternal salvation of those on whom it is bestowed. For Scripture proof of the special love of God for the elect, read Romans 9: 13, John 17: 9, Jeremiah 31: 3.

5. Is it not unjust for God to love some people more than others?

No. If God were to deal with the human race according to justice alone, all without exception would be condemned. The subject we are considering is not a matter of justice, but of mercy. Mercy does not have to be administered equally, or impartially. Since **God owes his special, saving love to no one**, he is free to give or withhold it as he pleases. See Romans 9:14-18, where the apostle Paul answers this same question, a question which was being asked even in his day.

6. What is meant by saying that God's love is "free"?

This means that God loves men of his own free will, and not because he is under any obligation or necessity to do so.

7. What is the reason why God bestows his special, saving love on one person, and withholds it from another person?

Doubtless God has a good reason for everything he does, but his reasons are not always revealed to us. We only know that whatever God's reason may be, it is **not** because one person's works, nature or character are better than another's. The Catechism makes this clear by adding the words "from nothing in them moving him thereunto". This expression rules out also the common error that God's special love is given to particular persons because God knew in advance that they would repent of their sins and believe the Gospel. The truth is that the elect repent of their sins and believe the Gospel **precisely because the special, saving love of God has been bestowed upon them.**

8. When does God draw the elect to Jesus Christ?

"In his accepted time", that is, in the particular time which God has appointed for each person. In some, it may be in their childhood or youth. In some, it may even be in their infancy (see Luke 1:15). In others it may be in mature years, or in old age. In some, it may be just before death, as in the case of the dying thief. But in every case it is during the lifetime on earth of each elect person.

9. How does God invite and draw the elect to Jesus Christ?

By his Word and by his Holy Spirit, working together.

10. Why must the minds of sinners be enlightened if they are to come to Christ?

Because by nature their minds are darkened and clouded by sin, and therefore they are **totally prejudiced against God and the Gospel.**

11. Why must their wills be renewed and powerfully determined if they are to come to Christ?

Because by nature they are dead in sins, and their wills are stubbornly prejudiced and bent against God.

12. Does God, in his work of effectual calling, force the elect to come to Christ whether they want to or not?

Certainly not. God deals with the elect **as persons**, not as if they were sticks or stones. The Holy Spirit so renews and changes their hearts that of their own will

they **want** to come to Christ. If a person really wants to come to Christ with all his heart, that is an evidence that the Holy Spirit has made that person willing by changing his heart.

13. If it were not for the almighty work of the Holy Spirit changing the heart, how many of the elect would come to Christ?

None at all, for by nature they are both **unwilling** and also **unable** to come.

Lesson 55

For Week Beginning January 19, 1947

Q. 68. Are the elect only effectually called?

A. All the elect, and they only, are effectually called; although others may be, and often are, outwardly called by the ministry of the word, and have some common operations of the Spirit; who, for their wilful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Jesus Christ.

Scripture References:

Acts 13:48. All the elect are effectually called, and eventually believe on Christ.

Matthew 22:14. Though many are outwardly called by the Gospel, only a part of these are effectually called by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 7:22. Matthew 13:20, 21. Hebrews 6:4-6. Those who are only outwardly called by the Gospel, may and often do share in the common operations of the Spirit.

John 12:38-40. Acts 28:25-27. John 6:64, 65. Psalm 81:11, 12. Those who have only the outward call of the Gospel and the common operations of the Spirit, and lack the effectual call of the Spirit, inevitably neglect the grace offered to them, are justly left in their unbelief, never truly come to Christ, and so are lost.

Questions:

1. What class of people alone are effectually called by the Holy Spirit?

The elect of God.

2. What other names are given in the Bible to this class of people?

Christ's "sheep", those whom the Father gave unto Christ, those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, those whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life, those predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son, etc.

14. What, in a word, is the difference between the external call of the Gospel and the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit?

In the external call of the Gospel, grace is **offered** to sinners; in the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, grace is actually **conveyed** to sinners so that they respond by accepting the offer. The external call is an **offer**; the effectual call is an **operation**.

3. In addition to the Spirit's work of effectual calling, what other kind of calling takes place?

The outward calling of the ministry of the Word, that is, the Gospel offer.

4. Which group is the larger, those called by the Holy Spirit, or those outwardly called by the ministry of the Word?

Those outwardly called by the ministry of the Word. See Matthew 22:14, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Here the "called" are those **outwardly** called. The "chosen" are those **effectually** called by the Holy Spirit.

5. Are the operations of the Holy Spirit in human hearts limited to the elect?

No. The **saving** operations of the Holy Spirit are confined to the elect; but in addition to the Spirit's saving operations, there are the **common** operations of the Spirit, which may be and often are experienced by others than the elect.

6. What is the nature of the common operations of the Spirit?

The common operations of the Spirit may convict of sin, lead to an outward reformation of life of greater or less degree, restrain sin and evil, lead sinful people to perform acts of kindness or mercy in the human sphere, and the like. But the common operations of the Spirit fall short of salvation; they do not result in the person being united to Christ as his Saviour in repentance and true faith.

7. Why are the common operations of the Spirit insufficient for salvation?

Because unless born again of the Holy Spirit, a person inevitably neglects or misuses the common operations of the Spirit. Nothing short of a new birth will bring about saving faith in Christ.

8. Is it fair for God to give to some people only the common operations of the

Spirit, while withholding from them the saving operations of the Holy Spirit?

Salvation is a matter of grace, not of debt. God is not obliged to save anyone at all. If he chooses to save some but not all, this does not involve injustice on God's part. Since God owes salvation to nobody, he is perfectly free to bestow it as a free gift on some, while withholding it from others.

Q. 69. What is the communion in grace which the members of the invisible Church have with Christ?

A. The communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is their partaking of the virtue of his mediation, in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and whatever else, in this life, manifests their union with him.

Scripture References:

Romans 8:30. The elect, by the experience of justification, partake of the virtue of Christ's mediation, thus having communion with Christ in grace.

Ephesians 1:5. By the experience of adoption into God's family, the elect partake to the virtue of Christ's mediation, thus having communion with Christ in grace.

1 Corinthians 1:30. By the experience

Lesson 56

For Week Beginning January 26, 1947

Q. 70. What is justification?

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which he pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.

Scripture References:

Romans 3:22-25. Romans 4:5. Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners.

2. Corinthians 5:19-21. Romans 3:22-28. In justification, God not only pardons all a person's sins, but also accepts that person as positively righteous in God's sight.

Titus 3: 5-7. Ephesians 1:7. Justification is not based on the character or works of the person justified, nor even on the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart, but is strictly "according to his mercy" and based on Christ's righteousness and "redemption through his blood."

of sanctification, and other benefits received in this life, the elect partake of the virtue of Christ's mediation, thus having communion with him in grace.

Note: This question is of the nature of a summary of the contents of Questions 70-81. Therefore we shall consider it only briefly and then pass on to Q. 70.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word "virtue" in this question?

It means "power" or "efficacy" in accomplishing an intended purpose.

2. What is the meaning of the word "mediation" in this question?

It describes Christ's work of reconciling God and man, who were alienated one from the other by sin. Christ as Mediator brings these two together again.

3. What is the character of Christ's work of mediation?

It possesses "virtue" or power to accomplish its intended purpose. Christ's work of mediation is now an accomplished, finished historical fact, although of course the application of it to particular persons is not yet completed, but continues at the present day. The power of Christ's work of mediation will continue for ever.

Romans 5:17-19. Romans 4:6-8. In justification, the merit of Christ's righteousness and obedience are "imputed" or credited to the account of the person who is justified, who receives this "imputed" righteousness as a free gift of God.

Acts 10:43. Galatians 2:16. Philipians 3:9. Faith is the means of justification, or the connecting link between the sinner and the righteousness of Christ.

Questions:

1. In what book of the Bible is the doctrine of **Justification by Faith** most fully set forth?

The Epistle to the Romans.

2. In what book of the Bible is the error of **justification by works** most clearly refuted?

In the Epistle to the Galatians, which shows that we are justified by faith **alone**, without the deeds of the law.

3. Does not the Epistle of James teach that we are justified by works?

Yes. But this is not a contradiction of the teaching of Romans and Galatians. James presents good works as the fruits or **evidence** of our justification, not as the **ground** or reason for our justification. We are justified by faith alone, but the kind of faith that justifies is never found alone. We are not saved on the ground of good works, but if really saved, we will not be without them as the fruits of our salvation. See "Blue Banner Faith and Life," Volume 1, Number 8, October-December, 1946, page 177, column 2.

4. What is the meaning of the word "justify" in the New Testament?

This is a legal term which means to **declare or judicially pronounce a person to be righteous before God, according to the standard of God's moral law.**

5. When a person is justified, what becomes of that person's sins?

They are freely pardoned or forgiven, being cancelled by Christ's atonement.

6. Why would the forgiveness of our sins not be enough to save us and give us eternal life?

Because God requires more of us than we should merely be free of sin. We must not only be without sin, but must also have a positive righteousness, just as if all our life long, without failing for one moment, we had always loved the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourself. If God were merely to pardon our sins, we would still be unsaved because we would lack this positive righteousness without which none can enter heaven or receive eternal life. Suppose a man is arrested and fined for driving an automobile in a reckless manner, and at the same time it is discovered that he does not possess a driver's license. A kind friend may step up and pay the amount of the fine, thus cancelling that obligation. But paying the fine would not give the person the right to drive an automobile; for that he must have a positive authorization in the form of a driver's license. Similarly, for Christ by his atonement to cancel the guilt of our sins still does not give us the right to enter heaven; for that we must have a positive righteousness credited to our account.

7. In addition to forgiving our sins, what else does God do for us in justification?

He accepts and accounts, or regards, our persons as righteous in his sight.

8. What is the only ground of God's act of justification?

The only ground is the righteousness of Christ—his "perfect obedience and full satisfaction"—which God "imputes" or reckons to the credit of the sinner. Christ's sufferings and death on the cross cancel the guilt of our sins. The positive righteousness of Christ, by which he actively and perfectly obeyed the whole of God's law throughout his entire earthly life, is the ground or basis for God accepting our persons as righteous in his sight. Christ not only **died** for us; he also **lived for us**, a life of perfect, total, blameless, obedience to the whole law of God, and **without this no human being could possibly receive eternal life.**

9. What two false grounds of justification does the Catechism reject?

(a) "Anything wrought in them," that is, a change of character wrought in a person by the Spirit of God. Every Christian, of course, has such a change of character, but this is not the ground of his justification before God. (b) "Anything done by them," that is, good works of any kind, such as are claimed as a ground of salvation by Catholics and others. Thus the Catechism rejects, in the first place, the error of Modernism, or salvation by character; and in the second place, the error of Catholicism and all other forms of moralism, namely salvation by human works.

10. What is the meaning of the word "imputed" used in connection with justification?

This word, which occurs again and again in the apostle Paul's discussion of this subject, means "reckoned" or "accounted". Our sins are reckoned to Christ; Christ's righteousness is reckoned to the Christian, or credited to his account.

11. What part does faith play in connection with our justification?

Faith is in no sense the ground or reason for our justification. It is, however, the **means or instrument** by which we receive the grace of justification. We are justified **by means of faith, but on account of the righteousness of Christ.**

12. Why does the Catechism add the word "alone" after "faith"?

Because the Roman Catholic Church and some others teach that we are saved by a combination of faith **and** works. This contradicts the Scripture doctrine that the only ground of justification is the righteousness of Christ, and the only means of justification is personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Lesson 57

For Week Beginning February 2, 1947

Q. 71. How is justification an act of God's free grace?

A. Although Christ, by his obedience and death, did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in the behalf of them that are justified; yet in as much as God accepteth the satisfaction from a surety, which he might have demanded of them, and did provide this surety, his own only Son, imputing his righteousness to them, and requiring nothing of them for their justification but faith, which also is his gift, their justification is to them of free grace.

Scripture References:

Romans 5:8-10, 19. Christ rendered a true satisfaction of God's justice on behalf of those who are justified.

1 Timothy 2:5, 6. Hebrews 10:10. Matthew 20:28. Daniel 9:24-26. Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12. Hebrews 7:22. Romans 8:32. 1 Peter 1:18, 19. In the case of those who are justified, God accepts the satisfaction of his divine justice at the hand of a "surety" or substitute, which he might have demanded of each justified person himself. This "surety" is God's own Son, provided as a substitute by God himself.

2 Corinthians 5:21. Christ's righteousness imputed to the justified person.

Romans 3:24, 25. The only condition of justification is faith in Christ.

Ephesians 2:8. Faith in Christ is itself a gift of God to the believer.

Ephesians 1:7. Redemption and forgiveness are matters of God's free grace, that is, free, unmerited gifts of God's love.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the expression "God's free grace"?

This means God's favor bestowed as a free gift on those who are not only undeserving, but also ill-deserving.

2. Why does it seem contradictory to say that "Justification is an act of God's free grace"?

It seems contradictory to make this statement, because our justification was purchased by the payment of a price; if purchased and paid for, then how can it be at the same time a free gift? This is the problem that this question of the Catechism explains.

3. How can our justification be both a purchase and also a free gift?

It was purchased by Jesus Christ; it is a free gift to us. Salvation is free to sinners, but it cost the precious blood of Christ to make it free.

4. Why was it necessary that our justification be purchased by Christ?

Because the justice of God, which had been violated by human sin, had to be satisfied if sinners were to be justified. God cannot deny himself; because he is absolutely just, he cannot disregard human sin. The sinner cannot be justified unless God's justice has first been satisfied.

5. Was it not unjust for God to take the sins of guilty human beings and lay them on the innocent Christ?

This arrangement would have been unjust only if God the Father had compelled Jesus Christ **against his will** to bear the sins of the elect. This, however, was not the case. Christ was not compelled to suffer and die for sinners; he suffered and died for them voluntarily. Since Christ willingly suffered for our sins, there was no injustice involved in this transaction.

6. What is the meaning of the word "surety"?

It means a person who acts as a guarantor or substitute, doing for us what we have failed to do for ourselves, and paying our debt to God's justice, which we could not pay ourselves.

7. Where in the New Testament is Jesus Christ called a "surety"?

Hebrews 7:22.

8. How should we answer those who say that a God of love would be willing to forgive sinners without any atonement, and that a God who will not forgive sinners unless his Son is crucified is a harsh and vindictive Being?

In the first place, we should remind such people that they have no right to talk about "a God of love" as if God were nothing but love. The God revealed in the Bible is a God of righteousness as well as a God of love. In the second place, such people are looking at one side of the matter only. The same God who demanded an atonement also **provided** the atonement; the same God who said "When I see the blood I will pass over you," also provided the Lamb for the sacrifice. When God **gives** what he himself de-

mands, he cannot be accused of being harsh or unloving.

9. What does God require of sinners for their justification?

Simply faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour. The exact meaning of this is explained in the next question, No. 72.

10. In addition to giving his Son to die for our sins, what else does God provide in order that we may be saved?

The faith by which we believe in Christ is itself a gift of God.

11. Where does the Bible teach that saving faith is a gift of God?

Ephesians 2:8 and Acts 11:18, as well as other places.

12. What do we mean by saying that "faith is a gift of God"?

By this we mean that if God had merely given his Son to die for sinners, and then left it to men to accept or reject the offer of salvation on a "take it or leave it" basis, the result would have been that not a single human being would ever be saved, for all are so enslaved by the power of sin that no one would believe on Christ. Therefore God in his mercy also changes people's hearts by the work of his Holy Spirit, so that they become able and willing to believe on Christ as their Saviour.

13. If faith is a gift of God, does this mean that God makes people believe in Christ whether they want to or not?

God does not compel any person to believe in Christ against his will. God changes a person's heart or nature by his almighty power, with the result that that person voluntarily and gladly accepts Christ.

14. What has been the history of the doctrine of justification by God's free grace?

This doctrine is implied and suggested in the Old Testament, and clearly revealed in the New Testament, especially in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. In Acts chapter 15 we read of the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, where the doctrine of justification by free grace prevailed over the false doctrine which would add works of law-observance as part of the necessary ground of justification. As the centuries passed, the doctrine of justification by free grace was practically forgotten, and its place was taken by the Roman Catholic system of salvation by grace-plus-works. At the time of the Reformation in the early years of the sixteenth century, the glorious truth of justification by free grace was re-

discovered by Martin Luther and widely proclaimed by Luther and the other Reformers. The result was the greatest revival that the Church has ever known. In modern Protestantism the doctrine of justification by free grace has been largely abandoned. "Liberalism" or "Modernism" preaches a doctrine of salvation by works or salvation by character. The result is that modern "Liberal" Protestantism has already lost its power and is gradually losing most of its influence in the world. Its adherents number many millions of people, but they are only mildly interested in religion.

15. What objection has been raised against the doctrine of justification by free grace?

The objection has been raised, that if sinners are justified as a free gift of God, regardless of their own works or character, then here remains no motive for righteous or godly living, and we might as well do as we please.

16. How can this objection be answered?

First of all, we should realize that this objection is nothing new. People were raising it in the time of the apostle Paul. Romans 6:1, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?"; Romans 6:15, "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" To both questions Paul replies in the negative, "God forbid." In the second place, people who raise this objection talk as if justification were the whole of salvation, as if God justifies sinners and then does nothing else for them. But we may not look at justification alone by itself. The person who is justified is also **regenerated** or born again. He receives a new heart, which will seek after holiness. Gradually he is **sanctified** by the Holy Spirit, that is, his character is changed and made holy. Justification does not happen alone; it is a link in a chain. **The person who has been justified is also in process of being sanctified, and there are no exceptions to this rule.**

17. But if we are not to do good works in order to save our soul, then what is the Christian's motive for practicing righteousness?

The right motive for righteous living is devotion and thankfulness to God for creating us and redeeming us from sin as a free gift. We are to practice righteousness, not in order to be saved, but because it is our duty and because we love God.

18. Prove from the Bible that good

works are **the fruit** and not **the ground** of our salvation.

Ephesians 2:8-10, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." Philippians 2:12, 13, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: **for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.**" Note that we are not commanded to work **for** our salvation, but rather to work it **out**. We receive it as a free gift, and then we are to work out the consequences of it in our lives.

19. Why have many people been bitterly opposed to the doctrine of justification by free grace?

Because this doctrine humbles human pride to the dust and gives **all** the glory and credit for human salvation to God alone. Even faith itself is really God's gift. The result is, as Paul pointed out in Romans 3:27, that "boasting" is excluded. Sinful men

would gladly give God **part** of the credit for salvation, and take part of the credit themselves. But the doctrine of justification by free grace gives **all** the credit to God alone and none whatever to the sinner. Human pride rises in stubborn rebellion against such a doctrine. Only when a person's heart has been changed by the Holy Spirit can he really accept this doctrine sincerely. Then he will have "a broken and a contrite heart." (Psalm 51:17).

20. Why is a new Reformation needed at the present day?

Because in our day the doctrine of justification by free grace is all but forgotten. The majority of the large denominations, though they may have it set forth in their official creeds, as a matter of fact no longer believe or preach it in any pointed or consistent way. In many cases the Protestant churches which claim to hold it yet show but little zeal or enthusiasm for preaching it. It is not an exaggeration to say that the average Protestant church member knows little or nothing of it. Meantime the Roman Catholic Church, which strongly opposes this doctrine, is gaining ground daily.

Lesson 58

For Week Beginning February 9, 1947

Q. 72. What is justifying faith?

A. Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and his righteousness, therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.

Scripture References:

Hebrews 10:39. Justifying faith is a **saving** grace.

2 Corinthians 4:13. Ephesians 1:17-19. Justifying faith is wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Holy Spirit of God.

Romans 10:14, 17. In producing justifying faith, the Holy Spirit uses the word of God, that is, the Gospel message.

Acts 2:37. Acts 16:30. John 16:8, 9. Romans 5:6. Ephesians 2:1. Acts 4:12. The person in whom justifying faith has been wrought is convinced of his own inability to save himself, and that none can save him except Christ.

Ephesians 1:13. Assent to the truth of

the promise of the Gospel is an element in justifying faith.

John 1:12. Acts 16:31. Acts 10:43. By justifying faith, a person receives and rests upon Christ and his righteousness as the ground of the pardon of sin.

Philippians 3:9. Acts 15:11. By justifying faith, a person receives and rests upon Christ and his righteousness as the ground of his being accepted and accounted righteous in the sight of God, for salvation.

Questions:

1. What is meant by saying that "justifying faith is a saving grace"?

This means that justifying faith brings about a person's eternal salvation. The person who has this kind of faith shall certainly be saved, and receive eternal life.

2. How does a person come to have justifying faith?

Not of a person's own human will power, but as a special gift of God.

3. How does God give a person the gift of justifying faith?

He produces this faith in a person's heart by the word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit.

4. Can either the word or the Spirit alone produce justifying faith in a person's heart?

No. Only by both together can justifying faith be produced. The word, or Gospel, message, alone, without the Holy Spirit, may result in a kind of faith, but not justifying faith. Where the word is not known, as among the heathen who have never heard the name of Christ, the Holy Spirit does not do any saving work (except perhaps in the case of infants dying in infancy, etc.).

5. When God works justifying faith in a sinner's heart, of what four facts does the sinner become convinced?

(a) He becomes convinced of his sinful condition. (b) He becomes convinced of his misery. (c) He becomes convinced of his own helplessness to save himself from sin and misery. (d) He becomes convinced of the inability of anyone else except Almighty God to save him from sin and misery.

6. When God works justifying faith in a person's heart, what attitude will that person have to the promise of the Gospel?

He will give up his natural doubt or unbelief, and gladly recognize that the promise of the Gospel is true.

7. When a person denies the truthfulness of God's Word, in whole or in part, what does this show concerning the state of that person's heart?

Such unbelief ordinarily indicates that the person does not have saving faith, and is not a child of God. The only exception to this statement would be the case of a person in whose heart justifying faith has been wrought by the Holy Spirit, who yet because of weakness of intellect denies the truthfulness or authority of some portion of the Bible without realizing that this is inconsistent with justifying faith and that it dishonors God.

8. Is it enough for a person to accept the promise of the Gospel as true?

No. A person may accept the promise of the Gospel as true and yet not be a saved Christian. We must also "receive and rest upon Christ and his righteousness", etc.

9. What is meant by "receiving and resting upon Christ and his righteousness"?

First of all, this means giving up all hope of being saved in any other way than as a free gift by Christ. We must give up all claim to good works, good character, or whatever it may be that we have been putting our confidence in. Secondly, we must ask God to save us as a free gift for Christ's

sake, because of the merit of Christ's atonement and righteousness. Thirdly, we must count on God doing as he has promised, entrusting ourselves to Christ as our Saviour, both for this present life and for eternity.

10. In addition to pardoning sin, what else does God do for the person who has justifying faith?

In addition to pardoning the person's sin, God also accepts and accounts his person as **righteous**. It has been said that "Justified means just-as-if-I'd", though of course this is not the derivation of the word. But it is true that **justified means just as if I had always lived a perfect life**; not merely just as if I had never committed any sins, but actually just as if I had always loved the Lord my God with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my mind, and with all my strength, and my neighbor as myself. Not only does Christ's shed blood take away the guilt of our sins, but the perfect, blameless, righteous life of Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the whole law of God, is "imputed" or placed to the credit of the person who has justifying faith.

11. Besides justifying faith, what other kinds of faith are there?

Besides justifying faith, there are also (a) Historical faith and (b) Temporary faith.

12. What is "Historical Faith"?

This is a mere belief in Jesus Christ as an historical person, just as we believe in George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. The person who has historical faith believes that Jesus Christ lived, said and did certain things, was crucified—and he may even believe that Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. But all this is to him merely so much **information**. He has no **personal trust** in Christ as his Saviour.

13. Can "Historical Faith" alone save us?

No. We read in James 2:19 that the devils have this kind of faith. But it does not save them; it only makes them tremble with fear.

14. What is "Temporary Faith"?

This is a kind of faith which at first resembles true saving faith, but it is only temporary and soon passes away because it has no root in a new heart. We learn of this kind of faith from the Parable of the Sower. Temporary faith often results from "revivals" where there is much excitement and people's emotions are powerfully stirred up. They profess to be "converted", but later return to their former sinful manner of living and lose interest in religion.

15. How can "Temporary Faith" be distinguished from true justifying faith?

The only sure way to distinguish between the two is by the test of time. True faith abides and grows with the passing of

time; temporary faith withers and dies. When a person's faith seems to arise largely from emotional excitement, we should realize that it may not be true saving faith, but only temporary.

Lesson 59

For Week Beginning February 16, 1947

Q. 73. How doth faith justify a sinner in the sight of God?

A. Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works that are the fruits of it, nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification; but only as it is an instrument by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and his righteousness.

Scripture References:

Galatians 3:11. Romans 3:28. Scripture places **faith** in contrast with "the law" and "deeds", therefore we are not justified by those graces that accompany faith, nor by the good works that are the fruits of faith.

Romans 4:5 compared with Romans 10:10. Believing on Christ for justification is contrasted with **working** for justification; therefore **faith is not a work of the believer**, but rather a **receiving of Christ's work**; therefore faith itself is not imputed to the believer as the ground of his justification.

John 1:12. Philippians 3:9. Galatians 2:16. In justification, faith is simply and solely an **instrument** by which the believer establishes contact with the righteousness of Christ for salvation.

Questions:

1. Is faith the **means** of our justification, or is it the **ground** of our justification, or is it both?

Faith is the **means** of our justification, but not the **ground**. According to the language of Scripture, we are justified **by** faith or **through** faith, but not **on account of** faith.

2. What is the only **ground** of our justification?

The only **ground** of our justification is the atonement and righteousness of our Saviour Jesus Christ. **We are saved by grace, through faith, on account of the righteousness of Christ.** The source of our salvation is grace, the means of our salvation is faith, and the ground of our salvation is Christ's finished work.

3. Is faith regarded in the Bible as a "good work" of the believer?

No. Faith is the Christian's act of be-

lieving and trusting Christ as his Saviour. But in the Bible this is not regarded as a "work"; on the contrary, it is expressly **contrasted** with "works", as in Ephesians 2:8, 9, "For by grace are ye saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; **not of works**, lest any man should boast." If faith were regarded as a "work", it would leave room for the believer to boast of his faith. But salvation by faith is expressly declared to be "not of works, lest any man should boast". Therefore faith is not regarded as a "work", has no merit attached to it, and cannot be in any sense the ground of our salvation. Note, too, that the Catechism, in harmony with the Bible, speaks of "good works" as the **fruits of faith**; therefore faith itself cannot be a good work of the believer. Rather, **faith is a good work of God in the believer.**

4. What error is sometimes held concerning the place of faith in our salvation?

The error that salvation by faith means **eternal life on lower terms than those originally announced in the Covenant of Works.** According to this false teaching, since we as sinners do not have any adequate righteousness, God graciously lowers his requirements, and agrees to accept faith in place of righteousness. This teaching is based on a mistaken interpretation of Romans 4:3, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness", which is quoted by Paul from Genesis 15:6. This false teaching interprets this text as follows: "Abraham did not have a perfect righteousness, such as God originally required of men, but he **did** have faith, and so God graciously accepted faith as a substitute for righteousness". This interpretation would contradict the whole teaching of Romans and Galatians, not to mention other parts of the Bible, concerning the ground of our justification. For example, in Romans 5:12-21 there is an elaborate parallel between Adam and Christ, which teaches that Christ fulfills the Covenant of Works, and that Christ's righteousness is the ground of our justification. The context in Romans 4 shows that the interpretation of Romans 4:3 cited above is wrong, for in verse 2 and again in verses 4 and 5 it is plainly asserted that Abraham was not justified by works; therefore in Abraham's case faith could not

have been regarded as a "work" or substitute for righteousness. By comparison with other parts of the epistle it is evident that the true meaning of Romans 4:3 is as follows: "Abraham believed God, and by means of this faith in God's promises, the perfect righteousness of Christ was imputed to him just as if it were his own personal righteousness." God never accepts anything less than perfect righteousness, but he graciously accepts Christ's righteousness in place of our own.

5. What is meant by saying that faith is "only on instrument"?

This means that all the righteousness involved in our salvation, and also all the power involved in our salvation, are wholly of God; faith is merely a connecting link, a channel, a way of receiving God's grace.

6. What is the error of the Roman Catholic Church concerning faith?

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that faith is a grace involving merit, that is to say, a form of "good works". A common Catholic catechism speaks of "faith", "hope" and "charity" as "graces or gifts of God", but adds that "Grace is necessary to salvation, because without grace we can do nothing to merit heaven." This amounts to saying that while we cannot save ourselves without

help from God, yet we can save ourselves with help from God. The truth, of course, is that faith is a grace or gift of God by which we receive as a free gift, apart from any merit on our part, the heaven which Christ has merited for us.

7. What is the common error of "liberal" Protestants concerning faith?

Modernism or Liberalism tends to regard faith as something valuable for its own sake, something like "morale" or "self-confidence", which keeps a person from discouragement, rather than regarding faith as a connecting link with the righteousness of Christ. Liberalism thinks of faith from the psychological point of view, and regards it as helpful and valuable because of the state of mind which it produces in a person, rather than regarding it from the theological (and Scriptural) point of view as having the atonement and righteousness of Christ for its object. According to Liberalism, it is the act and attitude of believing, rather than what or in whom we believe, that is the important thing. Needless to say, this modern "Liberal" idea of faith is utterly destructive not only of the doctrine of justification by free grace, but of the whole teaching of the Bible on faith and salvation; that is to say, the "Liberal" idea of faith is destructive of Christianity.

Lesson 60

For Week Beginning February 23, 1947

Q. 74. What is adoption?

A. Adoption is an act of the free grace of God, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, whereby all those that are justified are received into the number of his children, have his name put upon them, the Spirit of his Son given to them, are under his fatherly care and dispensations, admitted to all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and fellow heirs with Christ in glory.

Scripture References:

1 John 3:1. Adoption is an act of God's free grace, that is, an undeserved gift of God's love.

Ephesians 1:5. Galatians 4:4, 5. God's act of adoption is "in and for his only Son Jesus Christ."

John 1:12. All believers in Christ, that is, all justified persons, are also adopted into the number of God's children.

2 Corinthians 6:18. Revelation 3:12. In adoption, the name of God is put upon the believer.

Galatians 4:6. In connection with adop-

tion, the Holy Spirit is given to the Christian.

Psalm 103:13. Proverbs 14:26. Matthew 6:32. Those who have been adopted as God's children are under his fatherly care and dispensations.

Hebrews 6:12. Romans 8:17. Those who have been adopted as God's children are made heirs of all God's promises, and fellow-heirs with Christ in glory.

Questions:

1. What is the difference between justification and adoption?

Justification is a change in our legal status; adoption is a change in our personal status. Justification pronounces us to be righteous in God's sight; adoption makes us God's children. Justification makes us citizens of God's kingdom; adoption makes us members of God's family. In justification, God acts as a Judge; in adoption, God acts as a Father.

2. Why is adoption referred to as "an act"?

Because it takes place instantaneously at a particular time.

3. Does adoption come before or after justification?

In the logical order, as presented in the Catechism, justification comes first and adoption follows this. But in Christian experience these two acts of God take place **at the same instant of time.**

4. Can a person be justified without being adopted, or adopted without being justified?

No. These two acts of God always occur together. They can be **distinguished**, for they differ in meaning one from the other, but they cannot be **separated**. The person who is justified is also at the same time adopted into the family of God. The person who is truly a child of God, in the religious sense of the term, is also a justified person.

5. Why is the doctrine of adoption often neglected or denied at the present day?

Because of the prevalence of the **false** doctrine of the "universal Fatherhood of God." If God is the Father of everyone, then obviously everyone is already a child of God, and the doctrine of adoption does not make sense. If every person in the world is already a child of God, by nature, then there is no need for adoption into the family of God. Many Christian people fail to realize that this conception of "the universal Fatherhood of God" (in the **religious** sense) is a **false** doctrine and without support in the Bible.

6. How can we know by personal experience that we have been adopted as God's children?

Galatians 4:6. Romans 8:15, 16.

7. What special blessings does adoption involve?

(a) A special and intimate relation to God, as his children; (b) The Holy Spirit given to us to dwell in our hearts; (c) A right to all the promises of God in the present life; (d) A title-deed to eternal glory as fellow-heirs with Christ.

8. How many times can a person be adopted into God's family?

Like justification, adoption takes place only once in the life of a person.

9. Can we forfeit or lose our adoption into God's family?

No. Once received into God's family, we shall be his children forever. This privilege cannot be lost.

10. Can we forfeit or lose our own feeling or consciousness that we are God's children?

Yes. By falling into sin and grieving the Holy Spirit, we can lose our own assurance or consciousness that we are God's children. This matter is more fully discussed under Q. 81, "Are all true believers at all times assured of their present being in the estate of grace, and that they shall be saved?" Salvation cannot be lost, but our own assurance of it can be lost **to a degree, and for a time.** Adoption cannot be lost, but our own enjoyment of it can be forfeited **for a time.**

11. What special duty does our adoption into God's family impose on us?

The duty of living as sons and daughters of the living God. See **2 Corinthians 6:14-18.**

Lesson 61

For Week Beginning March 2, 1947

Q. 75. What is sanctification?

A. Sanctification is a work of God's grace, whereby they whom God hath, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are in time, through the powerful operation of his Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life.

Scripture References:

Ephesians 1:4. 1 Corinthians 6:11. 2

Thessalonians 2:13. Those whom God from eternity has chosen to be holy, are in time sanctified by the powerful operation of his Holy Spirit.

Romans 6:4-6. The Holy Spirit applies the death and resurrection of Christ to the believer, that he may be sanctified.

Ephesians 4:23, 24. Sanctification involves renewal of the whole man after the image of God.

Acts 11:18. 1 John 3:9. In sanctification, the "seeds" or roots of repentance and all other saving graces are planted in the believer's heart.

Jude 20. Hebrews 6:11, 12. Ephesians

3:16-19. Colossians 1:10-11. In sanctification, the graces which have been planted in the believer's heart are stirred up, increased, and strengthened.

Romans 6:4, 6, 14. Galatians 5:24. Sanctification results in the believer more and more dying unto sin, and living unto righteousness.

Questions:

1. Why is sanctification called a **work** of God's free grace instead of an **act** of God's free grace?

Because, unlike justification and adoption, sanctification is not an act, but a **process**. Justification and adoption are instantaneous acts, completed once for all in an instant of time, but sanctification is a life-long process starting the moment the person is regenerated, and continuing until the moment of death when the soul enters the state of glory.

2. Who will be sanctified?

The elect, whom God has chosen from before the creation of the world to be holy, and they only.

3. What is the meaning of the word "sanctify"?

It means to **make holy**.

4. What two kinds of sanctification does the New Testament **speak of**?

(a) It speaks of what may be called a sanctification of position or external privileges. This kind of sanctification is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:14. It involves certain spiritual blessings and privileges, but does not necessarily involve the eternal salvation of the person who is thus "sanctified." (b) It speaks of personal sanctification, or the sanctification of a changed and godly character. This personal sanctification is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:11. The person who is sanctified in this way is a saved person and heir of eternal life.

5. Which of these two kinds of sanctification is discussed in the question we are studying in The Larger Catechism?

The second, or personal sanctification of life and character.

6. What power is involved in the work of sanctification?

The almighty power of God the Holy Spirit.

7. What is meant by saying that the Holy Spirit applies the death and resurrection of Christ to those who are being sanctified?

This means that those benefits which Christ purchased for the elect by his sufferings and death, and which are guaranteed by his resurrection, are actually bestowed on the Christian by the work of the Holy Spirit. God the Father **planned** our redemption; God the Son **purchased** our redemption; God the Holy Spirit **applies** our redemption so that we actually experience the benefit of it.

8. What is meant by saying that those who are sanctified are "renewed in their whole man"?

This means, first of all, that sanctification involves both the body and the soul, as is shown by 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Secondly, sanctification is not limited to any one function or part of the soul's life, but includes all. It involves the mind, or intellect; the emotions, or feelings; and the will, or power of decision.

9. What is the pattern or ideal according to which the Holy Spirit carries on his work of sanctification?

The pattern is "the image of God". Man was created in the image of God, but by his fall into sin, the image of God in man was broken and marred. However it was not entirely destroyed; the broken fragments of it remain in every human being in the world. By sanctification, the image of God in man is restored. This image of God consists chiefly of knowledge, righteousness and holiness.

10. What figure of speech does the Catechism, following the New Testament, use to describe the process of sanctification?

The figure of death and resurrection, or dying unto sin and rising unto newness of life.

11. What lessons concerning the Christian life can we learn from this figure?

First, we can learn that we may not tolerate the least sin in our life. We are to **die** unto sin, to **crucify** sin. Secondly, we can learn that our progress in holiness is not something that we can achieve of ourselves; as the dead have no power to raise themselves, so our rising to newness of life depends upon the power of God.

12. What two errors concerning sanctification are common today?

(a) The error called **antinomianism**, which is a denial that the Christian is under obligation to observe the moral law of God. This error of course makes sanctification unnecessary. (b) The error called **perfectionism**, also called "total sanctification" and "sinless perfection," which teaches

that sanctification is not a process but an **act** which may be completed at a definite time during the course of the present life, after which the person is "totally sanctified". Note: The question of perfectionism, or "total sanctification", will be further discussed under Q. 78, "Whence ariseth the imperfection of sanctification in believers?"

Lesson 62

For Week Beginning March 9, 1947

Q. 76. What is repentance unto life?

A. Repentance unto life is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and word of God, whereby out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, and upon the apprehension of God's mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, he so grieves for and hates his sins, as that he turns from them all to God, purposing and endeavoring constantly to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience.

Scripture References:

2 Timothy 2:25. Repentance unto life is a saving grace, or gift of God.

Zechariah 12:10. Acts 11:18-21. Repentance unto life is wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Ezekiel 18:28-32. Luke 15:17, 18. Hosea 2:6, 7. In true repentance the sinner is thoroughly aware of the danger of his sins.

Ezekiel 36:31. Isaiah 30:22. The sinner who is truly repentant is aware not merely of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins.

Joel 2:12, 13. In true repentance there is always an apprehension of God's forgiving mercy in Christ to such as are penitent.

Jeremiah 31:18, 19. The person who is truly repentant has a deep sorrow for sin.

2 Corinthians 7:11. The person who is truly repentant actually hates his sins.

Acts 26:18. Ezekiel 14:6. I Kings 8:47, 48. True repentance involves turning from all one's sins unto God.

Psalms 119:6, 59, 128. Luke 1:6. 2 Kings 23:25. Genuine repentance involves a sincere purpose of new obedience to the will of God.

Questions:

1. Why does the Catechism speak of "repentance **unto life**" instead of speaking simply of "repentance"?

Because there is another kind of repen-

13. What attitude should we have toward the matter of sanctification?

We should not only seek to understand clearly the Bible doctrine of sanctification, but also should seek the reality and power of it in our personal experience.

tance which is **not** unto life. We read that Judas "repented himself . . . and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:3-5). This false repentance is also called "the sorrow of the world" (2 Corinthians 7:10) in contrast to true repentance or "godly sorrow". There we read that "the sorrow of the world worketh death"; that is to say, it is not "repentance unto life", but "repentance unto death", for the outcome of it is not eternal life but eternal death.

2. Why is repentance unto life called "a saving grace"?

It is called **saving** because its outcome is salvation or eternal life; it is called a **grace** because it is something we receive as a gift from God, not something we have naturally of ourselves.

3. According to the teaching of the Bible, who needs to repent?

Everyone without exception needs to repent. We should note that the commands to repent in the Bible are universal. John the Baptist and Jesus, for example, in their preaching, said "Repent **ye**", without distinguishing between good and bad, religious and indifferent, ignorant and educated, etc. They did not say, "Repent, those of you who have done something that needs to be repented of", nor "Repent, those of you who are sinners", but simply and without qualification, "Repent **ye**".

4. How is repentance unto life wrought in the heart of a sinner?

By the Spirit and the Word of God. Here the term "Word of God" of course means not only the Bible, but the message of saving truth contained in the Bible, that is, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, regardless of whether it is read, preached, or proclaimed in some other way. Repentance unto life is not wrought by the Spirit alone without the Word, nor by the Word alone without the Spirit, but by the two together, the Holy Spirit using and applying the truth of the Word. This implies that where the Gospel has not been proclaimed, the Holy Spirit does not work in such a way as to bring about people's salvation. He works where

the Word has been proclaimed and is known.

5. Is it enough for a person to realize the danger of his sins?

No. Fear of God's punishment plays a part, certainly, in bringing people to Christ for salvation, but fear of punishment alone is not enough. The person who is a Christian **only** because of fear of hell is not really a Christian at all. We must be sorry for **our sins**, not only for the sufferings and misery that they bring on us. We must turn from sin **because sin is wrong**, not merely because it is dangerous.

6. In addition to the danger of our sins, what must we realize concerning our sins?

We must realize the "filthiness and odiousness" of our sins; that is to say, we must realize that our sins are utterly contrary to the holiness and character of God, and are therefore unclean and to be hated.

7. Why must we also have an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ?

Without an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ, repentance would not lead to salvation but to **despair**, for while realizing that our sins deserve God's wrath and curse for all eternity, we would yet see no way of deliverance from them. It is only when accompanied by **faith in Christ as Saviour** that repentance is a **Christian** experience. It is reported that a Hindu society in New York City took the Westminster Shorter Catechism definition of "Repentance unto life" and changed it to fit their Hindu religion, by **omitting** the words "and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ". By this omission, they eliminated everything that is distinctively Christian from the definition. The result was as follows: "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience." This satisfied the Hindu Society, which shows that there is no Christianity in it.

8. Is it necessary for a Christian to have deep sorrow for sin?

Certainly it is necessary. Sin is not a trifle, nor a slight evil. It is **absolutely** evil, so that any sin, even the least, deserves God's wrath and curse to all eternity. Even the least sin is a **total contradiction of God's holiness**. Therefore the Christian, throughout life, must always have deep sorrow for sin.

9. Is repentance an act, a process, or an attitude?

Looked at on its human side, repentance is **an attitude of heart and mind with respect to God, self and sin**. But repentance unto life is more than an attitude. It is an attitude which results in action, the constant serious effort to live a righteous life.

10. Should we repent once for all when we come to believe on Christ, or should we continue to repent day by day?

The crisis of conversion when a person first believes in Christ and turns to God ought to be pre-eminently a time of repentance. But repentance is not something that can be done once for all. We must continue to have the attitude of repentance day by day throughout our life in this world.

11. How can we test the genuineness of our repentance?

It is not safe to rely wholly on our **feelings**, for they are very deceptive. The only sure test of any religious experience is its **fruits**. If our repentance leads to "purposing and endeavoring" to live a new and better life, we may believe that it is genuine Christian repentance, or "repentance unto life".

12. Why is there so little true repentance at the present day?

There may be several reasons for this condition, but certainly one of the main reasons is that during recent years there has been relatively little preaching of **the law of God, the holiness of God, and the wrath of God against human sin**. Instead of stressing these subjects, modern Protestantism has shifted its emphasis and proclaims a God who is nothing but love, and who is represented as too kind-hearted to punish anyone forever. Sin is represented as an evil, but not a great enough evil to alienate man from God and bring him under the wrath and curse of God. It is no wonder that this shift of emphasis, and these corruptions of the truth, have resulted in the present state of affairs. The unbalanced modern emphasis on the love of God has produced an attitude of complacency and self-righteousness in modern Protestantism. Scripture teaches that Christ came to call, not the righteous, but **sinners**, to repentance. Those who consider themselves righteous will of course feel no need of repentance. Only by a general return to the whole truth about God and his law can the ground be laid for a real revival of Christian faith and experience.

13. How can it be proved from the Bible that repentance is a **gift of God**, and not simply an achievement of our human free-will?

There are texts which speak of repentance as a gift of God, such as Acts 11:18 and 2 Timothy 2:25. Also there are texts which teach the same truth by speaking of repentance as a **work of God**, such as Jeremiah 31:18, 19 and Zechariah 12:10.

14. Can repentance take away the guilt of our sins?

No. The guilt of our sins is cancelled only by the blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

15. If repentance cannot cancel our sins, then why must we repent?

Christ came to this world, not simply to

save us, but to save us **from sin**. He came not simply to give us **eternal life**, but to give us **eternal righteousness**." We cannot accept a part of what Christ offers; we must take all or nothing. If we do not want righteousness, then we cannot have eternal life either. We cannot be saved without being saved **from sin**. The person who does not repent is the person who wants to hold on to sin. This state of mind is contrary to accepting Christ as our **Saviour from sin**. We cannot have our sins and also have salvation **from** our sins at the same time, any more than a person could be saved from fire while deliberately remaining in a burning building.

Lesson 63

For Week Beginning March 16, 1947

Q. 77. Wherein do justification and sanctification differ?

A. Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification imputeth the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification his Spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exercise thereof; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued: the one doth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.

Scripture References:

1 Corinthians 6:11. 1 Corinthians 1:30. Justification and sanctification are inseparably joined together.

Romans 4:6, 8. In justification, God imputes to the sinner the righteousness of Christ.

Ezekiel 36:27. In sanctification, God infuses grace, and enables the Christian to exercise it.

Romans 3:24, 25. In justification, sin is pardoned.

Romans 6:6, 14. In sanctification, sin is subdued.

Romans 8:33, 34. Justification frees all believers equally, and perfectly in this life, from the wrath of God.

1 John 2:12-14. Hebrews 5:12-14. Sanctification is not equal in all Christians, but varies according to the progress they have made.

1 John 1:8, 10. Sanctification is not perfect in any Christian in this life.

2 Corinthians 7:1. Philippians 3:12-14. Sanctification is a gradual process which approaches, but does not in this life actually attain, the ideal of moral perfection.

Note: This question of the Catechism being a contrast between the two doctrines of justification and sanctification, the following table of resemblances and contrasted points may be helpful in understanding this matter.

I. Points in which Justification and Sanctification Are the Same

1. They are inseparably joined together; there is no justification without sanctification, and no sanctification without justification. The person who has one has the other also.

2. God is the Author and source of both Justification and Sanctification.

3. Both Justification and Sanctification proceed from God's **grace**, or special love and favor to sinners.

II. Points in which Justification and Sanctification Differ

Justification is

1. An **act** of God's free grace.
2. An act by which God **imputes** Christ's righteousness.

3. An act in which God **pardons** sin.
4. **Total and equal** in all cases.
5. **Complete and perfect** in this life.
6. A **judicial verdict** which frees from condemnation and awards eternal life.

Sanctification is

1. A **work** of God's free grace.
2. A work by which God **infuses** grace and power.
3. A work in which God **subdues** sin.
4. **Different in degree** in different persons.
5. **Incomplete and imperfect** in this life.
6. A divinely planted and watered **spiritual growth** of Christian character.

Questions:

1. What is meant by saying that sanctification is inseparably joined with justification?

This means that though these two elements of salvation can be **distinguished**, they cannot be **separated**. There is no such thing as justification without sanctification, or sanctification without justification. The person who has been justified is, without exception, being sanctified, and vice versa.

2. Prove from the Bible that justification and sanctification are inseparable.

1 Corinthians 1:30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Here **righteousness** (which is the same thing as justification) is linked together with **sanctification**, and we are told that Christ Jesus is made unto us both righteousness and sanctification. Therefore the person who has Christ has both justification and sanctification. Romans 6:22, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Here "being made free from sin", that is, **justification**, is closely connected with "bringing forth fruit unto holiness," that is, **sanctification**.

3. What attempts have been made to separate justification and sanctification?

(a) People of the Pentecostal persuasion hold that justification is not necessarily accompanied and followed by sanctification. They tend to divide Christians into two classes, namely: 1. Those who have only been justified; and 2. Those who have been both justified and also sanctified. Those who hold this view also tend to regard sanctification as **an act** which may be complete in this life. This same general tendency is manifested by those who attempt to classify Christians into: 1. Those who have received the Holy Spirit; and 2. Those who are "saved" but have not yet received the Holy

Spirit. (See Romans 8:9, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his").

(b) Modern "Liberalism" has given up the doctrine of justification by free grace, but seeks to cultivate sanctification apart from justification. Thus the modern Liberal preachers no longer believe in or proclaim the truth of justification by the free grace of God, but they never weary of preaching about "character building" and similar subjects. This error is vastly more serious than that of the Pentecostal believers mentioned above. They say that a person may have the foundation of justification without having the house of sanctification built upon it. But the modern Liberal preachers say, in effect, that a person may have a wonderful house of sanctification without any real foundation at all underneath it; that is, without any foundation except ordinary, unregenerate human nature.

4. What is the difference in meaning between the terms **impute** and **infuse**?

To **impute** is a legal term; it means to reckon something, or charge something to the account of a person. To impute Christ's righteousness to a person means to place Christ's righteousness to the credit of that person. Imputation is a transfer of righteousness or guilt, credit or debit, in God's record books. The term **infuse**, on the other hand, means **to pour in**; it refers not to a transaction in the record books of God in heaven, but to something that God does in the heart and soul of a person here on earth. It describes, not a change of legal status, but a change of personal character. God **imputes** to us the righteousness of Christ, but **infuses** grace and power into our hearts so that we can cultivate our own righteousness. The perfect righteousness of Christ is **imputed** to the believer while he is still here in this world; but in heavenly glory he shall also be clothed with the **perfected righteousness of saints**, that is, the personal righteousness of character which is the product of sanctification (see Revelation 19:8).

5. Why did not God provide that sanctification should be equal in all believers in this present life?

Because God is almighty, of course he could have made sanctification equal in all believers in this present life, but as a matter of fact he did not choose to do so. Why, we are not told in the Bible. We can only say that God in his sovereignty has done as seemed good in his sight (see Matthew 11:26). We cannot call God to account for his plans and decisions. To do so is a contra-

diction of the religious relationship between man and God.

6. Why is the distinction between justification and sanctification important for us in our Christian life?

This distinction is extremely important for the Christian life, because there is always some tendency to confuse these two things. The person who thinks that justification includes all the sanctification he needs, so that he need not seek personal holiness of character and life, stands in peril because he is not truly justified. On the other hand, the person who thinks that sanctification includes all the justification he needs, stands in peril because he is trying to save himself by good works. Thus the distinction between justification and sanctification is extremely important for avoiding the two extremes of antinomianism and legalism. The true believer will avoid both of these extremes, and will

realize that justification is the foundation of his salvation, while sanctification is the fruit of his salvation. We should hold and teach the whole Bible truth about both of these great doctrines, noting carefully their similarities and differences, and the relation between the two.

7. Is the difference between justification and sanctification merely a matter of theory or abstract doctrine, or "theological hair splitting"?

On the contrary, this is a matter of vital importance for the practical life of every Christian. No sincere Christian will regard such matters as mere theories or abstractions. Every true Christian will realize that this distinction is vitally important, and that justification and sanctification are as necessary for the salvation of his soul as air, food and water are for the life and health of his body.

Lesson 64

For Week Beginning March 23, 1947

Q. 78. Whence ariseth the imperfection of sanctification in believers?

A. The imperfection of sanctification in believers ariseth from the remnants of sin abiding in every part of them, and the perpetual lustings of the flesh against the spirit; whereby they are often foiled with temptations, and fall into many sins, are hindered in all their spiritual services, and their best works are imperfect and defiled in the sight of God.

Scripture References:

Romans 7:18, 23. Mark 14: 66-72. Galatians 2:11, 12. By reason of the sinful corruption of nature which remains even in believers, they are faced with many temptations and fall into many sins.

Hebrews 12:1. The Christian is hindered in all spiritual exercises by the remnants of sin in his nature.

Isaiah 64:6. Exodus 28:38. Even the Christian's best works are imperfect and defiled by sin in the sight of God.

1 John 1:8. James 3:2. James 5:16. Philippians 3:12-14. Proverbs 24:9. Ecclesiastes 7:20. The imperfection of sanctification in believers is a fact recognized in Scripture.

Questions:

1. If it is true that the Christian has received salvation then how can the Catechism speak about "the imperfection of sanctification in believers"?

The term "salvation" in the Bible and in Christian doctrine is not always used in the same sense. It is a complex idea and includes several elements. Sometimes one of these is referred to, and sometimes another. We commonly say that a Christian is a saved person, which is quite true, of course, if rightly understood. But if we wish to speak with precise accuracy, we must say that a Christian is a person who has been saved in one sense, is being saved in another sense, and shall be saved in still another sense. He has been saved from the guilt of sin, is being saved from the power of sin, and shall be saved from the presence of sin. The Christian has received justification, is receiving sanctification, and shall receive glorification. We receive salvation in instalments, not all at one time. As the Christian's sanctification is a process which continues throughout his earthly life, it necessarily remains imperfect during this present life.

2. Is our sanctification imperfect because of something outside of us, or because of something inside of us?

Our sanctification is imperfect because of something **inside** of us, namely, the sinful nature which remains with us even after we are born again. It is very common indeed for Christians to blame their sins and failures on something outside of themselves, such as the sinful world, the devil, adverse circumstances, and so forth. But the truth is that our own sinful nature is the real cause of the imperfection of our sanctification.

3. But do not external factors such as the world and the devil lead Christians into sinful compromise with evil?

External factors, such as the world, the devil, evil companions, intoxicating liquor, and the like, may be the **occasions** of our compromising with evil. These external factors take advantage of our sinful nature, and we are seduced into committing actual transgressions. But these external things of themselves could have no power to seduce us into sin if it were not for the sinful nature remaining in us. All these external temptations were faced by our Saviour Jesus Christ, yet he never committed the least sin. In his case there was no sinful nature to which the external occasions of temptation could present a powerful appeal. We should guard against the prevalent error of loudly denouncing the world and the devil, while saying little or nothing about the sinful corruption of nature which remains in every Christian in the world. Merely condemning the sins of the world will not make Christian people holy or Christlike. More than this is needed. The sin in each person's own heart must be mortified or crucified. When this is done the world and the devil will find much less to appeal to in the Christian's heart.

4. What are some of the names used in the Bible to designate the sinful nature which remains in those who are born again?

"The old man" (Romans 6:6); "the flesh" (Romans 7:18); "the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:23); "the stony heart" (Ezekiel 36:26); "sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:17); "the body of this death" (Romans 7:24).

5. What is the meaning of the word "flesh" in the Bible?

This is one of the hardest terms in the Bible to understand, because it is used with at least three different meanings, which are as follows: (a) The **purely physical sense**, as in the expression "flesh and blood". In this sense "flesh" is a certain part of the human body. (b) "Flesh" is also used to mean **man in his human weakness**, as for example in the verse, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field". (c) The term "flesh" is used to mean **the sinful nature of fallen man**, which remains even in the Christian, as in the verse "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing". We should guard against the extremely common error that the word "flesh" means a **part** of our human nature. It does not refer to a "lower" nature; it **refers to our whole nature as corrupted by sin.**

6. What is the most common error in understanding those Bible passages which speak of "the flesh" as something evil?

Undoubtedly the most common error in dealing with these passages is to regard "the flesh" as meaning simply **the human body**. In reality, of course, "the flesh" includes the **whole** nature of man which has been corrupted by sin, which the Catechism recognizes by speaking of "sin abiding in every part of them." Primarily, sin is not a matter of the body but of the soul or spirit, but it involves the whole of our human nature. There is nothing human that has not been corrupted and defiled by our fall into sin.

7. According to the Bible, which is characteristic of the Christian life, peace or conflict?

According to the Bible, the Christian life is both a life of peace and also a life of conflict. It is a life of peace with God and of conflict with sin. The unsaved person is at war with God and at peace with sin. The Christian is at peace with God and at war with sin.

8. If a person experiences no conflict with sin, what does this indicate concerning his religious experience?

A person who experiences no real conflict with sin is in all probability an unsaved sinner, dead in trespasses and sins. A person who experiences but little conflict with sin should examine himself to discover whether he has not grieved the Holy Spirit and so fallen into a condition of spiritual sluggishness and slumber. Such a Christian should heed the warning of Romans 13:11, "It is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

9. Should a Christian become discouraged because he has to fight a hard battle against sin?

No. While our human weakness naturally leads us to become discouraged by prolonged conflict, it is a fact that a hard battle against sin is a good sign. It shows that we are on the right track, travelling the real highway to heaven, and are experiencing exactly what all of God's saints, even the best and holiest, have had to go through. Instead of becoming discouraged by conflict with sin, we should rather be suspicious and even alarmed if we find that we have little or no conflict with sin.

10. Why is it that prayer and other spiritual duties are often so extremely difficult even for earnest and faithful Christians?

This is undoubtedly a fact of Christian experience, as well as a teaching of God's Word. The reason is that our sinful nature which remains with us fights desperately against those spiritual exercises which tend toward crucifying "the flesh". "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). As the Catechism points out, it is true that believers "are hindered in all their spiritual services."

11. What should we think of those evangelists and preachers who represent the Christian life as entirely joyful, pleasant and easy?

Those who speak so have not yet come to grips with the real evil of their own hearts.

Lesson 65

For Week Beginning March 30, 1947

Q. 79. May not true believers, by reason of their imperfections, and the many temptations and sins they are overtaken with, fall away from the state of grace?

A. True believers, by reason of the unchangeable love of God, and his decree and covenant to give them perseverance, their inseparable union with Christ, his continual intercession for them, and the Spirit and seed of God abiding in them, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Scripture References:

Jeremiah 31:3. The unchangeable love of God for his own.

2 Timothy 2:19. Hebrews 13:20, 21. 2 Samuel 23:5. God's decree and covenant to give his people the grace of perseverance.

1 Corinthians 1:8, 9. The believer's inseparable union with Christ.

Hebrews 7:25, Luke 22:32. Christ's intercession for his own.

1 John 3:9. 1 John 2:27. The Spirit and seed of God abiding in the Christian.

Jeremiah 32:40. John 10:28. The true believer can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace.

1 Peter 1:5. The true believer is kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Questions:

1. What class of people does the answer to this question of the Catechism discuss?

12. What is the real character of even the best of our "good works" in God's sight?

Even the best of our works are imperfect and defiled in the sight of God, because of the sin remaining in the heart and life of all of us.

13. What great Scripture passage deals with the Christian's warfare against sin?

Ephesians 6:10-18, which commands us to "put on the whole armor of God".

14. What part of the "whole armor of God" is the most important of all?

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (one)" (Ephesians 6:16).

True believers, that is, those who are truly born again, justified, adopted into the family of God, and in process of being sanctified.

2. What class of people does this answer not discuss?

The class commonly called hypocrites, including all who make a profession of Christianity but are not really born again. Some of these may be mere pretenders; others may be self-deceived, thinking they are born again when they really are not; others may know nothing about being born again, but assume that they can be saved by their good works or character. None of these are under discussion in the answer to Q. 79.

3. Can true believers fall away from the state of grace?

No. That is, they cannot **totally and finally** fall away from the state of grace.

4. Prove from the Bible that true believers cannot totally and finally fall away from the state of grace.

John 10:28. Romans 8:35-39, which lists sixteen things which cannot separate the believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and then adds "nor any other creature". Those who hold that true believers can fall away from the state of grace and be eternally lost reply that none of the things listed here by the apostle Paul can separate the believer from God's love, but the believer's own free-will can do it. By this claim they hold that **human free-will is not a created thing**, for after

listing these things the apostle adds "Nor any other creature". We conclude, therefore, that the believer's free will being a **creature**, it cannot separate the believer from the saving love of God.

5. What does the Catechism imply by the words "neither totally nor finally"?

These words imply that **true believers may partially and temporarily fall away from the state of grace**. As a matter of fact this partial and temporary falling away is taught in the Bible as a possibility, and it can be observed among Christian people in our own day.

6. Does the fact that true believers cannot perish depend on their own will power, earnestness or faithfulness?

No. If our eternal salvation depended on ourselves, none of us would be saved.

7. If our eternal security does not depend on our own efforts, then what does it depend on?

It depends on the love and power of God.

8. How does the Catechism summarize the Bible proofs that true believers cannot perish?

The Catechism lists five reasons from Scripture, which are as follows: (a) The **unchangeable** love of God. (b) God's decree and covenant to give them perseverance. (c) Their **inseparable union with Christ**. (d) Christ's continual intercession for them. (e) The Spirit and seed of God abiding in them.

9. Prove from the Bible that God's love for the elect is **eternal** and therefore **unchangeable**.

Jeremiah 31:3. This verse speaks of God loving his people with an **everlasting** love. If this love is changeable, then it is not really **everlasting**. If really everlasting, then it is unchangeable.

10. What is the nature of God's love for his elect?

God's love for his elect is not merely a general love, that wishes and hopes for their welfare, but a special, particular love that actually goes into action and infallibly provides for their eternal fellowship with God himself.

11. Give two texts of Scripture which prove that God has promised to keep his elect from falling away from the state of grace.

Psalm 138:8 and its New Testament counterpart, Philippians 1:6.

12. Show from Scripture that the believer's union with Christ is an **inseparable** union, and therefore an **eternal** union.

Romans 8:35-39. Psalm 23:6: Psalm 73:24. John 17:24.

13. Give a text from the Gospels and one from the Epistles showing Christ's intercession for his people.

John 17:9. Hebrews 7:25.

41. Will Christ ever stop making intercession for his people?

No. His intercession will continue until the last of the elect enters the state of eternal glory, for we read in Hebrews 7:25 that "he ever liveth to make intercession for them".

15. How do we know that Christ's intercession for his people will be effective?

God the Father will always grant the requests of Jesus Christ, for he is the Father's beloved Son in whom he is well pleased (Matthew 3:17) and everything that he does is always pleasing to the Father (John 8:29).

16. How does the abiding of the Spirit of God in believers prove that they cannot fall away from the state of grace?

The Holy Spirit cannot dwell in the heart of an unsaved person (John 14:17), but he dwells in the heart of every believer (John 14:17, Romans 8:9). Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would abide forever (John 14:16). If it were possible for a believer to fall away from the state of grace, that would mean that a **saved person would become unsaved** again. Then the Holy Spirit would have to leave that person, for he cannot dwell in an unsaved person. But Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to believers **to abide forever**. Therefore the Spirit cannot depart from a true believer's heart; therefore a true believer cannot lose his salvation and become unsaved again.

17. What is meant by the "seed of God" abiding in believers?

The "seed of God" means the new, holy nature created in the heart of a person when he is born again by the power of the Holy Spirit.

18. How does the abiding of this new nature or "seed of God" in believers show that they cannot fall away from the state of grace?

1 Peter 1:23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of **incorruptible**, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth

forever." Here the new nature, or "seed of God", which the Christian receives when he is born again, is affirmed to be **incorruptible**. If it is incorruptible, then it cannot perish and die, but will live and grow forever. But if it were possible for a believer totally to fall away from the state of grace, then it would be possible for the "seed of God" in that person's heart to perish and die. In that case, the "seed of God" would not be incorruptible, but corruptible. But God's Word plainly says that the "seed of God" in the believer is **incorruptible**. Therefore the "seed of God" abiding in the believer guarantees that the believer cannot totally fall away from the state of grace and be lost.

19. Should this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, or the eternal security of the believer in Christ, lead us to indifference or careless living in our Christian life?

It has often been made a criticism of this doctrine that it takes away all motive

for seeking holiness. This criticism is based on the false notion that Christians seek holiness only because of the fear of hell. Really this criticism is quite without foundation. Christians who believe in this doctrine are just as earnest, faithful and careful in their Christian life as other Christians who do not accept this doctrine. The truth is that this doctrine, rightly understood, should be, and is, a powerful incentive to patient and faithful Christian service. The Christian who is filled day and night with fears and worries lest he may fall away from the state of grace and perish eternally cannot render the best service to God, because his mind is distracted by his fears. The believer whose mind has been set at rest by the clear teaching of God's Word on this subject will be the better able to devote his life to seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Just as in ordinary human life, so it is true in the spiritual life of the Christian, that **security is necessary for normal progress and activity**.

Blue Banner Question Box

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

Question:

Is there not a contradiction between the Confession of Faith, XXIII 2, which says: "It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto", and our Testimony, Chapter XXX, which rejects as an **error** the proposition "That it is lawful to profess or swear allegiance to an immoral constitution of civil government"? Could a member of the Covenanter Church claim that the Confession of Faith sanctions his holding public office, regardless of what the Testimony says?

Answer:

(a) This query suggests that there may be a conflict between two of our subordinate doctrinal standards, namely, the Confession of Faith and the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony. As both of these documents were produced by the labors of fallible men, with an interval of about 150 years between the two, it is not inherently impossible that such a contradiction may exist. (b) The statement of the Confession of Faith merely asserts that for a Christian to hold office as a magistrate **is not wrong in itself**. It may be wrong under certain conditions, but it is not wrong **in itself**.

When something is wrong **in itself** it is **always** wrong, regardless of circumstances and conditions. For example, to take God's name in vain, to worship idols, to bear false witness, are wrong **in themselves**. Under no possible circumstances could it ever be right to take God's name in vain, worship idols, bear false witness. But there are things which are not wrong in themselves, but morally indifferent, which yet may be wrong under certain conditions. For example, to drive an automobile is not wrong in itself, but lawful or morally indifferent; but if it happens to be someone else's car, and you drive it without the owner's consent, then it is wrong. To open a locked door with a key is not wrong in itself, but to open the locked door of your neighbor's house, while he is away from home, in order to steal his property, is wrong. Now the Confession of Faith merely affirms that for a Christian to be a civil magistrate is not wrong **in itself**. This does not mean that it may not be wrong under certain conditions. Similarly in Chapter XXIV, Section 3, the Confession of Faith says: "It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry who are able with judgment to give their consent". This certainly does not mean that it is right for the unscripturally divorced to marry. (c) The Confession of Faith was prepared by the Westminster Assembly, and adopted by the Church of Scotland as part of the covenanted uniformity in religion between England, Ireland and Scotland, **under the**

terms of the Solemn League and Covenant (1643). At that time Scotland was a nation in covenant with God and there was no reason why Christian men should not accept the office of a magistrate. The Confession of Faith originated in that setting and of course its authors anticipated that the same state of affairs would continue. They had no way of knowing that within a few years the Solemn League and Covenant would be repudiated by the government and ordered burned by the official hangman. **A secular, non-Christian and literally Godless** constitution of civil government such as we now have in America, was entirely beyond the view of the framers of the Confession of Faith. Therefore their statements about it being lawful for Christians to be civil magistrates must be taken in their historical setting and not forced and twisted to apply to the very different set-up which exists in our country 300 years later. (d) The Testimony does not say that it is wrong **in itself** for a Christian to be a civil magistrate. It says that it is wrong **to profess or swear allegiance to an immoral constitution of civil government**. That is to say, while to be a magistrate is not wrong **in itself**, still it is wrong under certain conditions, namely when an oath to support a Christless secular constitution is required. Thus there is no real conflict between the Confession of Faith and the Testimony. The latter goes beyond the former, but there is no contradiction involved. (e) Every member of the Covenant Church, by our Terms of Communion and Church Covenant, has assented to, and accepted, **both** the Confession of Faith and the Testimony. If any member believes that there is a conflict between these two, the right course for him to follow is **not** to choose one of these standards and ignore the other, but rather to present the matter, with explanation and reasons, to the courts of the Church for determination. In this way it would come to the Synod for adjudication.

Question:

Please give a brief definition, suitable for a young people's society to commit to memory, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Answer:

The following alternative forms of definition are suggested:

(1) The Reformed Presbyterian Church is a branch of the Visible Church, which professes the Calvinistic system of Christian doctrine, the Puritan principle of divine worship, the Presbyterian form of

church government, and the duty of nations, as well as churches, to enter into a covenant relationship with the Triune God under the Kingship of the Mediator Jesus Christ.

(2) The Reformed Presbyterian Church is a denomination which is called "Reformed" because it professes that system of Christian doctrine which recognizes God's absolute sovereignty and total control over all things, and man's absolute dependence on God for every factor of his life and salvation. It is called "Presbyterian" because it adheres to that system of church government in which the church is governed by ministers and elders elected by the people but receiving their authority from Christ, organized in a series of graded courts the highest of which is a Synod which has jurisdiction over the whole denomination. It maintains that the Psalms of the Bible should be used exclusively, and without instrumental accompaniment, in singing praises to God; that Christians should not join oath-bound secret societies; and that the Lord Jesus Christ is to be recognized and honored as the King of the State as well as of the Church.

Question:

Please explain John 1:17, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ". Is the Scofield Reference Bible (page 1115) correct in its interpretation that grace is set in contrast to law?

Answer:

The Scofield Bible is in error. In Scripture, **grace** is commonly contrasted, not with **law**, but with **sin**, whereas **faith** is contrasted with **law** or "the works of the law". In John 1:17 we have not an absolute contrast of two things which are mutually exclusive, as fire and water, or light and darkness, but a relative contrast or comparison of God's revelation through Moses with his final revelation through his Son. Through Moses, God revealed the law, including the moral law, the ceremonial law, and the civil law of the nation of Israel. The law itself was a **gift of grace, an element in the system of grace, and a revelation of truth**. It was a gift of grace because God gave it, not in wrath or judgment, but in his kindness and love for mankind. It was an element in the system of grace, because it was intended as a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ, that is, to convict men of sin and teach them their need of the Saviour and his redemption. It was a revelation of truth because the law was a true expression of God's character, a true disclosure of the way of salvation by a blood

atonement and a true statement of what God requires of man. Thus the law which God gave through Moses was itself a matter both of grace and of truth. But the revelation given through Christ is so much clearer, fuller and more wonderful, that it is pre-eminently **the** revelation of grace and truth. In comparison with the brilliant noonday of God's revelation through the Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ, his revelation through Moses was dim and shadowy.

Question:

Please explain Deuteronomy 14:21, "Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God." As any animal dying of itself would probably be diseased and therefore unwholesome, how can this verse be reconciled with Leviticus 19:18 ("Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself") and Deuteronomy 10:18 (God "loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment")?

Answer:

(a) An animal dying of itself would not necessarily be either diseased or unwholesome. For example, a sheep might fall into a pit and break its neck and die, and be found immediately afterwards. In such a case it would not be harmful from the hygienic point of view, yet it would be forbidden to the people of Israel because not slaughtered in the manner specified in the law. (b) It is a disputed question whether such laws as that of Deuteronomy 14:21 are based on considerations of hygiene or sanitation, rather than on purely ceremonial religious considerations. In the verse under consideration, the added statement, "for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God", would seem to indicate that the command is of a ceremonial rather than of a sanitary character, and is intended to place a sharp distinction between the covenant people of Israel and the surrounding pagan nations. The Mosaic law strictly prohibited the eating of blood, or anything containing blood (Deuteronomy 12:16, 23, etc.) although eating blood is not necessarily contrary to good health. The person who had touched the dead body of any person became ceremonially unclean for seven days (Numbers 19:11), yet touching a dead body does not necessarily involve any hazard to health. There is good reason to believe that such regulations were intended chiefly, though perhaps not entirely, to put a religious distinction be-

tween Israel and the surrounding peoples. If this is correct, then the point of Deuteronomy 14:21 is not the assumed hazard to health in eating that which has died of itself, but rather the pagan religious character of such a practice. (c) Even if we hold that the command of Deuteronomy 14:21 is based on hygienic considerations, there is no necessary conflict with the command to love one's neighbor as himself. It is a recognized fact that in the early Old Testament period God dealt with various entrenched evils, not by prohibiting them outright, but by regulating them and mitigating their worst features. The treatment of slavery, polygamy and divorce in the Mosaic law exemplifies this principle. Because of the hardness of the people's hearts God did not categorically forbid all these practices, but he imposed laws limiting and regulating each of them. It may be that Deuteronomy 14:21 is to be understood as a mere toleration of the existing practice of giving or selling the animal which had died of itself to the stranger or alien, while Leviticus 19:18 represents the true ideal of love to one's neighbor toward which God's people were to strive.

Question:

Why does the Reformed Presbyterian Church endorse the practice of displaying the American flag in the sanctuary where God is worshipped? Can this practice be justified on the basis of sound principles?

Answer:

(a) The Reformed Presbyterian Church as a denomination does **not** endorse the practice mentioned in this query. There is nothing in the official standards of the denomination providing for or in any way sanctioning such a practice. The editor knows of no decision of the Synod approving it. Those congregations which display our national flag in their church auditoriums do so wholly on their own initiative and responsibility. It is purely a matter of local custom, not a matter of church law. (b) As to the question of whether this practice can be justified on the basis of sound principles, the following considerations are suggested as bearing on this matter. Our Saviour has commanded us to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. This implies that it is our duty to render a proper civil loyalty to our country in "the things that are Caesar's", that is, in the legitimate civil sphere. But of course our supreme loyalty in every sphere must always be to God, and there is one sphere of life that is reserved **strictly** for the expression of our allegiance to God, namely, the sphere of

religious worship. It is in religious worship that we pre-eminently render to God the things that are God's. Religious worship of course requires a time and place, so church services are held at stated hours in an appointed sanctuary. This sanctuary is not holy of itself, as a place, but while a Christian congregation is assembled in it to worship God it constitutes the necessary physical equipment for rendering the things of God to God. Now the furnishings and contents of such a place of worship should be strictly in keeping with its purpose as the place for publicly expressing our supreme loyalty to God. Certainly there are proper times and places for expressing our patriotic loyalty to our country. But it seems highly inappropriate that the symbol of loyalty to our country must be prominently displayed in the one place that is reserved for publicly expressing our supreme loyalty to God. At all events, the practice of displaying the national flag in a church pulpit would seem to break down, rather than to preserve, the distinction between rendering the things of Caesar to Caesar and rendering the things of God to God. Civil allegiance, after all, is the duty of citizens as individuals; it is not the duty of citizens in the corporate capacity of church members. It is probable that where national flags are displayed in church pulpits, this has been done in patriotic zeal and without any real study of the principles that are involved. And once the flag has been placed in the pulpit, it may be extremely difficult to get it removed. This matter is of course properly under the jurisdiction of the Session of a congregation.

Question:

Is it right to change the Bible by publishing new versions such as the American Standard Version and the Revised Standard Version?

Answer:

Publishing a new translation, whether in English or in some other language, is not really "changing the Bible". Whether new versions are justified or not depends on the degree of their faithfulness to the original Hebrew and Greek of the Scriptures. New versions are not bad just because they are new, nor are the old versions good just because they are old. Each version must stand on its own merits and be subjected to the test of faithfulness to the Hebrew and Greek. We should realize that when the Authorized or King James Version was published in 1611 it was a **new** version and gradually replaced the earlier versions. The translation of the Bible in

general use in China today is the product of repeated revisions over a period of about a hundred years, and it may have to be revised and corrected several more times before it is entirely satisfactory as a translation of the Hebrew and Greek into Chinese. We should guard against the attitude of blind conservatism which opposes anything new simply because it is new. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

Question:

Would it not be better to devote our energies to making a better world here and now, rather than looking forward to heaven as our hope?

Answer:

This is a false antithesis. It is not a case of "either . . . or" but of "both . . . and". Christian people are to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and they are also to look forward to heaven as their hope. The Christian who is not concerned about making a better world here and now thinks it is not necessary to glorify God in ordinary affairs. The Covenanter martyr Donald Cargill is quoted as saying that the Covenanters meant to get God glorified on earth, which was more than a mere entrance into heaven. We should heartily endorse this sentiment. However if we raise the question of **relative emphasis**, it must be affirmed that Biblical Christianity places the chief emphasis on the future life. If we disagree with this attitude, that only shows our lack of attachment to the system of truth revealed in the Word of God. The Scriptures regard the present life not as the main thing in itself, but as a preparation for "the life that is life indeed," the life of eternity.

Question:

Why did God allow the prophet to be killed by a lion (1 Kings 13:24)?

Answer:

God allowed this prophet to be killed by a lion because of his disobedience to a command of God which had been clearly revealed to him (1 Kings 13:17, 26). It was the true prophet's own fault that he was deceived by the lies of the false prophet (verse 18). He should have refused to believe anything that contradicted the Word of God that had been revealed to him, and which he **knew** really was the Word of God. If we inquire why God permitted the false prophet to tell lies, we are face to face with the insoluble problem of God's providential permission of evil in the world.

We can give no complete answer to this problem; we can only say that God in his sovereignty has wisely permitted sin, purposing to order it to his own glory in the end.

Question:

How can we explain the fact that people who accept "Christian Science" seem to receive peace of mind and release from nervous tension throughout this false system?

Answer:

That "Christian Science", which denies the reality of sin, the human body, and death, is a false system cannot be questioned by any orthodox Christian. That many people seem to receive peace of mind and release from nervous tension by accepting this false system also seems to be true. It is also true that people have received "benefits" from various other false religious and psychological cults. While psychology may afford a partial explanation of these facts, no doubt the complete explanation must be theological. The Bible teaches that there is a personal devil, Satan, who is supremely concerned about the eternal destiny of human beings. The Bible teaches that Satan, within the limits of the providential permission of God, can cause physical pain and suffering, and no doubt also mental distress, to human beings (Job 1:12; 2:4-6; Luke 13:16; Revelation 2:10). Undoubtedly Satan's principal desire is that human beings should suffer for all eternity in hell, rather than merely that they should suffer for a time in this present life. It is reasonable to suppose that Satan may be quite willing for a person to have great peace of mind and also bodily health in this world, if by this concession on Satan's part the person is induced to believe that a false religion is true because it "works". In brief, those who accept a system like "Christian Science" as true have been deceived by Satan in order that they may perish eternally. Satan's work, of course, may use natural psychological laws and forces to accomplish this purpose.

Question:

Can a man who does not believe in predestination be an elder in the Reformed Presbyterian Church?

Answer:

Every elder in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, at his ordination, is required to sign the Terms of Communion and answer the constitutional Queries. These require an acknowledgement that the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger

and Shorter Catechisms, and the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, is agreeable unto, and founded upon, the Scriptures. The doctrine of predestination is a very prominent element of the system of doctrine set forth in the various standards mentioned above. The doctrine of predestination is **essential** to that system of doctrine, and without it the Confession of Faith, etc., would present not a **system** of doctrine but only a confused aggregate of doctrines. A person who does not believe in the doctrine of predestination either rejects the system of doctrine taught in the above standards, or else he has no clear and adequate understanding of what that system of doctrine is. In either case, such a person is not qualified to be an elder in the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Question:

How shall we answer the claim of the Roman Catholic Church that the Gospels of Mark and Luke, since they were not written by apostles, are not inspired, and were made a part of the Bible only by the authority of the Church?

Answer:

The Vatican Council (1870) of the Roman Catholic Church, Session III, affirmed that all the books of the Old and New Testaments (and the books of the Apocrypha) are "sacred and canonical" "because, written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their Author, and as such were delivered to the Church herself." Some Roman Catholic writers have made a distinction between the authority of Mark and Luke, on the one hand, and that of Matthew and John on the other. In refutation of this the following considerations are relevant: (a) There are no degrees of inspiration. Mark and Luke are either inspired equally with the other books of the Bible, or they are not inspired at all. (b) In 1 Timothy 5:18 the apostle Paul introduces a quotation from Deuteronomy and one from the Gospel of Luke with the words "For the Scripture saith . . .", thus placing Luke on a par with Deuteronomy, even though Luke was not an apostle. (c) It was not apostolic **authorship** which entitled the various New Testament books to a place in the "canon", but rather the fact that these books were **imposed as law** by the apostles upon the churches. According to this sound principle, Mark and Luke have as good a claim to a place in the New Testament as any of the other books. (See "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Volume 1, Number 2, February 1946, pages 31-32, "Who decided what books should be included in the New Testament, and on what basis was the decision made?").



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“The supreme Judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.”

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J. G. VOS, Editor and Publisher

R. F. D. No. 1

Clay Center, Kansas

From COVENANT TIMES

By Hugh C. Wilson

Awake, my harp! Ring out thy notes, ring out thy richest strain,
O'er those who boldly dared for love of God's cause to be slain;
Tell thou each Christian of today, who by the wayside faints,
Of times when Scotland's plaid was dyed with life-blood of the saints;
When everywhere, by hill and glen, within the stricken land,
Who held the Bible, also held their life within their hand;
When righteous men were hunted down like wild beasts of the field—
Brave men, who in the cause of truth would rather die than yield.

Lo! deep from wild sequestered glen, amidst the Sabbath calm,
Arises through the early mists to Heav'n the morning Psalm;
Then on the sward, when knees are pressed and every heart aware,
Their hearts rise with the speaker's voice, up to the throne in prayer.
The aged pastor reads the word from God's own sacred page—
Perhaps, where David sought the Lord to quell the heathen's rage;
Again a Psalm they sweetly chant, then kneeling down to pray:
"Oh! help us, Lord, to do thy will—protect us through this day."

With Bible placed upon a rock, he then expounds the word:
But, hark! like wind among the trees, a murmuring is heard,
As when far out the sailor hears across his trackless path
The tempest breathe o'er ocean vast a telegram of wrath.
An awful stillness intervenes, then borne along they hear,
Much louder now, like troubled winds, the murmur coming near.
Each heart stands still, the cheeks are blanched, the speaker's voice is dumb;
Their sentry calls from off the height, "The king's dragoons—they come!"

"Be calm, be calm, my children dear, and on the Lord rely;
He ever ready is to save the needy when they cry;
Mysterious unto us His ways, but, blessed be His name,
We yet may wear a robe of light—our foes a crown of shame.
Adown the glen now while ye may, seek safety all in flight,
But draw your blades, ye trusty few, who yet may have to fight;
The aged and the feeble first; haste! for they hurry near;
The women and the children next; ye strong men, guard the rear."

The holy man, when left alone, sank down behind a rock.
"Heed, heed not me, O Lord!" he cried, "but spare, oh spare Thy flock!
Thy hand lies heavy on the land, oh lift Thy chastening rod,
If 'tis Thy holy will to hear my humble prayer, O God!
And bless wherever met this day, in cave or lonely glen,
Thy chosen few, and teach them, Lord, to bear themselves like men;
And help Thy humble servant now, and hear his earnest cry;
If in his en'my's hand he fall, oh give him strength to die!"

The captain came. "Now, hoary scamp, to flames thy Bible fling,
And on your knees go down and swear allegiance to the King."
"To heaven's high King alone; but not to false King James, or thou,
While life-blood warms this aged frame, these knees will ever bow."
"Form round, and ready then, my lads, his blood be on his head.
King James or death?" "Heaven's King alone! I have already said."
Flash! went the guns, down sank the saint, thrust by the tyrant's rod,
With horrid oath into his ears, before Thy throne, O God!

BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 2

APRIL - JUNE, 1947

NUMBER 2

Sketches From Our History

THE SCOTTISH COVENANTERS

Their Origins, History and Distinctive Doctrines

(Selections from the book with the above title, by J. G. Vos, published by the author in 1940)

PART I

THE ORIGINS OF THE COVENANTERS

CHAPTER III

THE PERIOD OF THE SECOND REFORMATION, 1637—1651

1. The "Four Tables, 1637.

The Privy Council was called to meet at Edinburgh on November 15th, 1637. Before that day came, large numbers of loyal Presbyterians gathered in the city, which caused the Council to be alarmed. When the Council met, it asked the nobles to persuade the people to return to their homes. To this the nobles agreed, with the provision that a number should remain in the capital to transact business as the representatives of the rest. It was arranged that as many nobles as pleased, together with two gentlemen from each county, one minister from each Presbytery and one burgess from each burgh, should be organized as a commission to represent the whole body of Presbyterians of Scotland. This body was to meet only on special occasions, while a part of them were to remain permanently in the capital to keep a watchful eye on developments. Those chosen to remain in the city were sixteen persons, consisting of four representatives each of the nobility, gentry, ministers and burgesses. As these four groups or committees sat in four different rooms of the Parliament building in Edinburgh, they came to be called "The Four Tables." It was further arranged that one member from each of the Four Tables should constitute a supreme Table of four

persons. In this way a very efficient organization was speedily set up. When this was completed, the multitudes of Presbyterians who were not residents of Edinburgh returned to their homes.

The Four Tables soon proved themselves capable of activity. They complained to the Privy Council about the Prelates, the Book of Canons and the Service Book. The Privy Council tried to persuade them to drop the complaint against the Prelates, and press only those against the Canons and Liturgy, but this the Tables refused to do. When the Council tried to avoid receiving the petition of the Tables at all, the latter practically compelled the Council to receive their representatives and hear their complaints.

It was the conviction of Presbyterian Scotland that if the King only had accurate knowledge of the situation in Scotland he would afford them some relief. The Prelates, however, and in particular Archbishop Laud, saw that the King was kept prejudiced in favor of their measures and against the Presbyterians. Laud advised the King to use force, and declared that if this were done, the Presbyterians would soon yield. The King acted on Laud's advice, and on February 20th, 1638, the King's Proclamation was posted at Stirling, declaring "that the bishops were unjustly accused as being the authors of the Service Book and Canons, seeing whatever was done by them in that matter was by his Majesty's authority and orders". In addition to this, the King's Proclamation approved of the Canons and Service Book, and forbade all meetings and subscriptions against them, on pain of rebellion, and ordained that no petitioner appear in any town where the Privy Council was sitting, on pain of treason.

2. The National Covenant of Scotland, 1638.

The Proclamation at Stirling proved, for the first time, that not merely the Prelates, but the King himself, was determined to subvert the constitution and worship of the Church of Scotland. If absolutism in both Church and State was to be averted, immediate, strong and united action would be necessary. Among the ministers, Henderson, Dickson and others believed that the nation and the Church were guilty of serious defections, and that no real relief could be expected without repentance, confession of sin and renewed obedience to God and his law. They announced a public fast, and invited ministers to deliver addresses on such subjects as the defections of the Church and nation of Scotland, confession of sins, and renewal of the Covenant of 1580-1581. At a meeting held on February 26th, 1638, it was determined to renew the Covenant and that the document should be drawn up by Alexander Henderson and Johnston of Wariston, and revised by Rothes, Loudon and Balmerino. Great care was taken in the preparation of the form of the Covenant, objections were attended to, and the whole revised, to avoid injury to anyone's conscience. Finally all objectors were satisfied.

The completed Covenant consisted of three parts: (1) The Covenant of 1580-1581, verbatim; (2) A legal section, consisting in an enumeration of the Acts of Parliament condemning popery and recognizing and ratifying the acts of the General Assembly. This part of the Covenant was compiled by Johnston; (3) The practical section, or special application of the whole to the existing circumstances. This part was drawn up by Henderson.

The Covenant was publicly sworn on February 28, 1638. The first meeting was held at daybreak; at this time the entire Covenant was read to the assembled congregation, and all objections were heard and answered. It was announced that the Covenant would be sworn and signed at the afternoon meeting, to be held in Greyfriars Church. At the appointed time the Covenant, written on parchment and ready for signatures, was produced. The meeting was first opened with prayer by Henderson. The Earl of Loudon then explained and defended the nature of the meeting, after which Johnston read the Covenant to the people again. After this there was a season of silence, and then Rothes announced that if there were still those who had doubts or scruples, they should state them and they would be answered. Loudon and Dickson would be at the west door of the Church to

answer doubts for those from the west and south parts of Scotland, and Henderson and Rothes at the east door to answer for those from the north and east. "Few came, proposed but few doubts, and these few were soon resolved". There was another season of silence, and finally the aged Earl of Sutherland came forward and affixed the first signature. After this the nobles present in the Church signed in turn. On a later occasion the Covenant was signed by the ministers, and still later it was signed by large numbers of people of all classes throughout Scotland.

By the National Covenant of 1638, Scotland renewed the national renunciation of Popery, pledged adherence to Presbyterianism, and showed King Charles I that he was not above the law, and that so long as he observed the law of the land, he could count on the loyalty of the Scottish people. It has sometimes been held that the National Covenant was illegal and treasonable; but even a casual examination of the Covenant is sufficient to show that it was, in one of its aspects, an appeal from the tyranny of the King to the law of the land. That the Covenant was an agreement to resist tyranny cannot be denied; but this could not be illegal or treason, because Scotland was by law constituted a limited and not an absolute monarchy.

3. Royal Opposition to Ecclesiastical Reform, 1638.

The Covenant was signed on February 28th, 1638, and the General Assembly met on the 21st of November following. The intervening months were a time of conflict between King Charles I and the Covenanting party in Scotland. The King appointed the Marquis of Hamilton as Lord High Commissioner to represent the King in dealing with the people of Scotland. On May 16th the King sent Hamilton his instructions, listed in twenty-eight items, and closing with these words: "If you cannot by the means prescribed by us bring back the refractory and seditious to due obedience, we do not only give you authority, but command all hostile acts whatsoever to be used against them . . . for the doing whereof we will not only save you harmless, but account it as acceptable service done us". On June 11th the King wrote to Hamilton again and said, "I will rather die than yield to those impertinent and damnable demands (as you rightly call them), for it is all one as to yield to be no king in a very short time". To this letter the following postscript was added: "As the affairs are now, I do not expect that you should declare the adherers to the Coven-

ant traitors, until you have heard from me that my fleet hath set sail for Scotland, though your six weeks should be elapsed. In a word, gain time, by all the honest means you can, without forsaking your grounds". This was followed two days later by another letter to Hamilton, in which the King wrote: "One of the chief things you are to labor now, is to get a considerable number of Sessioners and Advocates to give their opinion that the Covenant is at least against law, if not treasonable. Thus you have my approbation in several shapes".

A Royal Proclamation was issued under date of June 28th, and read on July 4th at Edinburgh. In this Proclamation the King seemed to make some concessions to the Covenanters: "We do hereby assure all men that we will neither now nor hereafter press the practice of the Canons and Service Book, but in such a fair and legal way as shall satisfy all our loving subjects". The Covenanters suspected that this was merely a device to gain time; they were prepared, and read a Protestation immediately after the reading of the King's Proclamation.

On September 9th another Royal Proclamation was made, which purported to grant all that the Covenanters desired. A free General Assembly should be held, followed by a free Parliament. The Book of Canons, Service Book, Court of High Commission, and Articles of Perth, were to be abolished. The General Assembly was to be allowed to try the Prelates. The King would be favorable to the Covenanters, and those who had opposed the King would be pardoned. That this Proclamation was insincere is shown by the fact that on October 20th the King wrote to Hamilton that he did not think that Episcopal government was in great danger in Scotland, and also by the fact that when the General Assembly met, the King's Commissioner refused to sanction the trial of the Prelates.

On September 22nd the Covenanters replied to the King's Proclamation of the 9th, in a document entitled "The Protestation of the Noblemen, Barons, Gentlemen, Burrowes, Ministers, and Commons". They objected that the proposed General Assembly would not be really free to act, and listed fifteen reasons why the King's Proclamation could not satisfy them, followed by seven protests. The Protestation was read by Archibald Johnston at Edinburgh. On October 20th the King wrote to Hamilton: "I see by yours of the 27th September, that the malignity of the Covenanters is greater than ever. This I will say confidently that until at least the adherers to this last Protestation be declared traitors

nothing will go as it ought in that kingdom. As for the danger that Episcopal government is in, I do not hold it so much as you do". The King spoke one language in his Proclamations to the Covenanters, and quite another in his secret letters to his Commissioner in Scotland.

4. The General Assembly of 1638.

The General Assembly met in Glasgow Cathedral on Wednesday, November 21st, 1638. It was composed of 140 ministers, 2 professors, and 98 ruling elders. Of the elders, 17 were noblemen, 9 were knights, and the rest proprietors of land and burghesses. The Assembly sat until December 20th and initiated a thorough reformation of the Church of Scotland. This was the first free General Assembly held for thirty-six years; in 1606, 1608, 1610, 1617 and 1618 nominal Assemblies had been held, but they were not free Assemblies, but completely under the control of the State, and later declared null and void.

The Assembly proceeded to the trial of the Prelates, and summoned these to appear at its bar to be judged. The Prelates refused to appear, and declined the authority of the Assembly in a document which they sent it, entitled "The Declinator and Protestation of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of Scotland and Others their Adherents, Agaynst the pretended Generall Assemblie at Glasgow, 1638". In this paper they declared that the meeting was "most unlawful and disorderly" and so they would not attend. After the declination of the Prelates, the Moderator, Alexander Henderson, asked the Assembly whether it found itself a court competent to sit in judgment on the Prelates. At this point the King's Commissioner forbade any further proceedings and ordered the immediate dissolution of the Assembly. Hamilton in the King's name called on Henderson to dissolve the meeting with prayer, and when Henderson refused to do so, Hamilton himself declared the meeting dissolved and forbade all further sessions. This was the 29th of November. The Assembly, however, refused to be dissolved, and prepared a "Protestation" against the King's Commissioner's Proclamation dissolving the Assembly. The same day a Royal Proclamation was issued against the Assembly; it was called a "pretended Assembly", its members "pretended commissioners"; and they were ordered to leave the city within twenty-four hours. The Assembly, however, was not to be intimidated, and continued to meet for three more weeks.

When the Assembly finally adjourned, it had carried through an extensive reform of the Church. Prelacy was declared unlawful, and Presbytery restored. The Bishops and Archbishops were excommunicated. The Articles of Perth were declared unlawful. The Assembly condemned the Book of Canons, Liturgy, Book of Ordination, and the Court of High Commission; and the Assemblies held from 1606 to 1618 were declared null and void because of royal interference with their freedom. The Assembly had reasserted the freedom and authority of the Church, had renounced Erastian, Prelatic and sacramentarian corruptions, and had declared boldly against tyrannical abuse of power in both Church and State.

5. Continued Royal Opposition to Reform.

The General Assembly met again in August, 1639, and issued an act enumerating six causes "of the Bygone Evils of this Kirk", as follows: (1) The forcing of the Liturgy on the Church; (2) The Articles of Perth; (3) Substitution of government by Prelates for General Assemblies; (4) The civil powers of the Prelates; (5) Corrupt Assemblies; and (6) The lack of free and rightly constituted Assemblies. This act was passed by the unanimous vote of the General Assembly, and the King's Commissioner promised to hand in to the clerk his written consent.

Meanwhile King Charles I was becoming alarmed about the situation in Scotland. In 1639 he marched with his forces towards Scotland, and circulated a document called the "Short Declaration", in which he justified his resort to the use of armed force against Scotland, spoke of his "divine right", and said that the Covenant was a "conspiracy"; he said that the Covenant "could not be with God, being against

us, the Lord's anointed over them". Later in the year the "Large Declaration" appeared, a document still more violent than the "Short Declaration". The Scotch prepared to defend their country and Church against the King, and raised an army for this purpose. The Covenanters under General Leslie encamped at Dunse Law, about six miles from the King's forces. It was on this occasion that the blue banner of the Covenanters was first flown; the banner displayed the national arms and also the words "FOR CHRIST'S CROWN AND COVENANT" in gilt letters. When King Charles saw the determination of the Scotch, he decided to treat with them. A treaty was signed on June 18th, after which the forces on both sides were disbanded. By the treaty the King agreed, among other things, that a General Assembly and a Parliament should be held at Edinburgh in August, to determine the matters of the Church and the nation.

When the General Assembly met the following year (August, 1640) it enacted that persons who had subscribed the Covenant, and later spoke against it, should be dealt with by ecclesiastical censures. A minister was to be deposed, and later excommunicated; a layman, to be disciplined for perjury. In 1641 the Scottish Parliament made the Covenant a civil test: none could take his seat in Parliament until he took the Covenant. A number of noblemen were excluded from the Parliament chamber until they subscribed the Covenant. The same Parliament ratified the action of the General Assembly abolishing Prelacy, approved the Covenant, and restored to the statute book the "Great Charter of Presbytery" of 1592.

Note: Chapter III will be concluded in our next issue.

Prophecy and the Church

A Recent Study of Modern Dispensationalist Teachings,

Reviewed by the Rev. Samuel E. Boyle

"Prophecy and the Church", by Oswald T. Allis, Ph.D., The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia 6, Pa.; 1945, 339 pages, \$2.50.

Dr. Allis' analysis and refutation of modern Dispensationalism is a splendid book for Covenanters. In our denomination's current effort to secure a Christian amendment to the United States Constitution, acknowledging Jesus Christ as "Saviour and King of nations", two extreme groups of Protestants have either opposed

or ignored our message. One group is the Modernists; the other group is that wing of Fundamentalism which teaches dispensational premillennialism.

There is no intention here to upbraid sincere Christian men who believe in the infallible Bible as God's "only rule to direct

us how we may glorify and enjoy Him". The fact that some believers cannot agree with our interpretation and application of Scripture does not mean that we dismiss them as heretics. But in the light of some

experiences which our Christian Amendment lecturers have had with Dispensationist groups and individuals, Dr. Allis' book, "Prophecy and the Church", has a timely message for our Church.

History of Eschatology in the Church

"Eschatology" is a name that refers to the science of the "last things", that is, death, immortality, the judgment, the resurrection, the second coming, etc. One fine service of Dr. Allis in his book is the introductory summary of changing ideas about these "last things" in the nineteen centuries since our Lord was taken up to heaven.

Postmillennialism (throughout his book Dr. Allis spells "millennium" and words formed from it with a double "n") was taught by Augustine (born 354 A.D., died 430 A.D.) He believed that the millennium was literally fulfilled in the history of the Church; that Satan was "bound" during the earthly ministry of Jesus (compare Luke 10:18); that the spiritual rebirth of the believer is the "first resurrection" (John 5:25), etc. Although Augustine believed that the millennium was a literal thousand years, he somewhat inconsistently expected the millennial era to close at the end of the sixth chiliad of human history, about 650 A.D.

During the Reformation, men held that the millennium was then past and that the Church was then in the "little season". This theory permitted the dating of the beginning of the millennium from the time of Constantine.

Still another form of postmillennialism appeared which taught that the millennium was still **future**, not past. Dr. Allis informs us that this view has been associated particularly with a man named Whitby (1707 A.D.) Many have followed his postmillennial teaching. "Those who hold this view of the millennium can apply, with considerable literalness, the Old Testament kingdom prophecies regarding Israel to this glorious future of the Church on earth. Consequently, this teaching takes a decidedly optimistic view of the future of the Church. The glory of the Lord is to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. It is to be to a saved or nearly saved world that Christ is to return at the end of the age" (p.4).

Covenanter Eschatology

At this point, it may be profitable to digress from the review of Dr. Allis' volume for a discussion of the problem so often raised, "What do Covenanters believe about the Second Coming and the Millennium?"

It is probable that during the last century in America, at least, a millennial view similar to Whitbyan postmillennialism has dominated the preaching and thought of the Reformed Presbyterians. In many Covenanter libraries can be found a book entitled "Prelections on Theology", by the Rev. Thomas Sproull, D.D. (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1882). This illustrious Covenanter minister was born in 1803 and died in 1892. His public ministry reached from the Schism of 1833 to the Trial of 1891. In that time he was for many years a teacher in the Reformed Presbyterian Seminary in Allegheny, Pa. Chapter 33 of his book is a discussion of "The Millennium". The placid course of his exposition indicates that he was not engaged in disputing any opposite view in his own church, but merely setting forth the accepted postmillennialism of his readers. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Dr. Thomas Sproull presents here the

millennial theory held by Covenanters in that day, and since.

Dr. Sproull argues that the Scriptural predictions of Christ's Second Coming are not properly interpreted when applied to the millennium; they refer instead to the Last Judgment. The millennium, he insists, does not require the presence on earth of Christ in his human nature, but it will be achieved by His glorified Person; that is, through the Holy Spirit's leadership and power.

This millennium is thought of by Dr. Sproull as a "moral revolution" which will be gradually ushered in as a direct result of preaching the Gospel to all the world. Taking the word **parousia**, Christ's "coming", in a spiritual rather than a literal sense, Dr. Sproull defines it as "**a manifestation in his providence of his presence.**" This "presence" of course, is spiritual and hence invisible. Only at the final Judgment, when all is over, will there be that visible reappearance of our Lord promised in Acts 1:11. Dr. Sproull says: "When, at the millennium, Jesus shall take to him his great power and

reign, the kingdoms of the world shall become his by voluntary submission to his authority (Rev. 11:15); and he shall dispense to the children of men for a thousand years the blessings of his gracious administration . . ." (p. 418). How is this change to be brought about? Dr. Sproull enumerates three steps in this spiritual conquest of Christ the Mediator over rebellious nations of the world: (1) "By the infliction of terrible judgments on the nations of the earth". (2) "By the abundant outpouring of his Spirit". (3) "By the establishment of righteousness on the earth".

One may ask again, How can the **third** step be accomplished? Dr. Sproull quotes Ezekiel 21:27, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." On this Dr. Sproull comments: "The transition of society shall be from chaos to order. Worldly organizations shall be demolished, that in their places scriptural institutions may be established . . . One grand feature of the political change that shall take place, will be the administration of national affairs by the saints (Daniel 7:18)." In his concluding remarks Dr. Sproull describes "the glory and happiness" of this millennium in the words of prophecy, using such passages as Psalm 72, Isaiah 60:18-22, Revelation 21:23-26, etc. He closes: "He

who testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The Covenant of 1871, our Terms of Communion, said the practical interest of the Covenanter Church in the abolition of slavery, the prohibition of liquor, and its zeal for a Christian State, all show how strong this postmillennialism has been at least in the American Covenanter Church. Whether the Scottish Covenanters or the Westminster Assembly espoused postmillennialism is a moot question which I am not prepared to discuss.

The writer's grandfather, a Covenanter elder, often complained in his later years that Covenanter preachers did not preach the prophecies of the Old Testament any more. His criticism is probably significant of a quiet, but revolutionary shift in the thinking of our ministry—and our laymen as well—in respect to postmillennialism. Where does our Church stand now? Probably we are affected by the confusion of our day, with Fundamentalism's "Dispensational Truth", Modernism's "social gospel", and the fresh interest in amillennialism among conservatives. On these important matters Dr. Allis' book, "Prophecy and the Church", sheds considerable light.

Amillennialism

Dr. Allis is an amillennialist himself, though he does not discuss in detail his own conception of things. Amillennialism, he informs us, came as a sharp reaction to the preceding millennial views in Europe. Duesterdieck and Kliefoth (1874) are named as leaders in this marked change of eschatological thought. Kliefoth rejected the interpretation of Augustine which identified the millennium with the history of the Church. He agreed with Whitby that the twentieth chapter of Revelation was wholly future, and was a vision of things which immediately precede the end of the age. "But, being convinced that nowhere else in the New Testament is there any reference to or any provision for a millennial reign

before the advent, they concluded, as against Whitby, that this reign cannot be a period of time at all, but simply describes in terms of completeness or ecumencity the blessed state of the saints in heaven. This view is amillennial in the strictest sense of the word. For it denies that the 1000 years has any reference to time" (p. 5).

Dr. Allis in this book is not interested in establishing the comparative rightness of any one of the three chief millennial theories: post-, pre-, and amillennialism. His purpose is to show how Dispensationalism differs from them all, and to prove that this teaching is a serious threat to sound doctrine and the peace of the Church.

Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism should not be made synonymous with premillennialism. Many premillennialists are not Dispensationalists. With these men Dr. Allis has no serious quarrel. Dispensationalism, however, is a radical theory which, Dr. Allis feels, disrupts the unity of Scripture and gravely impoverishes the Christian Gospel for our times.

This new teaching, like many historical errors, arose because the established Christianity neglected certain important aspects of Christian truth. The English Parliament in 1752 ordered the Church of England to prepare a calendar for the Church feasts as far ahead as 8500 A.D., plus! This shows how comfortable and worldly the Church had become at that time, and reveals how

little attention was given to the many New Testament passages which refer to the Coming of our Lord, and other eschatological predictions. One famous reaction to the deadness and this-worldliness of the Church in the British Isles was the "Irvingite" movement under Edward Irving (1792-1834). This enthusiastic movement centered on expectancy of the immediate return of Christ. Dispensationalism appeared about that time in England.

In 1830 there arose a movement called "Darbyism", named for one of its prominent leaders, John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). Because one of their strongest centers was at

Plymouth, they have been known ever since as "Plymouth Brethren". This movement is given credit by Dr. Allis for sowing the seeds of Dispensationalism throughout the world in the past one hundred years. One of the most famous American exponents of this system of Bible teaching was Dr. C. I. Scofield, the author of the Scofield Reference Notes. The popularity of the Dispensational teaching in America can well be attributed to the tremendous sale of Scofield Bibles. Dr. Allis' discussion of Dispensationalism centers its attack on this textbook of Dispensationalism, the Scofield Reference Bible.

The Central Question

In the complex problem presented by the teaching known as Dispensationalism, Dr. Allis selects one issue as the central question to be answered:

"The question that concerns us is as to the relation, if any, between the kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament and the New Testament Church. Until early in the last century, it was the generally accepted belief that the Christian Church is the fulfilment of the kingdom prophecies, that the glorious predictions of the prophets concerning Israel have had and are to have, at least in the main, their fulfilment in the Church. But now, for a hundred years and more, the doctrine has been taught, and is now widely accepted, that Israel and the Church are quite distinct; that the kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament refer to Israel, not to the Church; that Israel is God's earthly people, while the Church is a heavenly mystery, unknown to the prophets and first revealed to the apostle Paul; that the Church is a parenthesis in God's prophetic program for Israel, and that its presence on earth interrupts the fulfilment of that program; that the rapture of the Church may take place 'at any moment' and will be followed by a Jewish age in which the kingdom prophecies concerning Israel

will be literally fulfilled." (Preface, p. v).

Dr. Allis' book is a detailed examination of these problems raised for Christians by the Dispensational teaching which claims to be "rightly dividing the word of truth." Though his scholarly rebuttal is plain-spoken, Dr. Allis is ever kindly and Christian in his manner. In the Preface he says: "I am quite aware, painfully so, that in my treatment of this highly controversial subject I am opposing the sincerely cherished convictions of many for whose piety and zeal I have the highest regard . . . It is my earnest hope that my Dispensationalist brethren will not resent this well-meant attempt to point out to them what I believe to be dangerous errors in what is often called 'Dispensational truth' but will test what is here set forth by the light of Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. For I am persuaded that they share with me the profound conviction that 'The Supreme Judge, by whom all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.'" (Preface, p.viii).

The Christian's Death

1 Corinthians 15:12-58

"The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection. At the resur-

rection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity." (Shorter Catechism, 37, 38).

I. Why Must Christians Die?

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), but this does not mean that the death of the body is always a penalty for sin. It is true that death is in general the "wages" or penalty of sin. God said to Adam and Eve, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Over and over again God's Word repeats the same solemn truth: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). But in the case of the Christian, death cannot be strictly the "wages" or penalty of sin. In the case of the Christian, death is the **consequence** or **effect** of sin, but not its **penalty**. The Christian, being a believer in Jesus Christ, is finished with penalties. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). All our sins were laid upon Jesus on the cross. He suffered and died in our stead. He bore the penalty of God's law as our Substitute. If Jesus has already suffered death as the penalty for the sins of his people, they cannot be required to suffer death as a **penalty for their sins** again. If God has accepted Jesus as the Christian's Substitute, then the death of the Christian cannot be, strictly speaking, **the wages of sin**.

Yet, as we all know, Christian people die as well as those who are not Christians. As to the mere fact of having to pass through the experience of death there is

no difference between the Christian and the unbeliever. This last river has to be crossed by all. The **fact** of death, then, is the same for the Christian as for other people. But the **meaning** of death is certainly not the same. For the Christian, the meaning of death is entirely different from what it is for the wicked or worldly person. For the person who is not a Christian, death is a penalty. It is God's punishment, a part of the righteous judgment of God upon that person's sins. But in the case of the Christian, Jesus Christ has already suffered the penalty, so for the Christian death has a different meaning. We may ask, then, why must Christians die?

The answer is, for Christians death is not a punishment but a form of discipline. It is a part of the process by which we are made fit for eternal life in heaven. "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory . . ." The experience of death is necessary for our becoming perfectly holy, and fit for the totally holy environment that awaits us in heaven. Let us always remember that while death is necessary before we can attain to perfection, still for the person who believes in Christ, death is no longer the wages of sin. For the Christian, death is a consequence, but not a penalty, of sin.

II. The Bible Calls Death An Enemy

There is a tendency today to regard death as a **normal** thing. Under the increasing dominance of pagan philosophy, people are coming to think of the death of an aged person as just as normal as for a ripe apple to drop off the apple tree, or for autumn leaves to drop off the trees as winter approaches. Because people are giving up their faith in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and taking up modern theories instead of the Bible, they are coming to think of death as **normal**.

This is an outcome of the wide acceptance and influence of the **theory of evolution**. If evolution is true, then mankind was not created by God in a state of moral and physical perfection. If evolution is true, then mankind has been gradually rising from the mud and slime and gradually climbing up toward perfection. If evolution is true, only by the death of **millions of generations** of mankind can perfection be attained for the human race. The number of individuals that would have to die before perfection could be attained would baffle the imagination.

And if evolution is true, death is just as normal as for a person to be weary and fall asleep at the end of a busy day. This modern attitude toward death, regarding it as a perfectly normal thing, is accompanied by an increasing practice of cremation instead of burial. The Christian practice of burial is rooted in the belief in a future resurrection of the body. The modern pagan practice of cremation regards death as the **end** of a person's individual life, and seeks to blot out and destroy the last vestige of that person's individual personality by destroying the body as quickly as possible by the process of burning.

These modern ideas are utterly contrary to the Word of God. According to the Bible, death is **always abnormal**. The Bible expresses this idea by speaking of death as **an enemy**: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26). Now why is death an enemy? Death is the separation of the soul from the body. It is the severing of the human personality into its component elements. We have a soul or spirit, and also a material body of flesh

and blood. Both were created by God; both are parts of our personality; both are essential for a complete human personality; both were created to fit together and function together in harmony with each other. But death separates them one from the other.

Death is contrary to the purpose for which God created us. God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul. According to God's purpose in creating mankind, body and soul were to be forever united. It is contrary to their nature for a separation to take place. And the body and soul would always have been united if it had not been for sin. If mankind had not fallen into sin, there never would have been the separation of soul from body for any human being. The perfection of immortality would have been attained without passing through the experience of death.

But sin entered. We read in Romans 5:12, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The result of sin was the terrible fact of death. For death is a **terrible** fact. Never forget that death is a dreadful thing.

There were just two things that made our Saviour, Jesus Christ, sigh and weep when he was on earth, so far as we can know from the Bible record of his life. The first was **unbelief**. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, because of the unbelief of the people: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37). The other thing that made Jesus weep was **death**. Twice Jesus wept because of death. The first time was when Lazarus was dead, and had been buried four days. Jesus observed the grief of Mary and Martha, and although he knew that he would soon raise Lazarus from the dead, still the awful fact of death drew tears from the eyes of the Son of God, and we read in the shortest verse of the Bible, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35).

The other time when death made Jesus weep was in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus knew that his own sufferings and death would come within a few hours. And on that occasion, the Scripture informs us, our Saviour "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death"

(Hebrews 5:7) That time, it was Jesus' **own** death that caused his tears. Death is such a dreadful thing that it brought the Son of God to tears. Death is always a dreadful thing, even though it is the means of the greatest good to the Christian. Death is always terrible, because it is contrary to our nature. It is the tearing apart of what was created to be kept together—our human body and our human spirit.

There is always something violent about death, even under the most peaceful circumstances. For the soul to depart from the body, leaving an essential element of the human personality subject to the natural processes of decay, is something unnatural and dreadful. Not only does the Bible teach that death is a dreadful thing, but the experience and instinctive feelings of humanity of all countries and all races of men confirms this same fact. There is no country or race where the fear of death does not exist and form a powerful motive in the lives of men. Some have been able to overcome fear of death by fanaticism or by devotion to a great cause, yet always the fear of death is terribly real and something that has to be reckoned with.

Yes, the Bible tells us the truth in calling death an enemy. But let us now consider what kind of an enemy death is. First of all, death is a **disarmed** enemy. The Christian must pass through the experience of death, but death has lost its power really to harm the Christian. It is written of Christ that he "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). Abolished death? But people still die! Yes, but Christ has abolished the **power** of death to **harm** his people. Death still has power to **claim** the Christian, but it has lost its power to **harm** the Christian. In Revelation 2:11 we read, "He that overcometh shall not be hurt **of the second death**." For the Christian, death means passing to glory, not passing to the second death.

One of the old Puritan writers wrote a book which he entitled "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ." We might say that by dying, Christ has **killed death**. The Bible teaches this: "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14, 15).

In the second place, death is a **doomed** enemy. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Death has not been destroyed **yet**—people still die every day. Not

destroyed yet, but its destruction has been decided on and proclaimed. God has said in his Word that when all the other enemies have been properly dealt with, then, last of all, **death itself is going to be destroyed.**

What does the Bible mean by "destroying death"? Well, it means, for one thing, that no one will die any more. God's redeemed people will have the fulness of immortality and need never think of death again. For another thing, it means that the grave will release the millions of human bodies that have been laid away, and they shall rise again and be re-united to their souls for ever and ever.

III. Death Is Only Temporary

I read once of a person—not a Christian, I am sure—who said, "Take care of yourself; **death is so permanent.**" That is the world's view of death. The world regards death as **permanent.** An ancient heathen tomb found beneath the city of Rome bore an inscription with some lines of Latin poetry from the Roman poet Catullus, ending with the words **Nobis nox una longa dormienda est:** "For us there is one long night for sleep." The world thinks of death as the end. This false idea that death "ends it all" is the explanation of the prevalence of suicide. If death ends it all, those who find life unendurable will rather choose death. But the tragedy of their choice lies in the fact that death does **not** end it all.

The idea that death is permanent is common in English poetry, too. Some of the most beautiful poems in the English language are filled with this terribly false idea that death is the end of all. Swinburne's "Garden of Proserpine" is an example of this:

"From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving,
Whatever gods may be;
That no life lives forever,
That dead men rise up never,
That even the weariest river,
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

"Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light,
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight;
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal,
Only the sleep eternal,
In an eternal night."

Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. And death is one of the works of the devil. Christ will destroy it, surely and without fail, at the appointed time. So for the Christian, death is a transition to glory. The body is buried, and returns to dust. But the soul passes immediately into glory. The state of the souls of believers after death is too large a subject to take up in detail here. But it may be said that the souls of Christians who have passed away are with Christ in the presence of God the Father, in perfect rest and peace, and waiting for the resurrection day when their bodies shall be raised up again in immortal power and glory.

There you have it—exactly the modern idea that death ends all, and blots out the human personality just as surely as the water of a raindrop loses its identity when it falls into the great ocean. But that is not the doctrine of the Christian Faith as found in the Word of God. Thank God, we have something better to look forward to! The idea that death is permanent is pagan, not Christian. As far as the human soul or spirit is concerned, death is only a transfer from this environment to the environment of heaven or hell. Certainly the Bible teaches that consciousness, thought, memory, continue as before. Death is not a sleep **for the soul.**

But even for the body, death is not permanent. It is only temporary. The separation of soul from body is only for a limited time. It will not be forever. Here we are dealing with matters of faith, which can neither be proved nor disproved by science. Our conviction rests not on science or reason, but on the Word of God. The body is laid to rest in the grave and returns to the dust of which it was made. That is, when the spirit is gone, the processes of decay are no longer restrained from their ordinary operation, and the human body returns to its chemical constituents. But, as the Catechism tells us, the bodies of Christian people, even though laid in the grave, **are still united to Christ.** That is, they have not been thrown away or discarded as of no more use. The Bible always regards the human body as precious. Even when overcome by death and laid away in the tomb, still it is precious beyond words, and not discarded or abandoned. It is still united to Christ, by the purpose of God to raise it up again at the Last Day. Even in the case of wicked people, the body will rise again and be reunited to the soul at the Last Day. The Bible teaches us this, although it tells us

practically nothing about the nature of the resurrection body of the wicked.

With respect to Christian people, we know that the resurrection of the body will be the completion of our redemption. Paul tells us that this is what the whole creation is waiting for, while groaning and travailing in pain together—waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption, of our body. (Romans 8:19-23). The normal constitution of our human nature is to be restored; soul and body are to be joined together again, never more to part—never, to all eternity, for ever and ever.

“It is appointed unto men once to die” (Hebrews 9:27). Death is a universal certainty, though there are some exceptions even to this statement. In the Old Testament period of history, there were just two exceptions, so far as we know. These were Enoch and Elijah, who were taken to heaven directly, without dying. But we are told in the New Testament that a **whole generation** of Christian people will never have to die—that generation living at the time when Jesus Christ comes again on the clouds of heaven. “Behold, I show you a mystery; **we shall not all sleep, but we shall**

all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:51-54). “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: **then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.**” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). With these exceptions, death is a certainty. Death is the end of the opportunity for salvation. It is the fixation of our character and destiny, for ever and ever. Those who are righteous at death will be righteous to all eternity; those who are wicked at death will be wicked to all eternity. Death marks the entrance upon **our eternal destiny**. Therefore death is to be prepared for above all things.

A Roman Officer's Faith In Christ

Matthew 8:5-13. Luke 7:1-10.

This miracle is recorded in two of the Gospels—Matthew and Luke—and there is an apparent discrepancy between the two accounts. In Matthew, the Centurion is represented as having gone to Jesus in person, whereas in Luke, he is said to have sent

messengers. But this difference is not really a contradiction. In the Bible it frequently occurs that what a person has done through messengers or agents is spoken of as done by himself.

The Roman Centurion

The Centurion was an officer in the Roman army which occupied the country of Palestine. He was in command of 100 soldiers. Being a Roman, he was originally a pagan and worshipper of false gods.

It is noteworthy that all the Centurions mentioned in the new Testament are favorably spoken of. It seems likely that the Roman army of that day and age still retained some of its old honor and nobility.

This Centurion, though he came from a pagan background, was a seeker after spiritual truth—after God and God's salvation. The leaders of the Jews were often very narrow-minded and strongly opposed to all other nations and races, especially to the Romans, whom they hated as tyrants and oppressors. But here we see a Roman officer who has a fine reputation among the

Jews—the elders and spiritual leaders of the Jews have only good to say of him. They declare him to be “worthy” of Christ's compassion. He had built them a house of worship, at his own expense; he loved their nation. Very likely this Centurion was one of the class called “Proselytes of the gate”, an adherent of the Jewish religion who yet did not have the full privileges of membership. Such proselytes could not worship in the Temple. There still remained a middle wall of partition between them and the Jews.

Now consider another feature of this man's character. He cared for a slave. This slave's life and health was precious in his sight. Such was far from the usual thing in the ancient Roman Empire. Slaves were little thought of; their life was cheap.

Seldom indeed would a master trouble himself very much about the health or comfort of a mere slave. But this Centurion did. His slave was "dear" unto him. He was just as much concerned over this slave's life and well-being as if it had been a member of his family. He arranges for the elders to act as his messengers to present the matter to Jesus. Somehow we have the idea that the officers and soldiers of the Roman army were cruel, callous men. Doubtless many of them were. But this Centurion, probably through his knowledge of the true and living God, was an exception; he had compassion on the sufferings of a slave.

Now think of the humility of this man, a Roman officer, in associating himself with the Jewish religion, even to the extent of personally bearing the expense of building them a synagogue. Did we hear of any officers of the German army building synagogues for the Jews in any of the countries they occupied in Europe? Remember that the Jews of that day hated the Romans. They called people who were not Jews "dogs" and "sinners". There was a spirit of antipathy on both sides between the Jews and the Romans. But this Centurion overcame all that, and proved that his love

for the covenant people of God was real by building them a synagogue.

Probably it was not easy to do that, financially or psychologically. We can imagine what some of his fellow-officers in the Roman army may have said when they heard of it. And the expense itself would be a burden. A Centurion was not a general or field marshal; he was only in command of a hundred men—not a very important officer, you see. His salary would not be very great. A man that had no conscience could make plenty of money by graft and extortion, and easily line his pockets with dishonest wealth, but this Centurion was not that kind. We can see that his pocketbook and his bank account were converted to the Lord, as well as his heart.

His attaching himself to the Jewish religion would probably bring on him ridicule or contempt from his brother officers in the army. No doubt the Centurion realized all this from personal experience. Never mind. He was seeking God and God's salvation, and the nearest he had been able to come to it was the religion of the Jews, and so he loved the Jews, and built them a synagogue.

The Centurion's Faith

The elders of the Jews said that the Centurion was **worthy**, and they used a word which means **deserving** or **personally worthy**, that is, of such good character and life that it was fitting for Jesus to help this man. Now of course no person is really worthy of God's grace. It was the Jews who said that this man was "worthy", and no doubt he was in the sense that they intended—that is, he was sincere and of a very good reputation.

But consider what the Centurion said about himself. **"For I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof."** Here a different Greek word for "worthy" is used; a word which means **sufficient** or **adequate**; as if to say, "My rank, my priority rating, is not high enough for me to invite Jesus to come into my house." Now remember that Jesus was a Jew, a member of the subject people, and the Centurion was a Roman, a member of the ruling race. And he was not only a Roman, but a Roman soldier; and not only a soldier, but an officer in the Roman army. And this Roman officer sends and tells Jesus that he does not rate high enough to invite Jesus to come to his home! Do you suppose that any Roman officer ever spoke to any Jewish civilian in that way before?

Note what this Roman officer called Jesus. He called him **"LORD"**. There was one person whom the Romans called "Lord", and that was Caesar, the Emperor at Rome. But here a Roman officer gives the title of LORD to Jesus, a member of the subject, conquered people of the insignificant country of Palestine. Certainly this Centurion knew more about Jesus, and had a clearer understanding of who Jesus was, than the rulers of the Jews of that day.

"Neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee". Here the word for "worthy" is the one used by the elders of the Jews, meaning "personally deserving". The Centurion realized the holiness of Jesus Christ, and therefore felt it would not be fitting that he, a sinful man, should approach close to so holy a Person. And although the Centurion did not receive Jesus into his house, yet he did receive him into his heart; and having Christ in his heart, he had the faith to say what he said next: "But say in a word, and my servant shall be healed."

Then he goes on to speak of his own position in the Roman army. "I am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers; and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and

to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." (Luke 7:8). The Centurion knows that Christ's mere word, without his actual presence, will be sufficient to accomplish the needed miracle. There is something in his own experience which is parallel to this and illustrates it. It is an argument from something less to something greater. "I am a man set under authority." I am not the Emperor, nor the Commander-in-chief, nor a General, but just an officer under the authority of others. I have to obey the officers who are set in authority over me.

But I also have men who are under my authority, and they obey my commands. I say to this one "Go," and he goes; to that one "Come", and he comes; to my servant "Do this," and he does it. Those that are under my authority obey me. I can sit still in my office and without leaving the room I can yet be sure of accomplishing the things that I have in mind to accomplish.

How much more Jesus, who is not in a

subordinate position, but is Lord and Master of all! Jesus has legions of angels at his command. It is not necessary that Jesus come to my house in person to perform a miracle; he can do it from a distance just as well; for surely Jesus will be obeyed by those who are under his authority!

The Centurion had faith in Christ's power, and still more in **Christ's Person**. Because Jesus Christ is **who he is** and **what he is**, the Centurion was sure that he could perform the miracle of healing without being present in person. He had a high idea of what and who Jesus is. He did not look on Jesus as Nicodemus did, as merely a teacher come from God. Nor did he look on Jesus as modern men do, as just an ancient leader of a bygone age who said some excellent things but also shared the errors and ignorance of his own day and age. Far from it. The Centurion had a better and higher idea of Jesus than that. He thought of Jesus as absolutely holy and as possessing absolute power, the Lord of all.

Christ's Appraisal of the Centurion's Faith

"I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Literally this may be translated: "Not even in Israel have I found such a faith." So Jesus commended the Centurion as having a better and greater faith than he had found among the Jews of his day. He had found a wild olive tree bearing fruit which the carefully cultivated olive tree ought to have borne, but did not. Here is the greatest faith, where it would be least expected. The Jews were the children of Abraham, the heirs of the covenants and promises. They had the best training and background. They had the Old Testament Scriptures. They had two thousand years of sacred history back of them, during which God had been educating them in his truth and his laws. They were God's chosen people of that day and age.

The result of it all? Formalism, hypocrisy, sham, wickedness, sin; unbelief, apostasy, rebellion against God; they were stiff-necked, resisting the Holy Ghost as their fathers did before them; their fathers had killed the prophets, and they decorated their tombs. True, there were some godly, pious souls among them. But even many of these seem to have misunderstood the spiritual nature of Jesus' mission and kingdom, and to have had their hearts set on an earthly throne in Jerusalem. But this Roman Centurion outstrips all the Jews in his faith.

Here is a man with a stark pagan back-

ground attaining the highest standing-ground of faith and spiritual insight, realizing his own sinfulness, overcoming all natural obstacles and difficulties, and really appreciating Christ's Person and power in a way that even Jesus' own disciples at this time failed to do. Truly it was within the power of God to take stones and from them raise up children unto Abraham, as John the Baptist had said.

After commending the Centurion's faith, Jesus continued: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:11, 12). Thus Jesus predicted the rejection of the Jews and the acceptance of the Gentiles, by the wonders of divine grace. We know that not many years later this came true. God's kingdom passed out of the hands of the Jews and became prevalently a Gentile kingdom, while Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple demolished.

In these words of Jesus, there is a practical lesson for us. To whom much is given, of him shall much be required. Privilege involves responsibility. As a Church we have a wonderful history. We can look back and see special blessings and gifts received from God through the past 400 years. Truly God has been gracious to the Covenant Church, both in Scotland and in Am-

erica. So much the greater is our responsibility! If we do not bring forth the proper fruits, God will take our candlestick out of its place. We cannot hold our religion in our ancestors' names.

Where true faith in Jesus Christ exists, there is the kingdom of God. Where true

faith in Jesus Christ is lacking, the kingdom of God does not exist in reality. If we become mere formalists, lacking true faith in the divine Redeemer, then the spiritual privileges we have known will be taken from us and bestowed on others who will bring forth the real fruits of them.

Some Noteworthy Quotations

"Not with doubting, but with assured consciousness, do I love Thee, Lord. Thou hast stricken my heart with Thy Word, and I loved Thee."

Augustine of Hippo

"God is, indeed, a God afar off; but He approaches you by and in the Scripture; unveils His presence to you; and speaks to you as though you were standing right by Him, and He drew you close beneath His wings . . . The confession of all those who have possessed the Scripture most fully and enjoyed it most richly, has ever been that it was God who brought **them** to the Scripture and the **Scripture** to them; that He opened their eyes, so that they might understand the Scripture; and that only by the light which shone on them from the Scripture, light has appeared in their own person and the life round about them."

Abraham Kuyper

"This we may positively conclude, that no man has made any good proficiency in the school of Christ, but he who joyfully expects both the day of death and that of the final resurrection . . . Notwithstanding the opposition of the blind and stupid cupidity of our flesh, let us not hesitate ardently to desire the advent of the Lord, as of all events the most auspicious. For he shall come to us as a Redeemer, to deliver us from this bottomless gulf of all evils and miseries, and to introduce us into that blessed inheritance of his life and glory . . . To conclude in one word, the cross of Christ triumphs, in the hearts of believers, over the devil and the flesh, over sin and impious men, only when their eyes are directed to the power of the resurrection."

John Calvin

"Of all the temptations that ever I met with in my life, to question the being of God and the truth of his gospel is the worst, and the worst to be borne. When this tempta-

tion comes, it takes away my girdle from me, and removes the foundation from under me. Oh, I have often thought of that word, 'Having your loins girt about with truth'; and of that, 'When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?'"

John Bunyan

"Now, my dear friends in precious Christ, I think I need not tell you that, as I have lived, so I die, in the same persuasion with the true reformed and covenanted Presbyterian Church of Scotland. I adhere to the testimony of the day, as it is held forth in our Informatory Vindication, and in the testimony against the present toleration; and that I own, and seal with my blood, all the precious truths, even the controverted truths, that I have taught. So I would exhort every one of you to make your personal reconciliation with God in Christ, for I fear many of you have that yet to do; and when you come where I am, to look pale death in the face, ye will not be a little shaken and terrified if ye have not laid hold on eternal life. I would exhort you to much diligence in the use of means; to be careful in keeping your societies; to be frequent and fervent in secret prayer; to read much the written Word of God, and to examine yourselves by it."

James Renwick

(Written four days before he was executed).

"What is ominous in the present-day drift of religious thought is the sustained effort that is being made to break down just these two principles; the principle of a systematized body of doctrines as the matter to be believed, and the principle of an external authority as the basis of belief. What arrogates to itself the title of 'the newer religious thinking' sets itself before everything else, in violent opposition to what it calls 'dogma' and 'external authority' . . ."

Benjamin B. Warfield (Written over half a century ago, and even more relevant today than when first written. Ed.).

"Christ, as a Prophet, is an open door of hope for ignorant sinners; O come in here, and be taught. Christ, as a Priest, is an open door of hope, for guilty sinners; O come in here, and get remission of sin in his blood. Christ, as a King, is an open door of hope to captive sinners, under the power and slavery of sin and Satan; O let such come in here, and share of the victory of Christ, who came in the flesh to destroy

the works of the devil, and who comes in the Spirit by a preached gospel, for the same end. O come unto him by faith and believing in him: and, if you cannot come, pray, pray that he may draw you in; for he stands ready to take you by the hand; he says not, Go in without me; but, Come in and take my help."

Ralph Erskine

Religious Terms Defined

A few definitions of important religious terms will be given in this department in each issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life." The aim will be conciseness without the sacrifice of accuracy. Where possible the Westminster Shorter Catechism will be quoted.

God. "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." (S. C. 4).

Atheism. The denial of the existence of God.

Materialism. The false doctrine that nothing exists except material substance and physical energy. (A form of atheism).

Polytheism. Belief in many gods.

Pantheism. The false system which holds that everything is divine, or that God is the soul of the universe, and that God attains personality and self-consciousness only in man.

Humanism. The false system which regards the human race as existing for its own sake, considers man's chief end to be his own welfare, and looks upon God and religion as means for promoting the progress of humanity.

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

Theism. The truth that there is a personal, almighty God who is distinct from the universe, Creator and Ruler of all things.

Self-Existence of God. The truth that God exists of himself, independently of all other beings, without a cause, without an origin, and without a purpose outside of himself. (The same truth is sometimes expressed by saying that God is a **self-contained Being**).

Personality of God. The truth that God is a Being possessing freedom and self-consciousness, who can call himself "I" and whom we can call "Thou".

Transcendence of God. The truth that God is not only distinct from the universe, but far above, behind and beyond it, and that there is absolutely nothing beyond God. The Bible expresses this by saying that God dwells on **high**.

Immanence of God. The truth that God is everywhere in the universe, and that absolutely nothing great or small could exist without His continual presence in it.

Unity of God. The truth that there is only one living and true God.

Trinity of God. The truth that the one God exists in three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

Sovereignty of God. The absolute, unchallengeable authority of God over the entire universe, by which he orders everything for his own glory, according to the counsel of his own will.

Attributes of God. Those qualities of God's nature which make him the kind of Being he is.

Incommunicable Attributes of God. Those attributes which God alone can possess, such as to be almighty, infinite, unchangeable.

Communicable Attributes of God. Those attributes of God which can be bestowed on angels and men, such as wisdom, holiness, goodness, love.

Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly

Lesson 66

For Week Beginning April 6, 1947

Q. 80. Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and that they shall persevere therein unto salvation?

A. Such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavor to walk in all good conscience before him, may, without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God's promises, and by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made, and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and shall persevere therein unto salvation.

Scripture References:

1 John 2:3. A conscientious endeavor to keep God's commandments is necessary for the attainment of assurance.

1 Corinthians 2:12. 1 John 3:14, 18, 21, 24. 1 John 4:13, 16. Hebrews 6:11, 12. The attainment of assurance is possible, and depends upon the truth of God's promises and upon the believer being enabled by the Holy Spirit to discern in himself the graces to which the promises are made.

Romans 8:15, 16. 1 John 5:10. The testimony of the Holy Spirit in the believer's soul is a factor in the attainment of assurance.

1 John 5:13. Full assurance includes assurance of final perseverance unto eternal life.

Questions:

1. What is meant by "assurance of salvation"?

By "assurance of salvation" is meant a conviction in the mind of a Christian of the absolute certainty of his present and eternal salvation. Our hearts crave not merely possibility or probability, but full assurance or certainty of our own salvation. The Christian who has full assurance has a conviction of absolute, infallible certainty concerning his own eternal salvation.

2. Do all Christians believe that full assurance is possible?

No. Roman Catholics and some Protestants deny the possibility of absolute assurance of salvation. They assert that we

can never know, in this life, with infallible certainty, that we are saved and heirs of eternal life. In general, all who deny the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints (or the eternal security of the believer) must also deny the possibility of absolute assurance of final salvation.

3. Why do we hold that those who deny the possibility of assurance are wrong?

We hold that those who deny the possibility of assurance are wrong because many passages of Scripture teach us that full assurance, or absolute certainty of salvation, is attainable in this life.

4. Do all people who claim to have assurance of their own salvation have a right to do so?

By no means. Many people claim they are saved when they have no valid basis for such a claim. In particular, there are three classes of people who, if they claim to have assurance, are basing their claim on a foundation of shifting sand: (a) **Legalists** (also called **Moralists**), who trust in their own good works, good life, good character, "doing the best they can", etc. (b) **Formalists**, who put their trust in the observance of external forms, ceremonies and ordinances, such as Church membership, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, etc. (c) **Emotionalists** (including also all **Mystics**), who trust their own feelings and emotions, who somehow just "feel" they are saved, or who base their assurance on dreams, visions or special direct revelations from God. All of the above are trusting in what the Scripture calls **refuges of lies** when they base their conviction of assurance of salvation on such grounds as these. In studying the true Scriptural grounds of assurance we shall see the reason why this is so.

5. What false teaching on assurance is very common among earnest Christian people?

The teaching on assurance that is generally associated with American "Fundamentalism" is erroneous and very superficial. It is the product of a superficial type of evangelism which says little or nothing about the need for deep repentance for sin, which presents only a partial and inadequate statement of the grounds of assur-

ance, and which almost always tends to confuse **salvation itself** with the Christian's **assurance of salvation**. This superficial type of evangelism encourages people to think that when they have written their name in place of "whosoever" in John 3:16, or raised their hand in a meeting to signify their acceptance of Christ as their Saviour, they should immediately think of themselves as certainly saved forever. This is a confusion of **salvation** with **assurance**, a confusion of **faith in Christ** with **faith that I am in Christ**; a confusion of **belief of the Gospel** with **belief that I have truly and rightly believed the Gospel**. It is amazing how dogmatically and confidently people write and speak on this subject, while they yet give no evidence of having studied its problems or being familiar with its history.

6. Are **salvation** and **assurance of salvation** the same thing?

Certainly not. **Salvation** and **assurance of salvation** are two different things, though often confused today as in the past. A person may be really saved, and still not be sure, in his own mind, of his salvation. Such a person is safe, and his safety is sure, but he is not sure about his safety. His salvation is not in doubt, but he may be in doubt about his salvation. Suppose a patient undergoes a surgical operation. When he consents to the operation, he exercises **faith in the surgeon**. The surgeon does his work skillfully and well; the operation is successful and the patient is on the road to recovery. Hours later he begins to come out of the anaesthetic. As his brain clears, he asks whether everything is all right. The surgeon comes and assures him that all is well. He was **safe** by reason of the surgeon's skillful work, but this fact did not give him **assurance of his safety, in his own consciousness**. That came later, upon appropriate evidence.

7. What is the difference between **salvation** and **assurance**?

We receive **salvation** by believing in Christ; we receive **assurance** by believing that we have believed in Christ aright. In **salvation**, the object of our faith is Christ. But in the case of **assurance**, we do not believe **directly** in Christ; rather, we believe something about ourselves, namely **that we personally have received something from Christ by believing in him**. To put it another way, to be saved, we must believe in Christ and what he did **FOR** us on Calvary long ago; to receive **assurance**, we must believe not only that Christ has done something **FOR** us centuries ago, but also that Christ has done and is doing something **IN** us right here and now. Confusing **salvation** with **assurance** leads many people who no

doubt are true Christians to trust in the wrong thing for their assurance of **salvation**. They base their assurance **solely** on the promises of the Gospel, such as "Whosoever believeth . . .", etc., and reason thus: "I believe, therefore I am saved." But it must be realized that there is true faith and also counterfeit faith (think of the Parable of the Sower); how do I know that I have believed **aright**, that my faith is **genuine saving faith**? It may indeed be genuine saving faith, but we should not rest assured of eternal **salvation merely** because of a decision made at some time to accept Christ as Saviour.

8. What are the grounds of **assurance of salvation**?

These grounds as they are presented in the Bible and summarized in the Catechism are three in number, and it should be realized that they work together, not separately, as grounds upon which we have a right to an infallible conviction of our own **salvation**. These grounds are: (a) the truth of God's promises to believers; (b) the evidence in a person's heart and life of those graces to which the promises are addressed; (c) the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Adoption, bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.

9. What is meant by the truth of God's promises to believers as a ground of **assurance**?

The divine truth of the promises of **salvation** is the foundation upon which **assurance** must rest. Without it, we could never attain full conviction or certainty. The person who doubts or disbelieves the truth of the Bible can never attain absolute certainty of his own **salvation**. But a recognition of the divine truth of the promises of **salvation alone** is not enough to warrant **assurance**. Many a person believes the Bible from cover to cover, with a technical or "historical" faith, who has no business to feel assured of his own **salvation**. The divine truth of the Bible, including the promises it contains, **alone and by itself**, is no proper ground of **assurance**. The devils also believe, and tremble (James 2:19). To illustrate this: An insurance policy promises to pay the holder \$5,000 in the event of the destruction of his property by fire. The policy is genuine and the company which issued it is financially sound. I may be so convinced of the soundness and reliability of this policy that I neglect even to read the terms and conditions which are printed in rather small type in the policy. Am I not satisfied that the policy is genuine? So I base my **assurance** solely upon the genuineness of the insurance policy. But one day

my property is destroyed by fire. I file a claim. After investigation, the company refuses to pay me anything. The policy was genuine, but it did not apply to my case. I had been using the property for storing gasoline, and there was a clause in the policy stating that if gasoline was stored on the property that would void the policy and release the company from all liability. It was genuine, but it did not apply to my case because I had not complied with the conditions. So a **mere** acceptance of the promises of God's Word, without evidence of a changed and new life, is not an adequate ground of assurance.

10. What is meant by the evidence in a person's heart and life of those graces to which the promises are addressed?

Briefly, this means the evidence of a changed and new life, that old things have passed away, and all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17). Here again, this ground of assurance cannot be taken by itself alone, but must go along with the other two grounds. Whosoever believeth shall not perish, but how do I know that I have believed aright, that my faith is real, that I am not self-deceived? A person might say, "I know just because I know, just as I know that my name is John Doe, or just as I know that I am awake and not asleep". But this will yield only **probability** and not infallible certainty. There may remain some lingering doubt that my faith is not the real thing, that somehow I am self-hypnotized. The truth is, **we know that we have believed aright when we see some of the fruits of salvation in our lives.** Christ came to save us **from** our sins, not **in** our sins. If we have believed aright, we will not only be saved instantly from their **guilt**, but also gradually from their **power** and **pollution**. Read 1 John 2:3-6; 1 John 3:14. Just what has Christ done for us? Has he forgiven our sins, just that and nothing more? If that is our experience, **we have no right to rest assured of our salvation.** Good works and a changed life are the **fruits** of a real salvation, and as such they form a part of the ground of a legitimate assurance of personal salvation. If Christ has really saved a person's **soul**, he will also, bit by bit, save that person's **life**—his eyes from tears and his feet from falling. All this enters into the ground of assurance of salvation.

11. What is meant by the testimony of

the Holy Spirit as a ground of assurance of salvation?

This does not mean some special revelation or strange voice inside of us, nor that God will speak to us as he once spoke to Moses and Paul, or as one person might speak to another. If we expect anything like this we will be disappointed. Read 1 John 3:24; 5:10; Romans 8:15,16. God is a Person. To know God is a very different thing from merely to know **about** God. The Holy Spirit, through the experiences of the Christian life, causes the believer really to **know God.** This personal knowledge of God, by the operation of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, becomes the final, ultimate ground of our infallible assurance of salvation. It serves as a true ground for the hope that maketh not ashamed (Romans 5:5). "The Holy Spirit is the direct Author of faith in all its degrees, as also of love and hope. Full assurance, therefore, which is the fulness of hope resting on the fulness of faith, is a state of mind which it is the office of the Holy Ghost to induce in our minds in connection with the evidence of our gracious character above stated. In whatever way he works in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, or sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, or begets us again to a lively hope, in that way he gives origin to the grace of full assurance—not as a blind and fortuitous feeling, but as a legitimate and undoubting conclusion from appropriate evidence". (A. A. Hodge, "Commentary on the Confession of Faith").

12. How can we test the genuineness of our own assurance?

Dr. A. A. Hodge in his "Commentary on the Confession of Faith", gives four tests by which true assurance can be distinguished from false or presumptuous assurance. These are: (a) True assurance produces unfeigned humility; false assurance leads to spiritual pride. (b) True assurance results in increased diligence in the practice of holiness; false assurance leads to slothfulness and self-indulgence. (c) True assurance leads to candid self-examination and a desire to be searched and corrected by God; false assurance leads to a disposition to be satisfied with appearance and avoid accurate investigation. (d) True assurance leads to constant aspirations after a more intimate fellowship with God; false assurance does not.

Lesson 67

For Week Beginning April 13, 1947

Q. 81. Are all true believers at all times assured of their present being in the estate of grace, and that they shall be saved?

A. Assurance of grace and salvation not being of the essence of faith, true believers may wait long before they obtain it; and after the enjoyment thereof, may have it weakened and intermitted, through manifold distempers, sins, temptations, and desertions; yet are they never left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of God as keeps them from sinking into utter despair.

Scripture References:

Ephesians 1:13. Assurance is not essential to faith, and may come afterwards.

Isaiah 50:10. Psalm 88. True believers may have to wait long before they attain full assurance.

Psalm 77:1-12. Psalm 31:22. Psalm 22:1. Even after full assurance has been experienced, it is subject to change from various causes.

1 John 3:9. Job 13:15. Psalm 73:15, 23. Isaiah 54:7-10. True believers are never left without any consciousness of the favor of God; they always have such a presence and support of the Holy Spirit as to preserve them from utter despair.

Questions:

1. What does the Catechism mean by saying that assurance is not of the essence of faith?

This means that true saving faith in Christ may exist without assurance of salvation in the believer's own mind. A person may have a true faith, and be really saved, without being sure of his salvation in his own consciousness.

2. Do all Christians receive the grace of assurance as soon as they believe in Christ as their Saviour?

No. There are some Christians who do receive the grace of assurance immediately upon believing in Christ as their Saviour. This is often the case with persons who are converted to Christ in a very sudden manner, or who have gone through an intense spiritual struggle before they really came to Christ. The Reformer John Calvin, who

was suddenly converted, is an example of this. But most Christians experience a more gradual conversion, and may have true saving faith for some time—even a long time—before they possess full certainty of their salvation in their own minds.

3. Can every Christian attain full assurance of his salvation?

Yes. Assurance is possible to attain, and every Christian who uses the appointed means of grace faithfully and patiently waits on God can and will obtain it in the end.

4. After assurance of salvation is once attained, can it be lost?

Yes. That is, it may be **temporarily** "weakened and intermitted" because of a variety of causes, including temptations, the believer's own sins, and providential dispensations of God. This is not only the teaching of Scripture (Psalm 32; 143:1-7; 2 Cor. 7:5), but the common experience of Christian people. For an unchanging and always unclouded consciousness of God's presence and blessing we shall have to wait until we reach heaven; such does not exist on earth. Assurance is not a constant, unchanging quantity; it is real, but it has its ups and downs.

5. Can a true Christian's consciousness of God's presence and favor ever be wholly lost?

No. If the believer's consciousness of God's presence and favor could be entirely lost, the believer could only sink into utter despair. But through all the experiences of life the believer is never left without "such a presence and support of the Spirit of God" as will preserve him from despair.

6. How should we seek to maintain a strong and clear assurance of our salvation?

Every Christian should earnestly endeavor to attain, and having attained, to retain, a strong and clear assurance of his salvation by a faithful, conscientious use of the means of grace, waiting upon God in Word, sacraments and prayer.

7. Should we feel discouraged if we do not possess full assurance soon after we believe in Christ?

No. We should exercise Christian patience, and wait upon God to give us assurance in his own time.

Lesson 68

For Week Beginning April 20, 1947

Q. 82. What is the communion in glory which the members of the invisible church have with Christ?

A. The communion in glory which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is in this life, immediately after death, and at last perfected at the resurrection and day of judgment.

Scripture References:

2 Corinthians 3:18. The believer's communion in glory with Christ in the present life.

Luke 23:43. The believer's communion in glory with Christ immediately after death.

1 Thess. 4:17. The believer's communion in glory with Christ perfected at the resurrection and day of judgment.

Note: Question 69 was "What is the communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ?" Questions 70-81 deal with the communion in **grace** which they have with Christ. Question 82 introduces the new subject of the communion in **glory** which they have with Christ. Then Questions 83-90 deal with this subject of communion in glory with Christ. The answer to Question 82 is a summary of the subject "**Communion in glory with Christ**". It contains no doctrine which is not more fully stated in the questions which follow. Therefore we shall consider Question 82 only very briefly, and then pass on to the questions which follow it.

Questions:

1. What is the difference between **grace** and **glory**?

In the Bible, both of these words are used with various meanings. But as used here in the Catechism, **grace** refers to those blessings of salvation which we receive in this present life, while **glory** refers to those blessings of salvation which we receive chiefly in the life to come.

2. Do the people of God receive glory all at once, or in installments?

God's people receive glory, not all at once, but in three stages or installments.

3. What are the three stages in which God's people receive glory?

(a) They receive **the first-fruits of glory** during the present life; (b) They enter **the state of glory** at their death; (c) They receive **the perfection of glory** at the resurrection.

Q. 83. What is the communion in glory with Christ which the members of the invisible church enjoy in this life?

A. The members of the invisible church have communicated to them in this life the first-fruits of glory with Christ, as they are members of him their head, and so in him are interested in that glory which he is fully possessed of; and, as an earnest thereof, enjoy the sense of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and hope of glory; as, on the contrary, sense of God's revenging wrath, horror of conscience, and a fearful expectation of judgment, are to the wicked the beginning of their torments which they shall endure after death.

Scripture References:

Ephesians 2:5, 6. Believers, because they are members of Christ their head, participate in the glory which Christ possesses in heaven.

Romans 5:5 compared with 2 Corinthians 1:22. Believers, in this life, enjoy the consciousness of God's love.

Romans 5: 1, 2. Romans 14:17. Peace of conscience, Christian joy, and hope of glory, are the believer's portion here on earth.

Genesis 4:13. Matthew 27:4. Hebrews 10:27. Romans 2:9. Mark 9:44. Just as the believer, in the present life, experiences a foretaste of the glory of heaven, so wicked people, in the present life, experience a foretaste of the miseries of hell.

Questions:

1. What is meant by the expression "the first-fruits of glory"?

This means a sample or foretaste of that glory which we shall enjoy to the full in the life to come.

2. What is meant by saying that the members of the invisible Church "are interested in that glory" which Christ already fully possesses?

Here the word "interested" does not mean that they are eager to learn about it, but rather that **they are entitled to a share in** the glory which Christ now enjoys in heaven.

3. Why cannot Christian people have the full enjoyment of Christ's glory here and now?

This is impossible because of three facts which, in God's providence, continue to exist during the present life: (a) the presence

of a sinful nature in the believer; (b) the mortality and weakness of the Christian's physical body; (c) the presence of sin and suffering in the world which surrounds the Christian.

4. When will these three facts, which prevent the full enjoyment of glory here and now, be changed?

The presence of the sinful nature in the believer will come to an end at his death. The mortality and weakness of his physical body will end at the resurrection at the Last Day. The sin and suffering in the world which surrounds the believer here and now, will be left behind him at his death, and will be totally abolished at the Judgment Day at the end of the world.

5. What is meant by saying that the believer here and now has "an earnest" of Christ's glory?

The expression "an earnest" means a deposit, a token payment, or a payment on account, which is made as evidence of good faith in promising that the balance shall be paid in due time. Glory is our inheritance in the life to come, but we receive a sample of it during this present life as evidence that we shall receive the fulness of it in the future life.

6. What kind of experiences go to make

up the "earnest" of glory which God's people receive during the present life?

The enjoyment of consciousness of God's love; peace of conscience; joy in the Holy Spirit; the hope (that is, the **assurance**, or "hope that maketh not ashamed", Rom. 5:5) of the fulness of glory in the future. These experiences enable the believer at times to enjoy a kind of "heaven on earth".

7. How do wicked people receive a sample of their future destiny during the present life?

Even before death they experience, more or less, "a sense of God's revenging wrath", "horror of conscience, and a fearful expectation of judgment". Sometimes these terrors may be so severe that they can be described as a kind of "hell on earth". The Bible teaches definitely that this is so, and it has often been exemplified by the words and actions of wicked people, especially as they felt the approach of death.

8. Does the believer enjoy this foretaste of glory equally at all times?

No. Because of doubts, temptations, the attacks of Satan, and other things, the enjoyment of this foretaste of glory varies from time to time. Sometimes it is very clear, and at other times it is clouded and weak. But the believer is never left entirely without it.

Lesson 69

For Week Beginning April 27, 1947

- Q. 84. Shall all men die?

A. Death being threatened as the wages of sin, it is appointed unto all men once to die; for that all have sinned.

Scripture References:

Romans 6:23. Death is the "wages" or penalty of sin.

Hebrews 9:27. God has appointed unto all men once to die.

Romans 5:12. Death has passed upon all men, because all have sinned.

Questions:

1. Are there any exceptions to the rule that all men must die?

Yes. Enoch and Elijah were **translated** to the state of glory without dying. Read Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5; 2 Kings 2:11. Also the Bible teaches that all of God's people who shall be living in the world when Jesus Christ comes again will be translated to the state of glory without dy-

ing. Read 1 Corinthians 15:51,52; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.

2. Has there ever been an exception to the truth that all men have sinned?

Yes, our Saviour Jesus Christ lived a blameless, perfect life, wholly without sin. Death would have been unable to claim him, except for the fact that the sins of God's people were laid upon him, and so he voluntarily laid down his life as a sacrifice for others. He came under the curse of God, suffered and died because of **our** sins. **In** him was no sin, but the Lord laid **on** him the iniquity of us all.

3. Is death to be regarded as a **normal** or an **abnormal** experience of human beings?

Modern thought, influenced by the evolution theory, holds that death is entirely **normal**, good and necessary. It holds that for a human being to die is just as normal and proper as for leaves to drop off trees in the autumn. According to evolution, only by the death of **millions of generations** of human beings can perfection be attained—if indeed it can ever be attained. But

according to the teaching of the Bible, death is strictly **abnormal**. Men were not created to die; they were created to live. The separation of soul from body, and the decay of the body are fearful things because they are **contrary to the integrity of our human nature as created by God**. Therefore the Bible describes death as "the last enemy", and says that it **shall be destroyed**. The Bible also says that the devil is the one who has the power of death (Hebrews 2:14) and that Christ came to destroy the devil and to "deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (verse 15).

4. What is proved by the fact that death is universal in the human race?

The fact that death is universal proves that sin is universal also. Regardless of the ideas of scientists and philosophers, human beings instinctively recoil from death and realize that death is a fearful thing. The human soul has planted in it an unquenchable thirst for life. Yet in the face of this universal thirst for life, death comes to all. The only adequate explanation is that **something is radically wrong with the human race**. This the Bible calls **sin**, and explains the fact of death by the fact of sin. Romans 5:12; 6:23.

5. Will science ever be able to overcome death?

No. By God's common grace, scientific discoveries may be able in some cases to **postpone** death, but science can never overcome death, because back of the natural causes of death (such as sickness, accident, old age) there is the spiritual cause, namely sin and God's righteous judgment upon sin.

Q. 85. Death being the wages of sin, why are not the righteous delivered from death, seeing all their sins are forgiven in Christ?

A. The righteous shall be delivered from death itself at the last day, and even in death are delivered from the sting and curse of it; so that, although they die, yet it is out of God's love, to free them perfectly from sin and misery, and to make them capable of farther communion with Christ in glory, which they then enter upon.

Scripture References:

1 Corinthians 15:26. Hebrews 2:15. The righteous shall be delivered from death itself at the Last Day.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57. Even in death, the righteous are spared the sting and curse of it.

Isaiah 57:1, 2. 2 Kings 22:20. In the case of the righteous, death is to be explained by God's love, not by his wrath against sin.

Revelation 14:13. Ephesians 5:27. The death of the Christian serves to free him perfectly from sin and misery.

Luke 23:43. Philippians 1:23. The Christian's death serves to render him capable of the farther communion with Christ which he then enters upon in the state of glory.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word "wages" in this question?

The word "wages" is here used with the meaning of **penalty** or **punishment**. Because the sinner **deserves** death, the Bible speaks of death as the "wages" of sin, for **wages** are a payment to a person of what he deserves to receive.

2. What is the real problem which this question of the Catechism faces?

The real problem which this question faces is: **Why do Christians have to die?** Since death is the penalty for sin, and Christ bore this penalty as the Christian's Substitute, it would seem to involve a contradiction to say that the Christian still must die himself.

3. Is it possible to give a complete solution of this problem?

No. The Catechism presents some truths which shed some light on the problem. But the problem itself cannot be wholly solved. We can only say that God knows what is best for his own glory and the real good of his people. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight". Why does God not take Christian people to heaven without dying, as he took Enoch and Elijah? We do not know. We can only acknowledge **the sovereignty of God** and affirm that whatever God does is all very good.

4. In what way are the righteous delivered from death, and when?

While not delivered from death as an experience, the righteous are delivered **from the death of the body as a state or condition**. This will take place at the Last Day.

5. What deliverance do the righteous enjoy in the experience of death?

In the experience of death, the righteous are delivered from the **sting and curse** of it.

6. What is meant by the "sting and curse" of death?

These terms describe death as **the penalty of sin**. See 1 Cor. 15:55, 56. The righteous do not have to experience death as the penalty of sin.

7. If death is not the penalty of sin to the righteous, then what is it?

To the righteous, death is, first of all, the **consequence** of sin, that is, an effect of sin on the human personality. In the second place, to the righteous, death is a token of God's love. It brings the Christian benefit rather than harm. This does not mean that the death of the body is not itself a fearful thing, but it means that the result of the death of the body is to bring real benefit to the Christian.

8. How does the death of the body bring benefit to the Christian?

The death of the body brings benefit

Lesson 70

Q. 86. What is the communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death?

A. The communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death, is, in that their souls are then made perfect in holiness, and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies, which even in death continue united to Christ, and rest in their graves as in their beds, till at the last day they be again united to their souls. Whereas the souls of the wicked are at their death cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, and their bodies kept in their graves, as in their prisons, till the resurrection and judgment of the great day.

Scripture References:

Hebrews 12:23. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness.

2 Corinthians 5:1, 6, 8. Philippians 1:23 compared with Acts 3:21 and Ephesians 4:10. The souls of believers are at their death received into the Lord's presence in heaven.

1 John 3:2. 1 Corinthians 13:12. Believers after their death shall behold the face of God.

Romans 8:23. Psalm 16:9. Believers after

to the Christian by translating him from this environment of sin and misery to the perfect environment of heavenly peace and rest. The Christian, even though justified, adopted, and in process of being sanctified, can never be perfectly happy and blessed in this world because of the presence on every hand, and in his own heart, of sin and suffering. Death removes the Christian from this vale of tears and places him immediately in heavenly glory in the presence of Christ.

9. Why is communion with Christ more perfect in heavenly glory than here on earth?

(a) Because the Christian is in the visible presence of Christ in glory. (b) Because the sins and temptations of his own heart and the distractions of earthly life will all have passed away. (c) Because bodily weakness, weariness, infirmity, sickness and pain will be no more.

For Week Beginning May 4, 1947

their death must await the redemption of their bodies.

1 Thess. 4:14. The bodies of believers, though buried in the grave, remain united to Christ.

Isaiah 57:2. The bodies of believers rest in their graves as in their beds.

Job 19:26, 27. The bodies of believers shall again be united to their souls.

Luke 16:23, 24. Acts 1:25. Jude 6, 7. The souls of the wicked are at their death cast into hell.

Questions:

1. What is the condition of believers in Christ after their death?

The condition of believers in Christ after their death is a condition of consciousness, memory, holiness, blessedness, and waiting for the completion of their redemption by the resurrection of their bodies; the condition of their bodies is a condition of rest until the resurrection.

2. When do the souls of believers enter upon this blessed condition?

Immediately after their death.

3. What popular false doctrine is rejected by this answer of the Catechism?

The unscriptural doctrine of "soul sleep", which holds that the souls of Christians at the time of their death pass into

unconsciousness, being as if they did not exist, until the resurrection.

4. Give two Scripture passages which prove that the doctrine of "soul sleep" is false.

Luke 16:19-31 and Luke 23:39-43.

5. What kind of holiness do believers possess immediately after death?

Perfect holiness (a) in extent; (b) in degree; (c) in stability. Never again can they fall short of moral perfection, suffer temptation or fall into any sin.

6. What will be the chief element in the happiness or blessedness of the souls of believers after their death?

The chief element in their blessedness or happiness is their beholding the face of God in light and glory.

7. Where is heaven?

This question, which our natural curiosity raises in our minds, cannot be definitely answered. However the Bible clearly reveals that heaven is the place where God's glory is specially manifested, and it is the place where our Saviour Jesus Christ in his glorified human nature now lives.

8. Is the condition of the souls of believers after their death the highest and most blessed condition they are destined to enjoy?

No. While the condition of the souls of believers after their death is a condition of perfect holiness, still it is not the highest and most blessed condition they are destined to enjoy. The enjoyment of the **supreme** blessedness must wait until the resurrection of the body at the last day. Therefore the Bible represents the souls of believers in heaven as patiently waiting for the resurrection.

9. When will the resurrection take place?

At the time of the second coming of Christ, called in the Bible the "Last Day". This will be a definite time, but it is one of the secret things of God's counsel which have not been revealed to us. Therefore all attempts to predict the time are false and wrong.

10. What is the condition of the bodies of believers after their death?

After their death, the bodies of believers rest in their graves as in their beds, and are still united to Christ.

11. What is meant by saying that the

bodies of believers are still united to Christ?

This means that Christ still regards the human bodies of his people, even though dead and buried, as something exceedingly precious, because he intends to raise them up again at the Last Day. Therefore he does not regard the dead bodies of his people as something worthless, to be discarded because of no more use, but as something valuable, to be watched over until the resurrection. The Bible compares the dead body of the Christian to a **seed** which has been planted and which will spring forth to new life at the appointed time. See 1 Corinthians 15:36-38.

12. What was the ancient pagan attitude toward the body after death had taken place?

The pagan attitude was that the body even in life is the prison of the soul, or a hindrance to the soul, or a burden to the soul, and that death liberates the soul from the body and sets it free for a higher and nobler life; and that the dead body is only worthless matter which must be cast away or discarded because it will only decay and can never live again. This pagan attitude, though characteristic of the ancient world, is quite common at the present day.

13. How does this pagan attitude toward the human body differ from the Christian belief about the body?

According to the Word of God, the human body is not something bad; it is not the prison of the soul, but the **home** of the soul; not a burden to the soul, but an **organ** of the soul; death by separating soul and body deprives the soul of something which it needs for its highest happiness and self-expression. See the apostle Paul's statements in 2 Corinthians 5:1-4. Especially the Christian attitude toward the body differs from the pagan attitude in that Christianity teaches that the body shall rise again by the power of God, and therefore its real and highest usefulness lies beyond the present life, in the life of eternity; therefore the dead body of a Christian is not something which has no further purpose or function.

14. What should we think of the increasingly prevalent practice of cremation as a substitute for burial?

Of course all things are possible to God, who can raise up a body that has been burnt to ashes just as easily as one that has been buried and has returned to dust. But the practice of cremation is fostered by increasing unbelief in the resurrection of the body.

It is a part of the modern pagan view of life. The idea back of the practice of cremation is that the dead body is worthless, merely so much lifeless matter which can never again be of use to the person's soul, and therefore is to be destroyed as quickly and as completely as possible.

15. Prove from the Bible that the souls of the wicked are in hell after their death. Luke 16: 23, 24.

16. What is the doctrine of "spiritualism" or "spiritism"?

This is the soul-destroying false doctrine that it is possible for the living to communicate with the dead through a person called a "medium".

17. What is the attitude of the Bible toward "spiritism"?

The Bible condemns and forbids "spiritism" in the most emphatic terms. Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Isaiah 8:19, and other Scriptures referring to "wizards", "witches", "familiar spirits", etc., condemn the practice of "spiritism". These "wizards", etc., were similar to the "mediums" of modern "spiritism".

Lesson 71

Q. 87. What are we to believe concerning the resurrection?

A. We are to believe, that at the last day there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust: when they that are then found alive shall in a moment be changed; and the self-same bodies of the dead which were laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls for ever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ. The bodies of the just by the Spirit of Christ, and by virtue of his resurrection as their head, shall be raised in power, spiritual, incorruptible, and made like to his glorious body; and the bodies of the wicked shall be raised up in dishonor by him, as an offended judge.

Scripture References:

Acts 24:15. There shall be a general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53. 1 Thess: 4:15-17. At the time of the resurrection, living Christians shall instantly be changed without dying.

1 Corinthians 15:53. John 5:28, 29. The self-same bodies that are buried shall rise again.

18. What should we think of the practice of **prayers for the dead**?

Prayers for the dead are unscriptural and wrong. If the dead are in heaven they do not need our prayers. If they are in hell our prayers cannot help them. After death there is no more opportunity for repentance or salvation. We should devote our attention rather to praying and working for the salvation of the living, leaving those who have passed away from this earth in the hands of God.

19. What should we think of the Roman Catholic doctrine of **purgatory**?

The Catholic doctrine of purgatory is to the effect that very few Christians are fit to go directly to heaven when they die. The rest must go to purgatory and suffer there until the fires of purgatory have taken away the rest of their sinfulness. This doctrine is utterly contrary to the Scriptures, and makes the cross of Christ of none effect, for it implies that Christ's atonement is not sufficient to take away all a person's sin.

For Week Beginning May 11, 1947

1 Corinthians 15:21-23, 42-44. The bodies of the righteous shall be raised incorruptible.

Philippians 3:21. The bodies of the righteous shall be like Christ's glorious body.

John 5:27-29. Matthew 25:33. Revelation 20:13. The bodies of the wicked shall be raised by Christ as Judge.

Questions:

What is the meaning of the expression "at the last day"?

This means the time of the second coming of Christ.

2. When will the last day come?

The time when the last day shall come has not been revealed in the Bible. It is one of the secret things which God has reserved to himself. However, the Bible teaches that it will be a definite, particular time. The Bible refers to it as "that day and hour". Although God has not revealed the time, it will certainly be a definite calendar year, month, day and hour, when the age-long history of this world will **suddenly** come to a **conclusion** with the return of Christ in glory upon the clouds of heaven,

followed immediately by the resurrection and the judgment.

3. Is it possible that the last day may come within our own lifetime?

Yes. While we do not believe that a sound interpretation of the Scriptures warrants the popular belief that the second coming of Christ may occur "at any moment", still this does not imply that it could not take place within our lifetime; nor do we have a right to expect that it will surely take place during our lifetime.

4. What attitude does the Bible command us to have toward the second coming of our Lord?

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20).

5. Is it scriptural for a Christian to look forward to the last day with eager anticipation?

Yes. Read 2 Peter 3:10-14, and note the expression used in verse 12, "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God . . .". Also note Titus 2:13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

6. Will there be more than one resurrection?

No. The Scriptures teach that there will be **one** general resurrection of the dead at the time of Christ's second coming.

7. Prove from the Bible that there will be one single resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

John 5: 28, 29, "The **hour** is coming, in the which **all that are in the graves** shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Concerning this passage of Scripture, it should be noted that (a) it speaks of "the **hour**", in the singular, "the hour is coming", not "the hours are coming". Therefore a single, definite time is meant; (b) when that definite time comes, not part, but **all that are in the graves** shall come forth; (c) those who shall come forth from the graves at that time are expressly stated to include both classes, the righteous and the wicked.

8. What should we think of the doctrine that there will be two resurrections, the first a resurrection of the redeemed, and the second, a thousand years later, a resurrection of the wicked dead?

This teaching forms a part of the pre-millennial interpretation of Revelation 20:1-6. This vision, which was revealed to the apostle John on the island of Patmos, is unquestionably filled with symbolic features, such as "the key of the bottomless pit", "a great chain", "a seal", and is therefore somewhat difficult to interpret with certainty. Because of this difficulty of interpretation, there has never been any unanimity in the Church, from the post-apostolic age to the present time, concerning the meaning of this vision. This prophetic vision should be interpreted in accordance with the clear teaching of our Lord in John 5:28,29, rather than to start with a theory about the meaning of Revelation 20:1-6 and then interpret John 5:28, 29 to fit our theory of the meaning of Revelation 20:1-6. Our Lord's clear teaching in John 5:28, 29 rules out the double resurrection idea. Therefore we believe that "the first resurrection" mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6 is not the resurrection of the body but a spiritual resurrection, possibly being the same as that spoken of by our Lord in John 5:25, "The hour is coming, **and now is**, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." It should be carefully noted that Revelation 20:4 does not say "they rose from their graves", but only "and they lived . . .".

9. Will the resurrection body of the redeemed be the same as the present body, or different?

Scripture teaches that the **identity** of the body will be the same, but its **qualities** will be different. It is the same body that is buried that shall rise again, but it will rise clothed with glory and immortality. 1 Corinthians 15:37, 42-44.

10. What is meant by saying that the resurrection body will be a "spiritual" body?

We must be careful not to misunderstand this word. "Spiritual" is an adjective, not a noun. A "spiritual" body is not the same thing as "a spirit" or "a spirit-body". When the New Testament speaks of the resurrection body of the saints as "a spiritual body" this means a body perfectly suited to be the temple of God the Holy Spirit.

11. Prove from the Bible that the resurrection body will not be a mere spirit, but will be a tangible, material body.

Luke 24:39, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

12. Why do many people scoff at the doctrine of the resurrection of the body?

This doctrine of God's Word has been made the object of scoffing by unbelievers ever since the Sadducees (Acts 23:8) and the Athenians (Acts 17:32) disbelieved it. Those who regard this doctrine as absurd or impossible do so because they reject the authority of the Scriptures and do not believe in a God who is almighty and can work miracles.

13. Can the resurrection of the body be proved by science or reason?

No. The resurrection of the body is a mystery which is revealed only in the written Word of God. Apart from the Scriptures we could not know it. Also we should realize that science and human reason can never **disprove** the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. We hold this precious

truth and promise by faith, on the authority of God's infallible Word, the Holy Bible.

14. Is it proper for the Church, in order to avoid offending those who do not believe in the resurrection, to emphasize **the immortality of the soul** and say little or nothing about **the resurrection of the body**?

No. In the Bible the emphasis is on the resurrection of the body rather than on the immortality of the soul, though of course the Bible plainly teaches both. Romans 8:23, "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, **the redemption of our body.**" We should not trim off one jot or tittle of our faith to suit the ideas or appease the prejudices of modern unbelief. The Church should proclaim the whole counsel of God, regardless of consequences, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.

Lesson 72

For Week Beginning May 18, 1947

Q. 88. What shall immediately follow after the resurrection?

A. Immediately after the resurrection shall follow the general and final judgment of angels and men; the day and hour whereof no man knoweth, that all may watch and pray, and be ever ready for the coming of the Lord.

Scripture References:

2 Peter 2:4. Jude 6. The angels that sinned are to be judged.

Jude 7, 14, 15. Matthew 25:46. Christ is coming again to be the Judge of all.

Matthew 24:36. The time of the judgment is unknown to men.

Matthew 24:42-44. Luke 21:35, 36. It is our duty to watch and pray and be always ready for Christ's coming.

Questions:

1. How soon after the resurrection of the dead will the judgment take place?

Immediately after.

2. Show from the Bible that the resurrection and the judgment are so closely connected that the latter must follow immediately after the former.

John 5:27-29. In this portion of Scripture (verse 27) Christ speaks of having received from God the Father authority to execute judgment; (verse 28) he predicts that he will call all that are in the graves to come forth; (verse 30) he states that they

shall come forth, some to the resurrection of life, and others to **the resurrection of judgment** (the word "damnation" in the Authorized Version represents a Greek word which is more accurately translated "judgment"). If the judgment is not to follow **immediately** after the resurrection, these verses could not connect the two events so closely.

3. What interpretation of prophecy denies that the judgment will take place immediately after the resurrection.

The premillennial interpretation of prophecy holds that (a) at the second coming of Christ the redeemed will rise from the dead; (b) this will be followed by a period of a thousand years during which Christ will rule the world from Jerusalem; (c) at the **end** of the thousand-year kingdom will come "the general and final judgment of angels and men." We believe that this view is based on a misunderstanding of the prophecies of the Bible.

4. What is implied by the use of the expression "the day and hour whereof", in speaking of the Judgment Day?

The expression "the day and hour whereof", implies that the judgment will begin at a definite, particular time.

5. Why is it impossible for anyone to know in advance the day and hour of the judgment?

It is impossible because this information has not been revealed to men by God. Not only does the Bible not disclose the day and hour, but it is impossible to calculate

the day and hour from prophecies in the Bible, in any way whatever.

6. Since we cannot know the day and hour of the judgment in advance, what should be our attitude toward the coming judgment?

Realizing the certainty of the judgment, and our own ignorance of the time, we should make adequate preparation, so that if the Judgment Day comes we will be ready for it. The person who is not saved should prepare, first of all, by repenting of sin and believing on Christ as his Saviour. The Christian should prepare by daily seriousness and faithfulness in the Christian life; he should "watch and pray, and be ever ready for the coming of the Lord."

7. Is it possible that the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the Judgment Day, will come to pass during the lifetime of people now living in the world?

Certainly this must be regarded as **possible**; otherwise the warnings of Matthew 24:42-44 and Luke 21:36 would not apply to the present generation. If it is **impossible** for the Judgment Day to come during our lifetime, then Christ's words "Therefore be ye also ready" would not apply for us; we do not need to be ready for something which cannot possibly happen to us. We should note that the statement "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" **refers to the second coming of Christ in glory**, not to the death of the Christian as it has often been wrongly interpreted. The content, verses 36-43, shows clearly that the second coming of Christ in glory is the subject that is being discussed.

8. Is it **probable** that the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the Judgment Day, will come to pass during the lifetime of people now living in the world?

The Bible affords no basis for answering this question with confidence. Many people in past times have thought that they could answer it confidently, but time has proved them wrong. It is better to refrain from speculations of this kind, and to rest content in the clear teaching of the Bible that it is **possible** that Christ may come again in our lifetime.

9. What wrong attitudes should be avoided in studying the doctrine of the second coming of Christ and related doctrines?

There are two extreme attitudes which should be avoided: (a) Many Christians become so absorbed in these doctrines that

they show but little interest in the other teachings of the Bible. This is a fanatical extreme. The second coming of Christ, the resurrection and the judgment are indeed important doctrines of the Bible, but they are not the **only** important doctrines of the Bible. (b) There are also many Christians who go to the opposite extreme, and almost totally neglect the doctrines of the second coming of Christ, the resurrection and the judgment. This also is a harmful extreme. The right view is a balanced one; we should view these doctrines in their proper place in the divinely revealed system of truth, giving them just the degree of emphasis that properly belongs to them, according to the teaching of the Bible.

10. Why do we believe in one single general judgment, instead of two or more?

A number of reasons based on the Bible might be given. In Revelation 20:11-15 we see portrayed a **general** judgment, at which there are present the redeemed, whose names are written in the Book of Life, and also the wicked, who shall be cast into the lake of fire. The same teaching is set forth in Matthew 25:46. The interpretation that Matthew 25:31 ("And before him shall be gathered all nations . . .") describes a judgment of **nations as such**, rather than a judgment of individual human beings, is quite unwarranted. The word here translated "nations" is the Greek word **ethnos** (plural **ethne**) which occurs 164 times in the New Testament. It is translated "Gentiles" 93 times; "heathen" 5 times; "nation" or "nations" 64 times; "people" twice. It is quite commonly used to mean the people composing a nation or nations, and has no necessary reference to "States" or nations in their corporate political capacity. It is quite unwarranted to hold that Matthew 25:32 means that before Christ's throne shall be gathered Great Britain, France, Germany, China, the United States of America, Mexico, etc. The meaning is simply that all people, without distinctions of race or nationality, shall be gathered before Christ's judgment throne.

11. Who is to be the Judge of the entire human race?

The Lord Jesus Christ. John 5:22, 27.

12. Why is Christ especially qualified to be the Judge of the human race?

Because he is both God and man, with these two natures united in one Person. Because he is God, he knows all things that ever happened; because he is man, he has experienced temptation and suffering; thus he is eminently qualified to render a just judgment.

Lesson 73

For Week Beginning May 25, 1947

Q. 89. What shall be done to the wicked at the day of judgment?

A. At the day of judgment, the wicked shall be set on Christ's left hand, and, upon clear evidence, and full conviction of their own consciences, shall have the fearful but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them; and thereupon shall be cast out from the favorable presence of God, and the glorious fellowship with Christ, his saints, and all his holy angels, into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments, both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels for ever.

Scripture References:

Matthew 25:33. The wicked shall be set on Christ's left hand.

Romans 2:15, 16. The wicked will be convicted by their own conscience.

Matthew 25:41-43. Christ shall pronounce sentence against the wicked.

Luke 16:26. The wicked shall be isolated from the presence of God, Christ, the holy angels and the saints.

2 Thess. 1:8, 9. The wicked shall be punished with terrible torments for ever.

Matthew 26:24. Those who have been judicially condemned can never to all eternity be restored to the favor of God.

Matthew 25:46. The punishment of the wicked will be everlasting.

Matthew 5:29, 30. The punishment of hell will involve the body as well as the soul.

Mark 9:43-48. The sufferings of hell will never come to an end.

Matthew 10:28. The punishment of hell will involve both body and soul.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the prophecy that the wicked shall be set on Christ's left hand, while the righteous are set on his right hand?

This teaching of our Lord implies that there is to be a **judicial separation of the righteous from the wicked**. These two classes of human beings, which have existed side by side during the present life, are to be separated by Christ acting as Judge. The separation will be infallibly accurate, total and permanent. Never again to all eternity will any of the wicked come into contact with any of the righteous. Never again will

it be possible for any communication to take place between the two. Wickedness and wicked men are going to be completely isolated in God's universe.

2. Upon what ground will the wicked be condemned?

The wicked will be condemned on account of their own sin. Matthew 25:41-46. Revelation 20:12, 13.

3. Will the wicked be condemned because they have not believed on Christ?

Those who have heard the Gospel and have failed to believe on Christ, being thus guilty of the sin of unbelief, will be condemned on account of this sin as well as on account of all their other sins.

4. Will the wicked be condemned because God has not predestinated them to eternal life?

Those whom God has "passed by" and not chosen to eternal life will be condemned, but their condemnation will be on account of their own sins, not on account of God's decrees.

5. In the case of the heathen who have never heard the Gospel, and are therefore not guilty of the sin of unbelief in Christ, what will be the basis on which they will be judged?

They will be judged according to the revelation of God in the light of nature (Romans 1:20) and the law of God written on the human heart (Romans 2:14-16), which will convict them as sinners and leave them without excuse.

6. Will the wicked feel themselves unfairly treated at the Judgment Day?

No. Even though they do not have the slightest love for God, or thankfulness for any of his mercies, still they will realize in their own conscience that God has treated them strictly according to justice. At the Judgment Day the perfect justice of God will be vindicated before the whole creation, and all will confess that **God is just**. Those who have spent their lives accusing God of unrighteousness will realize in their own hearts that God is righteous and they themselves are wicked.

7. Prove from the Bible that hell is a **place** and not merely a state or condition.

Matthew 10:28. Since the **bodies**, as well as the souls, of the wicked will be there, it must be a place.

8. What is the belief of the Universalists?

They believe that all human beings, without exception, will finally be saved and enjoy eternal life with God.

9. Can Universalism be reconciled with the statements of the Bible about hell?

No. The Bible very plainly teaches that not all, but only part, of the human race will be saved, and the rest will be eternally lost. Jesus spoke of a sin that shall never be forgiven in this world **or the world to come** (Matthew 12:32). He said concerning Judas Iscariot that it would have been better for him if he had never been born (Matthew 26:24). These and many other texts of Scripture cannot be reconciled with the theory of Universalism.

10. What is the belief of Annihilationists?

They believe that the punishments of hell will not be eternal, but only for a period of time, after which the wicked in hell will cease to exist, their personality having been blotted out or having totally disintegrated leaving nothing. They also argue that God is too good and loving to punish any of his creatures eternally. They also claim that in the Bible the word "eternal" does not mean really **forever**, but only age-long, or a long period of time.

11. What Scripture text proves that this doctrine is false?

Matthew 25:46. In this text the same Greek word is used for both "everlasting" and "eternal". It is unfortunate that the King James Version uses these two different words, because in the Greek exactly the same word is used in both cases. Therefore if the blessedness of heaven will last forever, the sufferings of hell must last forever too.

12. Is God too good and loving to punish the wicked for ever?

No. The only way we know of the goodness and love of God is from the Bible. The same Bible which tells us that "God is love" also informs us that "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). It is wrong to pick and choose among the teachings of the Bible. We must accept **all** that the Bible teaches, or else reject the Bible as a whole and take the consequences. If we accept what the Bible teaches about

God's love, we must also accept what it teaches about God's justice, and his wrath against sin (Romans 1:18).

13. Is it contrary to "the spirit of Christ" to believe in hell?

No. The only way we know anything about "the spirit of Christ" is from his teachings and actions recorded in the written Word of God, the Bible. The fact is that Christ's own teachings contain more warnings about eternal punishment than can be found in any other part of the Bible. It was not the apostles, nor the prophets, but Jesus himself who most clearly and emphatically warned men about the worm that dieth not, the fire that is not quenched, the outer darkness, the gnashing of teeth, the God who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Those who claim that to believe in hell is contrary to "the spirit of Christ" simply decide for themselves what they would like to believe, and then label their self-made creed "the spirit of Christ". It is really wicked to do this.

14. What Scripture passage proves that there can be no opportunity to repent and be saved in hell?

Luke 16:19-31, the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Note especially verse 23, "And in hell he lifted up his eyes . . .", and verse 26, "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

15. Is the fear of hell a proper motive for believing on Christ as our Saviour?

Yes. It is not the highest motive, for we are taught in 1 John 4:18 that the mature Christian, who is "made perfect in love", is beyond the need of being influenced by the motive of fear. But certainly Jesus inculcated the fear of hell (Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:5). We may conclude, therefore, that although it is true that "perfect love casteth out fear", yet those who have not reached that high point of Christian experience, and have not yet attained full assurance or certainty of their own salvation, ought to be influenced by the lower motive of fear of eternal ruin, and "flee from the wrath to come" by repenting of sin, believing on Christ for salvation, and a diligent use of the means of grace (the Word, sacraments and prayer).

Lesson 74

For Week Beginning June 1, 1947

Q. 90. What shall be done to the righteous at the day of judgment?

A. At the day of judgment, the righteous, being caught up to Christ in the clouds, shall be set on his right hand, and there openly acknowledged and acquitted, shall join with him in the judging of reprobate angels and men, and shall be received into heaven, where they shall be fully and for ever freed from all sin and misery: filled with inconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity. And this is the perfect and full communion, which the members of the invisible church shall enjoy with Christ in glory, at the resurrection and day of judgment.

Scripture References:

1 Thess. 4:17. The righteous shall be caught up in the clouds to Christ.

Matthew 25:33. The righteous shall be set on Christ's right hand.

Matthew 10:32. They shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted. 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3. The redeemed shall join with Christ in the judgment of angels and of the world.

Matthew 25:34, 46. The righteous shall be received into heaven.

Ephesians 5:27. They shall be fully freed from all sin.

Revelation 14:13. They shall be fully freed from all misery.

Psalms 16:11. They shall be filled with joy.

Hebrews 11:22, 23. They shall enjoy the company of saints and holy angels.

1 John 3:2. 1 Corinthians 13:12. They shall have a direct vision of God.

1 Thess. 4:17, 18. They shall be in the Lord's presence to all eternity.

Questions:

1. What two classes of people will be caught up in the clouds to meet Christ?

(a) The dead in Christ, who will rise from their graves as Christ descends from heaven with a shout, 1 Thess. 4:16. (b) The living Christians who are in the world at the time of Christ's second coming, 1 Thess. 4:17.

2. Why will not the law of gravitation prevent the righteous rising in the air to meet Christ?

The rising in the air, on the part of the righteous, will be a **miracle** wrought by the supernatural power of God. The law of gravity can no more prevent their rising in the air than it could prevent Christ's ascension long ago. The Judgment Day will mark the **end** of the dominion of natural laws, as we know them now, over God's people. That great day will mark the transition to "the age to come", the day of eternity, in which **the supernatural will not be the exception but the rule** (Hebrews 6:5, "the powers of the age to come").

3. What is the meaning of the statement that the righteous shall be set on Christ's right hand?

This statement implies a judicial, total and permanent separation of the righteous from the wicked. Never again to all eternity can there be the slightest contact or communication between the two classes of human beings, the redeemed and the judicially condemned.

4. What is meant by saying that the righteous shall be "openly acknowledged and acquitted"?

This means (a) that the Lord Jesus Christ, acting as Judge, will publicly declare, before the whole universe, that these people, who have been persecuted and reproached because of their faith in him, are his own people, upon whom his special love has been bestowed, and whom he has redeemed from sin to be his spiritual body; (b) that Christ, acting as Judge, will pronounce his people to be **not guilty of the slightest sin, and perfectly righteous before the law of God**, because he himself has borne the guilt of their sins by his atonement, and because of his own perfect righteousness which has been reckoned (or "imputed") to them just as if it was their own personal righteousness.

5. What is the meaning of the statement that the saints shall join with Christ in judging reprobate angels and men?

This truth, which is set forth in 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3, does not mean that the saints will have authority of **their own** to determine the eternal destiny of angels or men, for this solemn function belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Rather, the meaning is that the saints **shall join or concur with Christ** in the sentence which he will pronounce upon the wicked angels and

men; as Christ pronounces sentence, the saints will give their assent, approving of his judgment as righteous. As Satan and the wicked angels have grievously troubled and afflicted God's people for thousands of years, and as wicked men have oppressed and persecuted and reproached God's children, it is very fitting that the saints, having been vindicated by the great Judge, shall join in the sentence to be pronounced upon the fallen angels and wicked men.

6. What is meant by saying that the righteous shall be received into heaven?

This means that the judgment day will mark their entrance as total personalities, with both body and soul, into the place, as well as the condition, of total blessedness. The remainder of the answer to Question 90 deals with the character of this place and condition of perfect blessedness.

7. Why can we not have perfect blessedness here and now?

There are several reasons why the Christian cannot enjoy complete blessedness here and now, such as: (a) He cannot see his Saviour face to face here and now. (b) The facts of bodily infirmity, sickness and pain prevent the enjoyment of total blessedness now. (c) The sinful corruption which remains in the Christian's own heart, here on earth, which necessitates a constant battle against temptation and sin, prevents the enjoyment of total blessedness now. (d) Here on earth the Christian is surrounded by a **wicked and miserable environment**, and the more holy the Christian becomes, the more he feels distressed by the presence and effects of sin in his surroundings.

8. How will these various factors in our present condition be changed in heaven?

(a) We shall see our Saviour face to face. (b) Our mortal body, which is afflicted with pain, sickness, weakness and fatigue, will put on immortality; all sickness, pain and distress will forever pass away, and what is mortal will be swallowed up of life. (c) The sinful corruption of our own hearts, and the constant conflict against sin and temptation which results from it, will come to an end at the moment of death. (d) The environment of heaven will be perfectly holy; "and there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21: 27; see also Rev. 22:15).

9. What will be the chief element in the blessedness of heaven?

The chief element in the blessedness of heaven will be "the immediate vision and fruition of God".

10. What is meant by the word "vision" in this statement?

It means that the saints **shall see God**.

11. What is meant by saying that this vision of God will be **immediate**?

The word "immediate" implies that the saints shall see God **directly, without anything interposed between them and God**. Here on earth we cannot see God directly. We now see only darkly, as in a mirror, but then we shall see "face to face". Here on earth we see God only as he is reflected in his Word, and still more dimly in his works; but in heaven we shall have an immediate or direct vision of God, **without the need of his being reflected either in nature or in Scripture**. It was this truth that many of the Covenanter martyrs had in mind when, in their dying testimonies, they used words similar to those of James Renwick: "Farewell, sweet Bible, and preaching of the Gospel. Farewell sun, moon, and stars, and all sublunary things. Farewell conflicts with a body of death. Welcome scaffold for precious Christ. Welcome heavenly Jerusalem. Welcome innumerable company of angels. Welcome General Assembly and Church of the first-born. Welcome, crown of glory, white robes, and song of Moses and the Lamb. And, above all, welcome O thou blessed Trinity and One God! O Eternal One, I commit my soul into Thy eternal rest!"

12. What is meant by the statement that the saints shall enjoy fruition of God?

Fruition means to bear fruit. The purpose of a fruit tree is to bear fruit. A fruit tree which never bears fruit has no **fruition**; it has lived without attaining the purpose or goal for which it exists. If we think of a human life as a tree, we may say that the fruit it was intended to bear is **the perfect glorifying and enjoying of God**. The Christian cannot yield that fruit in this world except in a very imperfect and partial way. But in heaven he will at last attain the goal for which he was created; he will at last yield the real fruit of a perfect glorification and enjoyment of God. This goal is called **fruition of God** because only in perfect communion with God can this fruit be produced by any human life.

13. What should we think of the popular idea that the saints in heaven will do little or nothing but play on harps?

This popular notion is a mere carica-

ture of what the Bible teaches about heaven, based on an absurdly literal interpretation of one or two Scripture passages which are symbolic in character. The Bible war-rants believing that the saints in heaven will engage in the most intense activity, out of all comparison with the busiest activity and greatest achievements of their life here on earth. We may be sure that "the life that is life indeed" will not be a life of **idleness**.

14. Does not the Bible teach that heaven will be a state of perfect rest? How then can it be a state of intense activity?

It is true that the Bible teaches that heaven will be a state of perfect rest. The idea of "rest" is really largely a **negative** idea, meaning freedom from weariness, fatigue, unpleasant or painful toil, etc., **all of which evils are solely the results of sin and the curse**. It is only because of the presence of sin in the world that rest is incompatible with activity. Before Adam sinned activity and rest could be simultaneous. But after he sinned, activity became **laborious toil** because of the curse (Genesis 3:17-19). But in heaven "there shall be no more curse" (Revelation 22:3). Therefore in heaven **activity** and **rest** will no longer be contrary to each other; the saints can enjoy the most intense activity, and the most perfect rest,

at the same time. Weariness and fatigue will be unknown, for their causes will have been removed forever. (The foregoing is not to be understood as implying that the activity of the saints in heaven will be without pause or intermission, but only that their activity will not cause exhaustion and need for recuperation. Nor should it be supposed that Adam and Eve before the fall were constantly active; certainly God intended the night as a period of rest, even before the Fall, and there was the weekly sabbath as a period of cessation from common activity; but as long as man's life and constitution were **normal**, that is, sinless, activity was not a **destructive force**, and rest was not needed to **prevent death from exhaustion**, as it became necessary after the Fall into sin. Adam as created was a perfect, though finite, replica of the Godhead; and as God himself worked and then rested (Genesis 2:1-3) but did not need rest because of exhaustion, so mankind before the Fall worked and then rested, following the divine pattern, but not because their work had caused exhaustion).

15. Where will heaven be?

The Bible does not satisfy our curiosity by providing this information for us. However it definitely teaches that heaven is **a place** (John 14:1-6).

Lesson 75

Note: We have now completed the study of the first 90 questions of the Larger Catechism. It will be recalled that the Larger Catechism consists of 196 questions and answers arranged according to the following plan:

Nos. 1-5. **The Foundation:** The purpose of human life; the existence of God; the Word of God.

Nos. 6-90. **What Man ought to Believe Concerning God.**

Nos. 91-196. **What the Scriptures Require as the Duty of Man.**

(See "Blue Banner Faith and Life", January, 1946, page 1, for detailed summary of the contents of each of these sections). Having completed the first two sections of the Catechism, we now proceed to the study of the third section, namely, **What the Scriptures Require as the Duty of Man**. The following is an outline of the contents of this third section:

Nos. 91-148. **The Moral Law of God, including an Analysis of the Ten Commandments.**

For Week Beginning June 8, 1947

Nos. 149-196. **The Way of Escape from God's Wrath and Curse by Reason of our Transgression of his Law.**

Q. 91. What is the duty which God requireth of man?

A. The duty which God requireth of man is obedience to his revealed will.

Scripture References:

Romans 12:1, 2. The duty of conformity to the will of God.

Micah 6:8. God requires obedience to his revealed will.

1 Samuel 15:22. Without sincere obedience to God's will, all worship is vain.

John 7:17. Willingness to do God's will is the key to knowledge of God's truth.

James 1:22-25. Hearing the Word of God, without being willing to do God's will, is useless.

James 4:17. To fail to do God's will, when we know what it is, is sinful.

Questions:

1. Why do we owe a duty to God?

Because God is our Creator and we are his creatures, we are under moral obligation to love and serve him. As Christians, we are under an **added** obligation to love and serve God, because he has **redeemed** us from sin and hell.

2. What classes of people deny that human beings owe a duty to God?

(a) Atheists, who do not believe that there is a God. (b) Pantheists, who believe that everything is divine, and deny that God is a person except as he attains personality in man. (c) Humanists, who believe that our highest loyalty must be to our fellow-men, or to humanity. These usually regard God as someone who exists for the benefit of the human race, or at least that God and man exist for the mutual benefit of each other. They regard religion as a means to an end, for promoting human progress and welfare.

3. Why is it wrong to say that our highest loyalty should be devotion to the welfare of humanity?

This humanistic attitude, which is extremely common and popular at the present day, and is taken for granted by the leading newspapers and magazines of America, is really **idolatry**, for it puts the creature in place of the Creator and amounts to **deifying and worshipping mankind**.

4. Is it not true that serving our fellow men is a noble way of serving God?

It all depends on our **motive** for serving our fellow men. If our real motive is a desire to serve God, so that we serve our fellow men not just for their own sake, **but for God's sake**, then we may be truly serving God, provided we act in accordance with his revealed will. But if our motive is merely a desire to help humanity, so that we serve our fellow men **for their own sake**, then we are idolaters, and we are not truly serving God, even though we may be doing some of the things commanded in God's Word.

5. Do we have a right to choose whether we will obey God's revealed will or not?

God does not force or compel anyone to obey his revealed will. He permits free agents to make their own decision. However no person has a **right** to choose to disobey God. To decide against obedience to God's will is to be in rebellion against our Creator.

6. Why does God not consult our wishes before imposing his will on us?

We tend to forget that God does not manage the universe according to the principles of democracy. The kingdom of God is not a democracy, but an absolute monarchy; God is sovereign; he has total, absolute and unchallengeable authority over all his creatures. It is not for us to say whether we like God's commandments and laws; it is for us to obey them whether we like them or not, **simply because they are the revelation of God's will**. To attempt to place God on the same level with ourselves, as if he were responsible to us, or as if we could criticize or question his requirements, is irreverent, irreligious and wicked.

- Q. 92. What did God at first reveal unto man as the rule of his obedience?

A. The rule of obedience revealed to Adam in the estate of innocence, and to all mankind in him, besides a special command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was the moral law.

Scripture References:

Genesis 1:26, 27. Mankind created in the image of God, with a moral nature.

Romans 2:14, 15. The law of God written on the human heart by God's natural revelation.

Romans 10:5. The standard of righteousness is the moral law of God.

Genesis 2:17. God's special command to Adam not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Questions:

1. What do we call the condition of the human race before the Fall into sin?

The estate of innocence.

2. What special command did God give to mankind in the estate of innocence?

The command not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This special command formed **the condition of the Covenant of Works**.

3. How was this special command of God given to mankind?

This special command of God was given to mankind, not by nature, but by a special revelation or message from God, which Adam and Eve unmistakably recognized as a declaration of the will of God (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:3).

4. Apart from this special command, what rule of obedience did God give to mankind?

Apart from the special command which formed the condition of the Covenant of Works, God gave to mankind **the moral law** as the rule of obedience.

5. How was the moral law given to mankind in the estate of innocence?

The moral law was given to mankind in the estate of innocence **by God's natural revelation in the human heart**. Mankind as created had the moral law of God written upon their hearts. It was not necessary for God to address Adam and Eve with a **special** revelation of the moral law, for the moral law was already written by God in their own nature. No special revelation of the moral law was needed so long as mankind had not fallen into sin.

6. Do people have the moral law of God written on their hearts by God's natural revelation today?

Yes. The law of God is written by God's natural revelation upon the heart of every human being in the world. But the writing has been terribly darkened and distorted by human sin, so that this natural revelation of the will of God is no longer adequate as the guide for human conduct. Since the Fall the light of God's **special** revelation has been necessary. Apart from the light of Holy Scripture, men inevitably change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator (Romans 1:25).

7. Why did God not reveal the Ten Commandments to Adam and Eve?

As long as sin had not entered the human race, there was no need for a detailed list of commandments. The simple moral law of God written on the human heart was sufficient, for it told Adam and Eve that their highest obligation was to love God for his own sake, and that their next highest obligation was to love each other for God's sake. Only when sin had entered did specific detailed commandments such as "Thou shalt not steal", "Thou shalt not kill", "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor", etc., become necessary. As long as the human race existed in the state of innocence, such specific commandments would have been meaningless as well as unnecessary.

8. What is the popular "modern" view of the moral law?

The popular "modern" view of the moral law is not based on the Bible but on human philosophy and scientific theories. According to this popular notion the moral law is not a revelation of the will of God, nor an expression of the nature of God. It is thought of as existing of itself, as a part of "the nature of things". Modern thought regards the universe as existing of itself (that is, not created), and the moral law as existing of itself as a part of the universe. According to this view, if there is a God, he too is subject to the moral law which exists above and beyond him. In accordance with the prevalent idea of human evolution from a brute ancestry, the moral law is not regarded as a **revelation of God** but as a **discovery of man**. This theory holds that mankind originated not in the Garden of Eden but in the slime, and that the law originally written on the human heart was not the law of God but the law of the jungle; then through ages amounting to millions of years mankind gradually developed and improved, and discovered more of the true moral law inherent in "the nature of things", until the law of the jungle in the human heart was transformed into the moral law as men recognize it today.

9. What errors are involved in this "modern" view of the moral law?

(a) This "modern" view of the moral law regards it not as a revelation of the will of God, and expression of the nature of God, but as something existing of itself as a kind of impersonal force or principle in the universe. (b) This theory holds that mankind originated in the depths and has gradually climbed to the heights, whereas the Bible teaches that mankind originated on the heights and later fell into the depths by disobeying God. (c) This theory holds that the moral law is a human development or discovery, whereas the Bible teaches that the moral law is a divine revelation. In short, modern thought has no room for the three great Bible truths of (a) the creation of the universe by God; (b) the original perfection and subsequent Fall of mankind; and (c) the revelation of the moral law as the will of God.

Lesson 76

For Week Beginning June 15, 1947

Q. 93. What is the moral law?

A. The moral law is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect, and

perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto, in the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and

righteousness which he oweth to God and man; promising life upon the fulfilling, and threatening death upon the breach of it.

Scripture References:

Deut. 5:1-3. God's moral law requires obedience.

Deut. 5:31-33. God's law is a revelation of God's will.

Luke 10:26, 27. The moral law requires conformity of the whole man to God's will.

Galatians 3:10. The law of God requires total and perfect obedience.

1 Thess. 5:23. God's law is binding on all elements of the human personality.

Luke 1:75. God's law requires both holiness and righteousness in serving him.

Acts 24:16. God's law includes duties owed to God and duties owed to men.

Romans 10:5. Galatians 3:12. God promises life upon the fulfilling of his law.

Galatians 3:10. Genesis 3:17-19. Death is the penalty involved in the breach of God's law.

Questions:

1. How does the Catechism define the moral law?

It defines the moral law as "the declaration of the will of God to mankind". This involves the following Scripture truths: (a) The moral law is not a human discovery, but a divine **revelation**. (b) The moral law is not a force or principle inherent in the universe, but a revelation of the will of God. (c) God is not simply another name for "the best that is in humanity", but a supreme Person, who has a **will** which he reveals to his creatures.

2. Who is subject to the moral law of God?

Every human being that ever lived or ever shall live.

3. Does the moral law of God bind the heathen who know nothing of the Bible?

Yes. Apart from the Bible the moral law of God is written on their hearts by God's natural revelation. Romans 2:14-16.

4. Does God's moral law bind atheists who do not believe in God?

Yes. At the Judgment Day they will have to answer for their denial of God's existence as well as for all their other sins. As long as they do not believe in God, even

their "good deeds" are really wicked. Their rejection of God cannot cancel the authority of God's law over their lives.

5. Does the moral law of God bind Christians?

Certainly it does. Christ saves us **unto a life of obedience to God's moral law**.

6. Does God's moral law ever change, or is it always the same?

Although the real meaning of God's moral law is always the same, we see in the Bible that the particular form in which it was revealed was changed from time to time, chiefly by the addition of more detailed commandments.

7. Does God's moral law change now, in our own time?

No. Since the completion of the Bible, the revelation of God's will to mankind is complete and unchangeable and will stand in this fixed form till the end of the world.

8. What attitude do many modern people take toward the idea that God's moral law is fixed and will remain unalterable till the end of the world?

Many people who have been influenced by "modern" thought oppose this idea, calling it "narrow" and "static", and saying that it is absurd to suppose that detailed commandments given to men two thousand and more years ago can be adequate for the needs of humanity in this modern age of scientific progress.

9. How should we answer this objection to the unchangeable character of God's moral law?

(a) Those who raise this objection do not think of the moral law as a revelation of God; they regard even the laws in the Bible as products of human experience and progress. If the laws in the Bible are really **man-made or man-discovered**, then of course we might as well make or discover our own today, instead of depending on the attainments of men who lived ages ago. But if these laws are **God-given**, then they are equally adapted to the needs of all ages, for God is not limited by the passing of time, and he was able to give laws which would last until the end of the world. (b) When rightly interpreted, according to sound principles of Bible study, it will be found that the moral law of God as revealed in the Bible is exactly suited to the condition of humanity in the twentieth century, just as in any other period of human history since the Fall.

10. What kind of obedience does God's moral law require of mankind?

God's moral law requires **absolute** obedience, that is, **conformity of the whole man to the whole law through his whole life**. Thus God's moral law demands absolute perfection in our thoughts, words and deeds, as well as in the state or disposition of our heart, through our entire life, without falling short even for one instant.

11. Does the moral law of God require us to be good?

The moral law of God requires us to be not merely "good", but to be **absolutely good**, that is, to be **morally perfect**. The common manner of speaking about "being good" amounts to a lowering of God's standard. God requires not merely "goodness" but absolute moral perfection.

12. Is not such a standard far too high for the human race?

We must freely recognize that the ideal of moral perfection presented in the Bible is not attainable in the present life. The standard is not too high, though. If Adam and Eve had not sinned, all humanity would have attained to this standard of absolute perfection, and the human race would have been very different from what it actually turned out to be. That the standard is too high for **fallen** man to attain is **mankind's own fault** by reason of the fall into sin and resultant corruption and inability. God's standard has remained the same ever since the day that he created mankind. It is the human race that has changed. Also we should realize that the fact that the standard is too high for fallen man to attain shows **the divine origin of the moral law**. A stream cannot rise any higher than its source. If the moral law were the product of man's experience, it would present a standard low enough to be attained by sinful human beings. The **absolute** moral standard which we find in the Bible must be from God; human beings could never have produced it. Apart from Christ, human thought has never even been able to form an idea of a **perfect** man in whom no evil whatever exists. The Bible presents an absolute moral standard, and portrays Christ who fully embodies that absolute moral perfection in his own character. It is high; we cannot attain unto it; but that very fact shows that it is not man's standard, but God's.

13. What kind of duties does God's moral law obligate us to perform?

God's moral law obligates us to perform

the duties of holiness and righteousness which we owe to God and man.

14. What is the difference between "duties of holiness" and "duties of righteousness"?

While the terms "holiness" and "righteousness" no doubt overlap to some extent, it may be said that "duties of holiness" are **religious** duties in the strict sense, while "duties of righteousness" are **moral** duties in the strict sense. For example, prayer and reading the Bible are "duties of holiness"; to work industriously six days of the week (Ex. 20:9), avoiding idleness, is a "duty of righteousness".

15. What is the difference between duties owed to God and duties owed to man?

Strictly speaking, all duties are owed to God. There is no duty owed to man which is not owed to God also; that is, it is owed to man **for God's sake**. But some duties are owed to God **solely and directly**, while other duties are owed to God **indirectly**, by reason of our relation to our fellow men. For example, to reverence God's name and refrain from taking it in vain is a duty owed directly to God. But to love our neighbor as ourself is a duty owed to God indirectly. In this case our duty to God requires us to love our neighbor and seek his welfare; thus our duty to God involves a subordinate duty to man.

16. What does God promise upon the fulfilling of his moral law?

God promises life upon the fulfilling of his moral law; this is of course to be understood in the fullest sense, meaning **eternal** life.

17. Can eternal life be obtained in any other way than by the fulfilling of God's moral law?

Absolutely not. There is and can be no other way. God's standard has never been changed or lowered. Adam and Eve could have obtained eternal life by **themselves personally** fulfilling God's moral law. If they had done that, we too would thereby have obtained eternal life, and we would have been born unto the world **unable to commit sin**. However, Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and the human race fell into sin, with the result that no one can adequately fulfil God's moral law now. Still God's standard has not been lowered. Eternal life still depends upon absolute obedience to God's moral law. But God himself has provided the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, who perfectly fulfilled

God's moral law **on our behalf, as our representative**, so that "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). We should always be careful to avoid the error that the Gospel involves a lowering of the terms on which mankind can obtain eternal life. The Gospel does not involve a lowering of the terms; it involves a **substitution of the person who complies with the terms**; God graciously accepts Christ's fulfillment of the moral law as if it were our own attainment, and imputes or reckons it to our credit.

18. What penalty came upon mankind

Lesson 77

Q. 94. Is there any use of the moral law to man since the fall?

A. Although no man, since the fall, can attain to righteousness and life by the moral law; yet there is great use thereof, as well common to all men, as peculiar either to the unregenerate, or the regenerate.

Scripture References:

Romans 8:3. Galatians 2:16. Since the Fall, no man can attain righteousness and life by personal obedience to the moral law.

1 Timothy 1:8. The law is good in itself, but must be rightly used.

Questions:

1. What popular error concerning the moral law does this question of the Catechism guard against?

The very common error that sinful human beings can save themselves by their "good works" or "good character", that is, the notion that mankind, since the Fall, can attain to righteousness and life by personal obedience to the moral law. The Catechism rejects this false idea emphatically. Thus at the very beginning of a long section on the moral law and the Ten Commandments (continuing through Question 148), the Catechism carefully guards against the idea which the sinful human heart naturally tends to take for granted, **that it is possible for sinners adequately to obey the moral law**. The moral law, and its expression in the Ten commandments, have great use to all classes of men; but it is of the utmost importance that we recognize and reject the lie inherent in the Pharisees' system, the belief that the commandments can really **be kept**. The truth is that unregenerate people cannot keep the moral law at all so as to please God; even their "good works" are sins that need to be repented of; and true believers in Christ, by divine grace,

because of the breach of God's moral law?

The penalty of death. Romans 5:12; 6:23.

19. What is the meaning of "death" as the penalty for breaking the moral law of God?

"Death" as "the wages of sin", or the penalty for the breach of God's moral law, means **death in the most inclusive sense**, including (a) alienation of the person from God's favor; (b) by the death of the body, and its return to dust; (c) eternal separation from God's love and favor, called in the Bible "hell" or "the second death".

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are enabled to keep the moral law only in a partial and inadequate way, so that their "good works" are acceptable to God only by reason of Christ's mediation. It has sometimes been alleged that the Westminster Standards, by their very strong emphasis on the Ten Commandments, encourage the idea of "salvation by works". This charge is utterly unfounded and overlooks the express statements of the Westminster Standards both on the way of salvation and on the moral law.

2. If the moral law is of no use as a way of attaining righteousness and life, then of what use is it?

The moral law is affirmed by the Catechism to be of great use (a) to mankind in general; (b) to unregenerate sinners; (c) to regenerate persons. Questions 95, 96 and 97 take these classes up in detail.

Q. 95. Of what use is the moral law to all men?

A. The moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty, binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability to keep it, and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives; to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience.

Scripture References:

Leviticus 11:44, 45. Leviticus 20: 7, 8. Romans 7:12. The moral law is an expression of the holy nature and will of God.

Micah 6:8. James 2:10,11. The moral law serves as a revelation of the duty of all men, as creatures of God, to obey him.

Psalm 19:11, 12. Romans 3:20. Romans 7: 7. The moral law serves to convince men of their sinful and spiritually helpless condition by nature.

Romans 3:9, 23. The moral law serves to humble sinners by convincing them of their sin and misery.

Galatians 3:21, 22. The moral law serves to help men to gain a clearer insight into their need of Christ as Saviour from sin.

Romans 10:4. The moral law serves to give men a high idea of the character and righteousness of Christ, who fulfilled the law perfectly.

Questions:

1. What four uses does the moral law of God have for all men?

The moral law of God is of use to all men in the following four ways: (a) as a revelation of truth concerning God; (b) as a revelation of truth concerning man's moral obligation to God; (c) as a means of convincing men of their utterly sinful condition by nature; (d) as a help toward a right estimate of the matchless character of Christ.

2. How is the moral law a revelation of truth concerning God?

The moral law is a revelation of truth concerning God because it is **an expression of his holy nature and will**. This is contrary to the "modern" view of the moral law which regards it as a force or principle existing of itself in "the nature of things". That which is right is right not because it is right of itself, but **because God's own holy nature demands it**. We should note that the Catechism mentions the **nature of God before the will of God**. The nature of God determines what is right, and the will of God imposes this on mankind as a moral obligation.

3. How is the moral law a revelation of man's moral obligation to God?

As an expression of the will of God, the moral law comes to man with a **demand for absolute and total obedience**. This demand for obedience is based in the Bible, not on utilitarian considerations such as "the greatest good of the greatest number" or "the welfare of humanity", but upon the **Creator-creature relationship** which is grounded in the **Scripture doctrine of creation**. "And God spake all these words, saying, **I am the Lord thy God Thou shalt have no other gods before me**", etc. (Ex. 20:1-17). Nothing could be more **immoral** than the popular modern idea that the moral law is to be obeyed for selfish or utilitarian reasons. The moral law is to be obeyed because it is our **duty** to obey it in view of the fact that God is our Creator and we are his creatures.

4. How is the moral law of God a means of convincing men of their utterly sinful condition by nature?

(a) The moral law of God places before mankind an **absolute** moral standard. The harder a person tries to conform to this absolute standard, the more he must become convinced in his conscience that he cannot really attain it. Mankind as created by God, in the Garden of Eden, could have attained to this absolute moral standard. Since the Fall, the standard has remained the same, but the character of human beings has changed. The attempt of sinners to conform to an absolute moral standard, which could be attained only by sinless human beings, must serve to convince them of their sinful condition, because of their **inability** to live up to the standard. (b) The sinful human heart rebels against the holy requirements of God's moral law; thus the moral law serves to provoke man's sinful, corrupt nature into actual transgressions (Romans 7:7). The moral law actually **makes men worse sinners** because their sinful hearts rise in rebellion against it and **the sinful corruption of the heart** is translated into **sinful practice in the life** (Romans 7:8-11). (c) The moral law of God is calculated to humble men because of their sin and misery; the more keenly they realize their failure and inability really to keep the law, the more they must be humbled because of their sinful condition. Only where the lie that the law can be really obeyed is cherished, as by the Pharisees, can men be blind to their own sinfulness and consequently filled with pride. (d) The moral law of God is calculated to help men to have a **sense of need** as well as a sense of sin. It is to be a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. Personal failure to conform to the moral law should convince men of their deep need of a Saviour who has kept the law perfectly for them, and who will save them, so that in the end they too can conform perfectly to the law.

5. How does the moral law of God help men toward a right estimate of the matchless character of Christ?

Christ himself lived under the law (Galatians 4:4). He perfectly fulfilled all the requirements of the moral law of God, conforming totally to the absolute standard which God had set for mankind. If we realize that Christ fulfilled the moral law for sinners, then the deeper insight we have into the real character of the moral law, the greater will be our appreciation of the matchless character of Christ. Those who think of the moral law as a human discovery of a natural force or principle, usu-

ally also think of Christ as simply "a good man". Those who understand that the moral law is an expression of the absolutely holy nature of God, will think of Christ as **the one and only absolutely perfect man** and also as the God-man. If Christ lived a

life on earth of perfect conformity to the absolute standard of God's moral law, then Christ's obedience and righteousness are **absolutely perfect** in every respect. Christ is absolute moral perfection realized in a human life.

Lesson 78

For Week Beginning June 29, 1947

Q. 96. What particular use is there of the moral law to unregenerate men?

A. The moral law is of use to unregenerate men, to awaken their consciences to flee from wrath to come, and to drive them to Christ; or, upon their continuance in the estate and way of sin, to leave them inexcusable, and under the curse thereof.

Scripture References:

1 Timothy 1:9, 10. The moral law of God applicable to wicked men.

Galatians 3:24. The moral law is useful to drive sinners to Christ for salvation.

Romans 1:20 compared with Romans 2:15. The moral law leaves sinners without excuse.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word "unregenerate"?

This means a **person who has not been born again**, and is therefore a lost, unsaved sinner.

2. What is the ordinary condition of the consciences of unregenerate people?

Ordinarily the consciences of unregenerate people are **asleep** and therefore need to be awakened or aroused.

3. How does the moral law serve to awaken the consciences of unsaved sinners?

The moral law declares that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness (Romans 1:18), and so their consciences are stirred up to be afraid of the judgment of God that will come upon them.

4. Does the moral law provide a way of escape from the wrath of God?

No. The moral law provides no way of escape. It only pronounces God's judgment on human sin. Because the law itself provides no way of escape from God's wrath, it serves to drive the sinner to Christ, who is the only way of escape.

5. Do all unsaved sinners have a knowledge of the moral law of God?

Yes. Not only those who have a knowledge of the Bible, but even those who are entirely ignorant of the Bible, including the heathen, have some knowledge of the moral law of God from God's natural revelation in the human heart.

6. Do all unsaved sinners have an **equal** knowledge of the moral law of God?

No. Those who have only the natural revelation of the moral law have but a very dim and incomplete knowledge of it, yet their knowledge is sufficient to leave them without excuse. Those who have the light of Scripture have a much greater and clearer knowledge of God's moral law.

7. Does the moral law of God awaken the conscience of **all** sinners, and drive them to Christ for salvation?

No. While it is true that all sinners have some knowledge of the moral law of God, yet there are many who never truly come to Christ for salvation.

8. Why does not the moral law drive all sinners to Christ for salvation?

The moral law of **itself alone** is powerless to drive any sinner to Christ for salvation. It is only when the knowledge of the moral law is **accompanied by the supernatural work of God the Holy Spirit** that the sinner is really driven to Christ. Acts 16:14.

9. Why does the Holy Spirit not open the hearts of all sinners so that **all** will come to Christ and be saved?

The Bible does not give the answer to this question, except to speak of the **sovereignty of God**, by which he elects and saves whom he will, for his own reasons which he has not revealed to us (Romans 9:15, 18). The Bible plainly teaches that God has chosen some to salvation, and that he saves those whom he has chosen. God's reasons for discriminating between men are among the secret things which he has not revealed to men.

10. What is the effect of the moral law in the case of sinners who never come to Christ?

The effect of the moral law in the case of sinners who never come to Christ is "to

leave them inexcusable, and under the curse thereof."

11. Is the moral law of any use to enable unregenerate people to live so as to please God?

No. Romans 8:8, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God". The expression "they that are in the flesh" means the unregenerate, or those that have not been born again. Such people may learn from the moral law what their duty is, but they are dead in trespasses and sins and therefore they cannot please God. Their heart is not right with God, and everything they do is done with a wrong and sinful motive.

12. Is the moral law of any use to enable unregenerate people to earn their own salvation?

No. Romans 3:20. No sinner can possibly earn his salvation by his efforts to keep God's law. The harder a sinner tries to keep God's commandments the more he will realize that he is a **breaker** of the commandments and therefore a lost, helpless, needy sinner.

13. What is the place of the moral law of God in a Scriptural program of evangelism?

While the word "evangelism" means "proclamation of the gospel", we should realize that the gospel is meaningless without the law. **Gospel means good news**; that is, good news of **salvation from sin**; sin is **the transgression of the law**; without conviction of being transgressors of the law, people will feel no need of the gospel; without knowledge of the moral law of God, people will not feel themselves to be transgressors of the law. Therefore no program of evangelism is sound or Scriptural which does not emphasize sin as the transgression of God's moral law. Much present-day "evangelism" has but little to say about God's law, sin, and repentance; instead, the tendency is to speak only about "accepting Christ". A return to the old emphasis on God's law is urgently needed; without it, there cannot be a genuine revival of the Christian Faith.

Blue Banner Question Box

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

Question:

If we reject the use of musical instruments in the worship of God, because they are not appointed in Scripture for the New Testament Church, then to be consistent should we not also refrain from using the flannelgraph in the worship of God?

Answer:

So far as known to the editor, the flannelgraph is not used in the worship of God. What does happen is that the flannelgraph is sometimes used as a means of **instructing the people** at a meeting during the course of which God is worshipped by prayer, singing praise, etc. This is hardly parallel to the question of the propriety of using musical instruments in the worship of God, for when musical instruments are employed they are used as accompaniment for singing praises, which is strictly a matter of worshipping God. The question of using the flannelgraph as a means of instructing the people is a question of expediency rather than of principle. There

is no real difference in principle between using a flannelgraph and using such helps as a blackboard and chalk, or passing out printed sheets bearing words and pictures intended to help the hearers to grasp and remember the speaker's message. This does not imply, of course, that there are no limits to the proper use of such helps. Their propriety depends upon circumstances; they are not wrong in themselves.

Question:

If we insist, as a matter of principle, on singing praise to God only in the inspired words of Scripture, then to be consistent should we not also limit our prayers to quotations from the words of the Bible?

Answer:

(a) The Bible contains a book of praises, the Psalter, but it does not contain a book of prayers. We are definitely commanded to sing the Psalms in the worship of God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), but we are not commanded to use any of the prayers that are found in the Bible, except the Lord's Prayer, and even that not necessarily as a **form** of prayer but rather as a **pattern** for prayer ("After this manner therefore pray ye . . .", Matthew 6:9). Our

Lord's words, "After this manner", certainly imply that it is proper for us to formulate our own prayers, and pray extemporaneously. (b) Praise and prayer are not parallel. Praise deals chiefly with God, his Being and attributes, his works of creation, providence and redemption. Since God and his perfections are unchangeable, the Psalter as a fixed book of praises is suited to all times and all believers in all their circumstances. But prayer deals also with ourselves and our needs and circumstances, which change from day to day. No doubt one reason why the Bible provides no ready made prayer book is that no such collection of prayers could fit all the various and individual needs of God's people through the centuries of history. It is true that the Psalms often deal with human needs and experiences, but they are universal needs and experiences of God's people, such as sin and its forgiveness, danger and protection from it, discouragement and deliverance from it, and the like. It is also true that many of the Psalms are prayers, or contain prayers, but these are prayers which deal with universal experiences and needs of God's people, not prayers suited to needs peculiar to any individual person. (c) The Christian Church from its beginning recognized the Psalter as its divinely appointed book of praises, and for about 300 years the Church used only the inspired words of Scripture in singing praises to God. By the time of Ambrose of Milan (about 375 years after Christ), non-inspired hymns were beginning to come in, although the Psalter still easily held the first place. Apparently no one thought, during those centuries, of limiting the Church's **prayers** to the inspired words of Scripture. The two periods of the Church's greatest spiritual vitality and power, the period when the Church was faithful unto death under the persecution of Imperial Rome, and the period of the Protestant Reformation, were both pre-eminently periods of singing praises to God in the inspired words of the Psalter. But in both periods it was recognized that prayer should be spontaneous and free.

Question:

Is it true that the Greek word translated "baptize" in the New Testament literally means to immerse?

Answer:

Certainly not. In its New Testament usage, the Greek verb **baptizo** literally means to wash, as will be seen by looking up Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38, in both of which texts this verb is used, and where

the idea of **immersion** would obviously be out of place. The Greek noun **baptismos** literally means **washing**, as is evident from Mark 7:4, 8 and Hebrews 9:10. To suppose that **tables** were cleansed by **immersion** in water is absurd.

Question:

Why should not the New Testament songs such as those of Zacharias and Mary be included with the Old Testament Psalter in the Scriptural praise book of the Church?

Answer:

The only songs to be found in the New Testament are the so-called "songs of the nativity" of Luke 1 and 2, and the songs of angels and of the redeemed in the rapturous experiences of heaven given in Revelation. The assertion, often made, that "fragments of ancient hymns" are to be found here and there, as Eph. 5:14, 1 Tim. 3:16, etc, is pure conjecture, without proof. Such concise, measured statements might well be formulations of Scripture, or of the creed already in process of construction.

The songs given in Luke really belong to the close of the Old Testament dispensation, which was "until John"; that is, they belong to an exceptional, transitional stage of experience. In particular, the "songs" of Mary and Zacharias came through what was altogether extraordinary and unparalleled human experience. There is no evidence that these "songs" were intended to be sung in the praise service of the church. Indeed there is no evidence that either Mary or Zacharias "sang" these songs except in their hearts. The record is, "And Mary said,"; "Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,"; that is, their "songs" were **recitative**.

The "song" of Mary is composed in the spirit and with the very words of the Psalms. It is, in fact, a beautiful mosaic of phrases and sentences from the Psalms and Prophets. Likewise, the "song" of Zacharias is built upon a framework of quotations from the Psalms and Prophets. Both are "new songs", but "new", not in the sense of adding anything to the old, but in the sense of being new usage of the old to express praise to God in new, most marvellous, never-to-be-repeated experience. The remarkable thing is that the old was found to be adequate even there.

Zacharias addressed part of his song to John, the Forerunner, as he, a prophet, had authority to do. But that is not for us. The only sentence in Mary's song that is new, in the sense of being different, is one which belongs to herself alone, "For, behold, from

henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." She had a right to say that, but her experience is unshared with other human beings. Comparing her song with that of Hannah, the mother of Samuel (1 Sam. 2), we find them alike in many respects. The experience of Hannah was much nearer common human experience than that of Mary, yet we note that **Hannah's song is not included in the Psalter.**

Obviously, the Psalter is a **selection** of praises, collected into **one book.** These praises have to do with God objectively, as He has revealed Himself in word and works amid the experiences of His covenant people. But why are the songs of 2 Sam. 22 and 1 Chron. 16 included, while others, such as those of Hezekiah (Is. 38) and of Habakkuk (Hab. 3), are **not included?** (The last two are marked for the temple service, but, apparently not so used after the death of their respective human penmen. As to subject matter, Hezekiah's song is fully covered by Psalms 38, 39, 90 and others; Habakkuk's by Psalms 18, 68, 77 and others. Hence neither, as to content, is needed to supplement the Psalter). The only answer that seems satisfactory is that the Book of Psalms, being designed for the service of praise **for all peoples,** only those songs which the Holy Spirit inspired **for the purpose** of giving glory to God and edification to men **in the church of all ages,** have place in its collection.

Human experience, we know, is determined by the word of God. When the revelation of the word of God is complete, then the round of human experience is closed. As for its essentials, it merely repeats itself. Consequently, it is possible that there be a complete, completely sufficient, permanent round of praise for congregational worship, true to the revelation of God, universal in scope, and not confused by irrelevant details of individual cases. The individual's praise may always find expression in the general forms of the Psalms, but congregational praise could not always find expression in the individual's. Hence the Psalms are universalized.

The Book of Psalms bears evidence of having been built up by additions from experience to experience of the people of God until the Return from the Captivity of Babylon. At that time prophecy was practically complete, and fulfillment was about to begin on a grand scale.

If it was the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to add to the canon of Scripture from time to time, and to close it when He pleased, it must certainly have been His

prerogative to add to the Book of Psalms and to close it when He saw fit.

The same Spirit who indited the Old Testament indited the New. He indicated no songs in the New for congregational worship, as He had done in the Old. He gave promise of many Spiritual gifts for the New Testament church, but no promise of the gift of psalmody. No one was appointed to take the place of "the sweet Psalmist of Israel"; instead, the New Covenant people of God are identified as one with the true Israel, and the implication is that their need for praises has been fully provided for in the Book of Psalms.—F. D. F.

Question:

Does the doctrine of election as taught in the standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church mean that God **arbitrarily** chose the elect before the creation of the world?

Answer:

God's decree of election of particular persons to eternal life and the means thereof cannot be regarded as **arbitrary,** because an arbitrary action is one that is not based on any reason. Since God is infinitely wise he always has the best of reasons for everything he does. If God has chosen one person to eternal life, and has passed by another person, he had proper and adequate reasons for this discrimination. However what those reasons were pertains to the secret things of God which he has not revealed to men. We only know that whatever God's reasons may have been, they were not based on foreseen merit, repentance, faith, moral character, etc., of one person as against another. God had his reasons for choosing Jacob and rejecting Esau, but his reasons were not based on the moral character of the one or the other. To human appearance, Esau was perhaps the better man. That Jacob became the better man in the end was the **result,** not the cause, of God's choosing him instead of Esau.

Question:

God said "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). How can this be reconciled with the doctrine of election?

Answer:

The text cited is not contrary to the doctrine of sovereign selection. Of course it is true that whosoever will may take the water of life freely. But what makes people who are born **dead in trespasses and sins,** with a heart and nature totally preju-

diced against God and the Gospel, and desperately wicked, as the Bible clearly teaches—**what makes such people begin to want to come to God?** Sinful, fallen man is a free moral agent, but he cannot originate a desire for God and holiness in his own heart. Being a free moral agent, he will always act according to his nature; and his nature being sinful, he will always choose in favor of sin and against God. Only when God changes the “heart” or nature of a person by the new birth will that person begin to act according to his **new** nature, and choose as God his portion. If it were not for God’s decree of election, and the acts by which he puts it into effect, not a single person in the world would come to Christ. Every individual human being would use his free will and decide to live in sin and do as he pleased. We are to preach that whosoever will may come; but only those whose hearts the Lord opens really will come. Acts 16:14. Sinful humanity is not **sick** but **dead** in trespasses and sins, and can respond to the Gospel invitation only when the almighty power of God “quickens” them or makes them spiritually alive (Ephesians 2:1-8).

Question:

John 3:16 opens the kingdom of God to everyone. How can this be reconciled with the doctrine of election?

Answer:

John 3:16 is in no way contrary to the doctrine of election. This verse teaches that God gave his Son in order that whosoever will believe on him shall not perish, but have eternal life. We receive eternal life, not by believing that we are of the elect, but by believing on Christ as our Saviour. But it is still true that only the elect, who are effectually called by the almighty work of God the Holy Spirit, really do come to believe on Christ as their Saviour. Christ is **offered** as a Saviour to all mankind, certainly; but Christ **actually saves** only those who come to believe on him; and **only the elect** really do come to believe on him.

Question:

The Bible teaches that God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23). Is not this contrary to the doctrine that God has predestinated some to eternal life, and passed by others and ordained them to eternal punishment?

Answer:

It is true that God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked, but this is not contrary to the doctrine of election. The

text says that God **does not take pleasure** in the death of the wicked; it does not say that God **has not decreed** the death of the wicked and their punishment in hell. What God has decreed is one thing; what gives God pleasure is another thing. It gives a judge on the bench no pleasure to sentence a man to a prison term, or to the death penalty, but he may do it, not because it gives him pleasure, but because the interests of **justice** require it.

Question:

I heard a sermon in which the minister said we are elected or not elected from the beginning by God, and we have nothing to do about it if we happen to be in the group that is not elected. I can’t believe that. Does the Bible really teach it?

Answer:

The Bible certainly teaches that God has from all eternity determined the final destiny of every human being (Ephesians 1:4, 5; Romans 8:29, 30; 2 Peter 2:12; Jude 4). But the statement that “we have nothing to do about it if we happen to be in the group that is not elected” is unsound and open to objection because it seems to regard **God’s secret counsel as a guide for human action**. The Gospel is not merely an invitation; it is a divine **command**. God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). Those who do repent and believe on Christ will be saved. The rest of mankind will be eternally lost. God does not command merely the elect to repent; he commands **all** men to repent. How can a person find out whether he is of the elect or not? If he repents and believes on Christ with a true faith, that indicates that he is of the elect. There can be no shortcut to this knowledge. Those who truly come to Christ will find out in this life that they are of the elect. The wicked will find out in hell that they are reprobate, but they will also realize that it was their own sins, not God’s decrees, that formed the basis of their condemnation.

Question:

In 2 Peter 3:9 it is stated that the Lord is not willing (wishing) that any should perish . . . His will we believe must be done (Matthew 6:10). If it is not God’s will that any should perish, if it is his will that all should come to repentance, and it is true that God’s will must be done, then will not all be brought to repentance and saved in the end?

Answer:

(a) In 2 Peter 3:9 the subject under discussion is **the second coming of Christ** (note

verses 3, 4, 7, 10, 12). The apostle Peter is answering the objection of scoffers who disbelieved the doctrine of Christ's second coming on the ground that "since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation". That is to say, the uniformity of nature was urged as an objection against Christ's second coming, which will be a miracle. Peter replies that these scoffers forget the great flood in the days of Noah (verses 5, 6), and that as the world was once destroyed by water, it shall yet be destroyed by fire (verse 7). Peter then takes up the question of **why Christ's second coming is delayed** (verses 8, 9) and answers it by saying that "The Lord . . . is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Now the word to note is "**us-ward**". Toward **whom** is the Lord long-suffering? Toward **us**, that is, toward Peter and those who like him were of God's elect. That Peter could not have meant **all men in general** is shown by chapter 2 verse 12 of the same Epistle. Suppose Christ's second coming were to take place right away, argues the apostle; in that case some of the elect might perish, for they have not yet come to repentance and faith in Christ. But God is long-suffering to us-ward, and not willing that any of them should perish, and therefore the second coming of Christ cannot take place until all of God's elect have actually come to Christ. (b) Matthew 6:10. "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven", is part of a **prayer**. This verse speaks of God's "will" in the sense of **God's revealed will**, that is, **his moral law** which he has imposed upon angels and men. This verse does not speak of **God's secret will** (God's counsel or decrees) by which he has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, but of his will or law revealed to men as the standard for their life. God's secret will (or his decrees) always comes to pass without fail. But God's revealed will or moral law is not always obeyed. It **ought** to be obeyed, but because of the existence of sin in the world, it is often disobeyed. (c) Neither 2 Peter 3:9 nor Matthew 6:10 teaches that all men are going to be brought to repentance: 2 Peter 2:12 and Matthew 26:24 teach precisely the opposite.

Question:

There were many religious crises in Scotland in the 16th and 17th centuries which resulted in the godly banding themselves together in solemn covenants. But from that time until 1871 there is no record of any covenant being signed either in Britain or America among those who are called "Covenanters". Yet there were great moral

and spiritual issues to be faced during that time. Why did the American Covenanters not formulate their Church Covenant until 1871?

Answer:

To **explain** a matter is not necessarily to **justify** it. By way of explanation it may be said that the Covenanters in America never faced a crisis such as their forefathers faced in Scotland in the 16th and 17th centuries. Great moral and spiritual issues there indeed were, but not crises which threatened the very existence of the Church and the very life of her members. In Scotland the Covenanters faced desperate persecution. Time and again the liberties and structure of the Church were threatened by their enemies, and in the end the "malignant" power prevailed and the loyal Covenanters had to take to worshipping God in forests and fields. From the very beginning the Covenanter Church has enjoyed full religious liberty in America and her members have enjoyed security of their persons and property. Thus in America there did not exist the continual danger of the State corrupting or destroying the Church which was the case over long periods in Scotland. So it may be said that the American Covenanters did not make a formal covenant until 1871 because God's providence did not drive them to it as had happened in Scotland. Also, it should be realized that a religious covenant is a mere hypocritical formality unless there is unanimity and sincerity in adopting it. The record indicates that for many years the adoption of a covenant was repeatedly proposed but always postponed because of a lack of unanimity about it. The fact that the adoption of the Covenant of 1871 was followed by a period of special divine blessing on the Church would seem to indicate that it should have been done sooner. But that is true of every spiritual advance. A man after hearing the Gospel for ten years finally becomes a Christian. Why did he not become one sooner? Just because of the hardness of his own heart. The Church adopted a formal Covenant in 1871. Why was it not done sooner? Just because the Church's hardness of heart was not removed by the Holy Spirit sooner. As already stated, this is not intended to justify, but merely to explain, the matter.

Question:

Can you recommend a good book or pamphlet that deals in sane fashion with the question of why so many churches disapprove of the modern dance?

Answer:

An excellent booklet on this subject is

"To Dance or Not to Dance", by G. Mahler, published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis 18, Mo. (Tract No. 141, price 10 cents).

Question:

Please suggest a list of books on the Bible and Christian doctrine suitable for study by a layman.

Answer:

Pocket Bible Handbook by Henry H. Halley. Published by the author, 10 West Elm Street, Chicago, Ill. 764 pages. Contains an amazing amount of factual information on the Bible, archaeological discoveries and Church history. \$2.00.

"After Its Kind": The First and Last Word on Evolution, by Byron C. Nelson. Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minn. Intensely interesting, accurate in its scientific statements, and free from fanaticism. 217 pages.

Study Your Bible, by Edward J. Young. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. "A self-study course for Bible-believing Christians." 109 pages. A fine introduction to Bible study, dealing largely with the Book of Genesis.

Commentary on the Whole Bible, by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1347 pages. \$4.95. The best one-volume Bible commentary available.

Therefore Stand, by Wilbur M. Smith. W. A. Wilde Co., Boston, Mass. An encouragement to Christians to stand fast for true Christianity against the assaults of modern unbelief. Gives a clear picture of the modern revolt against Christianity. 614 pages. \$3.00.

The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, by Loraine Boettner. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. The standard book on Predestination; clear, Scriptural, easy to understand; deals in a satisfying way with all the objections that are raised against the doctrine of Predestination. 432 pages. \$3.50.

Prophecy and the Church, by Oswald T. Allis. An examination of the claims of Modern Dispensationalism, including the Scofield Reference Bible. (See review in this issue of

"Blue Banner Faith and Life"). The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 525 Locust St., Philadelphia 6, Pa. 339 pages. \$2.50.

A Candid Examination of the Scofield Bible, by A. Pieters. Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, Pa. An excellent booklet at 10 cents.

Christianity and Liberalism, by J. G. Machen. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. A book that has had an immense influence. Compares historic Christianity with modern Liberalism with regard to God, Man, the Bible, Christ, Salvation, the Church, and Christian Service. By unanswerable argument the author shows that Christianity and Liberalism are two different kinds of religion. 189 pages. \$2.50.

The Pilgrim's Progress and Grace Abounding (both in one volume), by John Bunyan. American Tract Society, 21 W. 46th St., New York, N. Y. Every Christian should read and re-read this book which will never grow old. 651 pages. \$2.00.

Note: Additional books will be recommended in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". Please order books from your local bookstore or direct from the publishers.

Question:

Please suggest a list of books for teachers in various Sabbath School departments.

Answer:

Understanding the Child, by Alfred Schmieding. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis 18, Mo. 198 pages. \$1.50.

A Christian Pedagogy, by Edward A. Koehler. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis 18, Mo. 260 pages. \$1.90.

Child's Story Bible, by Catherine F. Vos. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. Suitable for children over 7 years old, and useful for teachers of children's classes. The stories can be read to children without explanation, just as printed, and will be enthusiastically received. Covers the whole range of Bible history, and points the reader to Christ. 584 pages. \$4.00.

Pocket Bible Handbook, by Henry H. Halley. See answer to preceding question.

Manual of Reformed Doctrine, by Louis Berkhof. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. A clear and simple, yet comprehensive, statement of what Calvinists believe and why. Especially useful for teachers of high school age and adult classes. 372 pages. \$3.00.

Note: Additional books for Sabbath School teachers will be listed in the next issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". The listing of a book in the answers to the two foregoing questions is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Please purchase books from your local bookstore or direct from the publishers; do not send orders to the publisher of "Blue Banner Faith and Life."

Question:

What is your reaction to the article on "Mixed Marriages" in **The Converted Catholic Magazine**, June, 1946, page 165? Would you recommend presenting such a plan to the Synod of our Church with a proposal that it be adopted? If so, how should it be presented?

Answer:

The article referred to is entitled "How to Combat Mixed Marriages". It outlines a practical plan "to undo the evil of mixed marriage contracts as enforced by the Roman Catholic church". This plan "is designed to repair the evil already done by members . . . who have unwittingly signed away the spiritual rights of their unborn children by pledging themselves to carry out the unjust stipulations imposed by the Roman Catholic church as essential conditions for allowing a Protestant to marry a Roman Catholic." "In brief, the plan, first of all agreed to by a public resolution of an entire congregation, consists in getting the Protestant party to such a marriage to sign a second document **pledging not to carry out the terms of the contract imposed by the Roman Catholic church**. Its seven declarations are a penitent avowal of sin and shame in having signed a contract that is contrary to God's law and a danger to one's spiritual welfare, especially the provision that all children be baptized and reared in the Roman Catholic church. Declaration six flatly says: 'I declare that instead of keeping this promise I now break it and shall have my children baptized and reared in the Lutheran Church.' It is made clear that if a member refuses to sign these dec-

larations, or fails to adhere to them after promising to do so, he (or she) can no longer be considered a communicant or member of the congregation."

A promise or contract to have one's children reared in a religion other than that which is true, and which the contractor believes to be true, is a promise or contract to do something contrary to what God's moral law requires. No such contract can be binding on a person's conscience. Any Protestant who has entangled his conscience by entering into such a contract should break it immediately, and frankly state the reason why. Therefore the plan reported in **The Converted Catholic Magazine** is in line with the plain duty of any Protestant who has gotten himself (or herself) into such a predicament.

The Editor of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" does not know of any situation in the Covenanter Church, with respect to such mixed marriages, which would call for the adoption of such a plan by our Synod. If there are members of the Covenanter Church who have made promises to the Roman Catholic Church concerning the religious nurture of their children, it would be highly advisable for the Synod to do something about it immediately. This matter could be presented to the Synod in the form of a petition, which should be signed by one or more members in good standing and submitted to the Session of their congregation for transfer to the Synod (through the Presbytery if there is a meeting of same before the meeting of Synod). Or any member of Synod (minister or elder) could present such a petition to the Synod as a paper, over his own signature. Any member of the denomination can request a delegate to the Synod to present a matter in this way.

It should be borne in mind that the law of the Covenanter Church **prohibits** marriage between a Covenanter and a Roman Catholic (Confession of Faith, XXIV. 3). Any Covenanter who marries a Roman Catholic becomes liable to church discipline, although this would not affect the validity of the marriage in question. The Editor has no knowledge that the section of the Confession of Faith referred to above is being disregarded. If it is, the matter should be brought before the Church Sessions having jurisdiction over the persons involved so that the matter can be corrected and steps taken to avoid its recurrence in the future.

Question:

Is the common practice of having Hallowe'en parties, including "playing" about

ghosts, witches, etc., sinful? Does this practice involve a compromise with superstition?

Answer:

In the opinion of the Editor of "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Hallowe'en and the things ordinarily associated with it form an example of a practice which once was superstitious and sinful, but which today is morally indifferent. Long ago, when the idea of Hallowe'en was really believed, it was a sinful superstition; that is, when people really believed that on the evening before "All Saints' Day" numerous ghosts, witches, etc., were abroad through the world. Today nobody believes this except perhaps in some of the most ignorant and backward parts of the world. The observance of Hallowe'en today is merely for fun and does not involve any belief in the reality of ghosts or witches abroad in the world. With the passing of time the original superstitious belief has been abandoned, but some of the customs retained as amusement for children. Similarly some of our common customs such as wearing black for mourning could perhaps be traced to a remote pagan superstitious origin, which

however has been completely lost from the popular consciousness. So also part of the days of the week and the months of the year are named after heathen gods and goddesses, yet we use these names today without ever giving their remote pagan origin a thought. All of these usages once had a pagan, superstitious and sinful character, but they have become detached from their origin and have no such sinful implication today. This does not at all imply that the observance of Hallowe'en is always and everywhere right, or that there are no limits to be observed in connection with it. To affirm that something is **not sinful in itself, but morally indifferent** does not mean allowing a total license to indulge in it. On the contrary, it means that its use or observance is subject to the principles set forth in the Scripture concerning matters which are indifferent in themselves but which are **to be regulated by Christian expediency**. See Romans 14:12, 13, 16, 19-21, and the whole chapter.

Note: The Editor regrets that because of the large number of questions sent in, the answers to some of them must be postponed until the next issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life".

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J. G. VOS, Editor and Publisher

R. F. D. No. 1

Clay Center, Kansas



**BLUE
BANNER
FAITH
AND
LIFE**

VOLUME 2

JULY - SEPTEMBER, 1947

NUMBER 3

“God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of Himself; and is alone in and unto Himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which He hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting His own glory in, by, unto, and upon them. . . ”

The Westminster Confession of Faith, 11.2.

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J. G. VOS, Editor and Publisher

Clay Center, Kansas

LONG BARREN

By CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

Thou who didst hang upon a barren tree,
My God, for me;
 Though I till now be barren, now at length,
 Lord, give me strength
To bring forth fruit to Thee.

Thou who didst bear for me the crown of thorn,
Spitting and scorn;
 Though I till now have put forth thorns, yet now
 Strengthen me Thou
That better fruit be borne.

Thou Rose of Sharon, Cedar of broad roots,
Vine of sweet fruits,
 Thou Lily of the vale with fadeless leaf,
 Of thousands Chief,
Feed Thou my feeble shoots.

His love must surely be
Rich, infinite and free;
Nor can He be thought a God
Of grace and pow'r, that fills not His
 abode,
His Holy Court,
In kind and liberal sort;
Joys and pleasures,
Plenty of jewels, goods, and
 treasures,
(To enrich the poor, cheer the
 forlorn)
His palace must adorn,
And given all to me:
For till His works my wealth
 became,
No love, or peace, did me enflame:
But now I have a Deity.

(Thomas Traherne)

Who more can crave
 Than Thou hast done:
 That gav'st a Son,
To free a slave?
 First made of nought;
 With all since bought.

Sin, Death, and Hell,
 His glorious Name
 Quite overcame;
Yet I rebel,
 And slight the same.

But I'll come in,
 Before my loss,
 Me farther toss,
As sure to win
 Under His Cross.

(Ben Jonson)

Teach me, my God and King,
 In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in any thing
 To do it as for Thee.

(George Herbert)

Like Enoch, let me walk with God,
 And thus walk out my day,
Attended with the heavenly Guards,
 Upon the King's highway.

(Thomas Shepherd)

BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 2

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Sketches From Our History

THE SCOTTISH COVENANTERS

Their Origins, History and Distinctive Doctrines

(Selections from the book with the above title, by J. G. Vos, published by the author in 1940)

PART I THE ORIGINS OF THE COVENANTERS

CHAPTER III

THE PERIOD OF THE SECOND REFORMATION, 1637—1651

(Continued from last issue)

6. The Solemn League and Covenant, 1643.

The Long Parliament of England began in 1640. By 1642 England was involved in civil war between the King and the Parliament. In August, 1643, the Parliament of England proposed to the Estates of Scotland, and also to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, that Scotland enter into a reciprocal military union with the Parliamentary party in England. The Church of Scotland, however, preferred a religious bond to a military or civil union. The result was the drafting of the Solemn League and Covenant. The document was prepared by Alexander Henderson, and on the 17th of August, 1643, it was approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, after which it was sent to England, where, after slight changes, it was publicly sworn and afterwards subscribed by the House of Commons and the Westminster Assembly in a joint meeting. After this the Solemn League and Covenant was returned to Scotland, where it was sworn and subscribed by the Commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the Committee of the Convention of Estates of the Parliament of Scotland. Later it was sworn and subscribed with great unanimity by all classes of people throughout Scotland, except those who fav-

ored Prelacy in the Church and absolutism in the State.

The Solemn League and Covenant provided for the preservation of the Reformed religion in Scotland, and the reformation of religion in England and Ireland according to the Word of God, and the example of the best Reformed Churches. The Covenant also pledged the parties to the extirpation of Popery and Prelacy. The precise nature of the reformation to be attained was not stated, nor did the document state which Churches were the "best Reformed Churches". However it was generally understood that the bodies holding the Presbyterian system of government were intended, for the Church of Scotland was committed to the position that Presbytery is the only system of Church government set forth in the Word of God.

In 1644 the General Assembly enacted that all ministers take notice of any persons disaffected to the National Covenant or the Solemn League and Covenant who should come within the bounds of their parishes, so that these persons could be reported to the Presbyteries or other ecclesiastical judicatories. When King Charles I surrendered to the Scottish army in 1646 he declared his disapprobation of the Solemn League and Covenant. Regulations were promulgated in Scotland by which large numbers of people were required to sign or give their approval of the document. In 1651 the Rev. James Guthrie stated that one of the causes of the Lord's wrath against Scotland was the ignorance and want of sincerity on the part of many in taking the Covenants: "Many did take the national covenant, in example of others, it being counted praiseworthy and commendable, after such a defection as was then in the land, to engage in such a duty, and to be

reckoned amongst the repairers of the breach: many did take the solemn league and covenant, for fear; because the refusing to take it was attended both with ecclesiastical and civil censures, and therefore did they rather choose to hazard on the oath of God, than to run these hazards amongst men: which doth not yet condemn the enjoining the taking of these covenants upon a good and warrantable principle In taking of both covenants, though there were many whom a principle of the fear and love of God did move, yet there were not a few, whom after discoveries have made manifest, who were acted thereto by carnal wisdom and policy, for attaining their own base and corrupt ends, such as riches, places of preferment, and livelihood, and ease Guthrie listed as one of the special sins of the ministers of Scotland "Superficial admitting of all to the covenants; and solemn acknowledgement without taking sufficient pains to instruct and inform them in the knowledge of the things contained therein". This testimony of Guthrie that many took the Covenants as a mere formality, or at best with an implicit faith, is not difficult to believe when we realize that such subscription was required of students entering colleges, of all persons for the first time receiving the Lord's Supper, as well as of other special classes of persons. The Scotch later urged Charles II to sign the Covenants when at least some of them were sure he was playing the hypocrite. The leaders of Scottish Presbyterianism had not yet learned that subscription of a religious covenant, to be honest, must be voluntary and not the result of external pressure of any kind. Guthrie justified the infliction of both ecclesiastical and civil censures on those who refused to take the Solemn League and Covenant, and yet he counted it a cause of the Lord's wrath that so many took the Covenant insincerely or from wrong motives. It seems strange that neither he, nor, apparently, anyone else at that time, could see that when refusal to take the Covenant was attended with civil censures, it would require extraordinary force of character and incorruptible honesty to refuse to take the Covenant. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Parliament of Scotland and the General Assembly unintentionally tempted many to accept the Covenants in a dishonest, careless, or at least implicit way. Of course Scotland professed to be a Reformed nation, and certainly such a nation has the right, by its own voluntary act, to make a religious test essential to the holding of public office under its constitution; but when, for example, none could enter an institution of higher learning as a student without accepting the Covenant, it

must be concluded that the zeal of the Covenanting leaders exceeded their wisdom and that they placed a strong temptation to dishonesty or implicit belief in the pathway of many in the land.

7. The Westminster Assembly, 1643-1649.

On June 1st, 1642, the Long Parliament of England passed a bill to call an Assembly of Divines for consultation with Parliament; this bill, and two others like it, failed to obtain the consent of the King. Finally, in 1643, the Parliament called such an assembly by a Parliamentary ordinance, which did not require the King's consent. The Assembly was called to meet on July 1st, 1643, for the purpose of advising Parliament to the end of settling the government of the Church of England according to Scripture and clearing the doctrine of the Church of England from all false calumnies and aspersions.

After the Westminster Assembly had sat for some weeks Commissioners from the Church of Scotland were added to its membership. The Scottish Commissioners originally appointed consisted of four ministers (Rutherford, Douglas, Baillie and Gillespie) and three ruling elders (John, Lord Maitland, afterwards Duke of Lauderdale, Archibald Johnston of Wariston, and John, Earl of Cassilis). Later in the history of the Assembly, other Scottish Commissioners were added. Apart from the Scottish Commissioners, the Assembly ultimately had about 150 members. Of these, some thirty were members of Parliament, and the others were ministers representing the various parties of the Church of England, with the exception of the Romanizing party of Archbishop Laud.

Before the date set for the first meeting of the Assembly, it was forbidden to meet by a proclamation of King Charles I. A large number of the persons appointed met, however, in spite of the King's proclamation, and proceeded to transact business.

The Westminster Assembly itself really belongs to English rather than to Scottish Church history, yet the Church of Scotland cooperated in the enterprise at the time, and the work of the Assembly has had far greater permanent effects in Scotland than in England. The chief doctrinal standards of all branches of Scottish Presbyterianism down to the present day were formulated by the Westminster Assembly of Divines. The standards prepared by the Assembly include a "Form of Presbyterial Church-Government", a "Directory for the Public Worship of God", and the famous Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Cate-

chisms. All of these were prepared "as parts of the covenanted uniformity in religion betwixt the Churches of Christ in the Kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland".

The Westminster Assembly sat from 1643 to 1649, after which it became a committee for the examination of ministers, in which capacity it continued to meet until 1652, when it was finally dissolved after the dissolution of the Long Parliament by Cromwell. The Westminster Standards were all adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the Confession, Catechisms and Directory for Worship were ratified by the Scottish Parliament. The Scots Confession of Faith, which had been the doctrinal standard of the Church of Scotland since 1560, was thus superseded by General Assembly's adoption of the Westminster Confession in 1647.

The constitution given to the Church of Scotland by the adoption of the Westminster Standards was eminently Reformed in its three aspects—doctrine, worship and organization. The modern notion that while doctrine should be Scriptural, worship and organization are matters of indifference to be arranged according to expediency or human preference, was entirely foreign to the Westminster Assembly and the Church of Scotland of the period of the Second Reformation. Probably the Church of Scotland has suffered more than any branch of the Christian Church through the ages on account of insistence upon a pure and Scriptural form of organization.

It is worthy of note that when the Confession of Faith was adopted by the General Assembly in 1647, two reservations were carefully laid down by the Assembly. The first of these was "that the not mentioning in this Confession the several sorts of ecclesiastical officers and assemblies, shall be no prejudice to the truth of Christ in these particulars, to be expressed fully in the Directory of Government". The second was "that the Assembly understandeth some parts of the second article of the thirty-first chapter only of Kirks not settled, or constituted in point of government: And that although, in such kirks, a synod of Ministers, and other fit persons, may be called by the Magistrate's authority and nomination, without any other call, to consult and advise with about matters of religion; and although, likewise, the Ministers of Christ, without delegation from their churches, may, of themselves, and by virtue of their office, meet together synodically in such kirks not yet constituted, yet neither of these ought to be done in kirks constituted

and settled". These reservations show the emphasis placed by the Church of Scotland upon Scriptural organization, and the great care taken not to commit the Church to anything in the Confession that could be understood in an Erastian sense.

8. The Engagement, 1648.

The most prominent royalist in Scotland was the Duke of Hamilton. Charles I was a prisoner of the English Parliament, but the Scotch still maintained their loyalty to the King and were willing to do what they could for him, short of breach of the Solemn League and Covenant. In December, 1647, a party of Scottish noblemen visited the King secretly in the Isle of Wight, and made with him a secret treaty, by which Hamilton and his party agreed to raise an army in Scotland to assist the King in his effort to regain the throne of England. The King promised to permit the Solemn League and Covenant to be sanctioned by Parliament, and to support Presbyterian government in his dominions for three years, and after that, such form of Church government as should be determined by an assembly of divines aided by twenty commissioners nominated by himself. The King also undertook to suppress schism and heresy. This treaty with the King was called the Engagement, and Hamilton and the nobles who joined him were called the "Engagers".

When the fact of the Engagement began to be publicly known in Scotland, early in 1648, many of the Covenanters were opposed to the plan. In March the terms of the treaty were revealed to the Parliament, and a violent controversy followed. The Commission of the General Assembly met and issued a statement that the Engagement was sinful, involved perjury by breach of covenant vows, and would draw the displeasure of God on the Church and nation of Scotland. The royalists were in control in the Scottish Parliament, and so the protests of the stricter Covenanters were disregarded and the nation plunged into the course which ultimately brought ruin upon Scotland. The Parliament passed an act requiring all subjects to sign a bond supporting the Engagement. When the General Assembly met in July 1648 the declaration of the Assembly's Commission was approved, and the Act of Parliament requiring the bond to support the Engagement was condemned. The Assembly also warned all members of the Church of Scotland to beware of the unlawfulness and dangers of the Engagement, and passed an act of censure on all ministers who had favored the Engagement or who had neglected to warn against its sin-

fulness. A letter was also sent to the King, asserting the sinfulness of the Engagement, and that the concessions he had promised were not adequate, and requesting him to comply with the Covenant so that they could consistently support and defend him.

The army raised for the Engagement was led into England to fight the King's battles, and defeated by Cromwell at Preston. Hamilton, the commanding officer, was hanged. The Engagement thus failed of its purpose and came to nothing. But it had the effect of driving a wedge of division into the hitherto unbroken ranks of the Covenanters.

9. The Act of Classes, 1649.

The failure of the Engagement caused a political change in Scotland. The strict Covenanters obtained control of the Parliament, which had been controlled by the Engagers. The Covenanters were able to convince Cromwell that they had been opposed to the Engagement, and so hostilities between Cromwell and Scotland were averted for the time being. On January 4th, 1649, the Parliament passed the Act of Classes, which declared the Engagers to be Malignants and ineligible for public office. The Act enumerated four classes of persons ineligible for public office, and classified these according to the degree of their disqualification. The army was purged of all persons who had taken part in the Engagement or were suspected of being Malignants, that is, opposed to the Covenants. The Act of Classes has sometimes been regarded as an intolerant and unreasonable measure, but it must be remembered that it was a time of great public danger, and that the purpose of the law was to preserve the safety of the nation by keeping out of public office men who were known to be opposed to the recognized principles and sacred obligations of the nation. Nor should it be for-

gotten that Scotland professed to be a Christian and a Reformed nation, and as such possessed an unquestionable right to determine what classes of men were unfit to be rulers in such a nation. The philosophy which underlay the Act of Classes was the philosophy of Christian civil government, and Christian civil government cannot continue to exist in a wicked world without the provision of religious tests for public office.

10. Negotiations with Charles II, 1650.

King Charles I was executed by the English Parliament in 1649. No doubt the attempt of the Scotch to help him by the Engagement hastened his miserable end. Early in 1650 the Scottish Parliament sent commissioners to the Continent to confer with Charles II on the basis of the Covenants. Charles sailed for Scotland, and landed on June 16th, 1650, but not until after he had subscribed the Solemn League and Covenant. Accompanying Charles were several men whom the Act of Classes had excluded from positions of public responsibility. In August Charles signed a declaration renouncing Popery and Prelacy and professing adherence to the Solemn League and Covenant. There can be little doubt, in view of later events, that Charles was hypocritical and that he would have signed or sworn anything if he could thereby further his own ends. Even in 1650 some of the Covenanting leaders suspected Charles of insincerity, but the majority seemed ready to accept a mere technical acceptance of the Covenants on the part of Charles, without any real evidence of sincere and hearty acceptance of the covenant bonds to which the Scottish Church and nation were pledged by oath. This readiness to receive Charles II proved the undoing of Scotland, for it soon brought on an invasion by Cromwell, who could not tolerate a Stuart and an enemy of the Commonwealth on the throne of Scotland.

The True Freedom

John 8:12-59

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:32, 36.

The portion of Scripture before us is a part of one of Jesus' many disputes with the religious leaders of the Jews of his day. Jesus had claimed to be the light of the world, meaning, of course, the true **spiritual** light of the world. The Pharisees objected that Jesus was bearing witness of himself, and that for them to accept such a statement, two witnesses would be required.

Jesus replied that it was not simply a case of one person bearing witness of himself, for in addition to his own testimony there was the testimony of God the Father; that is, God the Father bore witness to Jesus by the miracles which he performed. This led to a discussion of where the Father is, and who and whence Jesus is. In verse 30 we read the result of this argument: "As he

spake these words many believed on him." Then Jesus addressed himself to those who had professed to believe on him, saying to them, "If ye continue in my word, then are

ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This brings us to the first point which we shall consider in this sermon.

I. Humanity is in a State of Spiritual Bondage

Jesus said to them, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This implied, of course, that they **needed** to be made free. And if they needed to be made free, then they were in bondage at the time; they were **slaves**.

The Jews resented this. They regarded it, no doubt, as an insult. Probably they considered Jesus extremely intolerant. They said, "We are the descendants of Abraham, the chosen people of God; we were never in slavery to any person. How can you assert that we shall be made free?" Yes, they were the descendants of Abraham. There could be no question about it; their genealogies had been carefully recorded.

But what about the rest of their claim? "We were never in bondage to any man"—was that true? If they had thought back through their history, they would have had to admit that even though they were Abraham's descendants, they could not claim that they had always been free men. For 400-odd years their ancestors had been in Egypt, and for a considerable portion of this time they had been in cruel bondage—in Egypt, called in Scripture "the iron furnace", of which God said to them in the Ten Commandments: "I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Yes, their ancestors had been slaves in Egypt. God made them free, but they had been slaves.

And they had been in bondage time and again to various foreign powers. But what about the very time when they were talking with Jesus and making their proud claim, "We are free men; we never were slaves"—? Well, the fact is that they were really slaves at that very moment. They had no real freedom. Their country had been conquered by the Roman legions. They were governed by hated foreigners, Roman officials and their despised Jewish puppets. Their political freedom, their national independence, was gone. All they had left was the mere shadow of their former national glory, a hollow sham, a puppet state, an imitation freedom. They were not really free; they were subject to the Romans.

Still they proudly claim to be free, and to have always been free: "We were never in bondage to any man!" But Jesus insisted

that they were slaves. Of course Jesus was not speaking primarily about political freedom and political slavery. Jesus was speaking about spiritual freedom and spiritual slavery. But still it must be remembered that there is a connection between the two. We must realize that political slavery results from spiritual slavery, and political freedom arises from spiritual freedom. The Jews lost their political freedom because they had first lost their spiritual freedom. They became subject to political bondage because they had already become subject to spiritual bondage.

So Jesus tells them, "You are slaves!" "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (verse 34). They claimed to be Abraham's children, and so they were. But Jesus reminds them that Abraham, after all, had two kinds of descendants: those descended from Isaac, whose mother was a free woman, and those descended from Ishmael, whose mother was a slave. Isaac and his descendants, born according to promise, that is, in fulfilment of God's promise, typified people who are **spiritually free**. Ishmael and his descendants, on the other hand, typified people who are **slaves of sin**.

Jesus suggested this distinction in the words of verse 35, "And the servant abideth not in the house forever: but the Son abideth ever." Remember how Abraham finally sent Hagar and Ishmael away. Ishmael was not born according to the promise. He did not stand for spiritual freedom, freedom from sin. He could not abide in the house forever. His standing there was only temporary. But it was different with Isaac. He represented spiritual freedom, salvation from sin by supernatural divine grace. He belonged in Abraham's household **permanently**. He was not a slave; he was **the son** whom God had promised. And he pointed forward to Jesus Christ, who is uniquely **the Son of God**.

These Jews claimed to be free men. They claimed to have always been free, for they were Abraham's children. But, Jesus explains, Abraham's children were of two different kinds. Now which kind were they like? Like Isaac, who was free, or like Ishmael, who was born of a slave woman? Their conduct proved that they were **spiritually** descendants of Ishmael and Hagar,

even though **literally** they might be descended from Isaac. They committed sin, therefore they were the slaves of sin. Since they were sinners, they could not claim to be free men. The Bible represents sin as slavery. In fact it is the cruellest form of slavery that there is. More tyrannical and bitter than Egypt, more despotic and powerful than Rome, is the power of sin in the human personality. Egypt and Rome, after all, could only enslave men's bodies; sin takes away the freedom of their souls.

Sin makes people call white black, and black white; makes them call evil good, and good evil. Sin blinds people's spiritual eyes so that they cannot see straight; it darkens and clouds their mind so that they cannot think straight; it sears their conscience with a hot iron so that, in the end, they become indifferent to the distinction between right and wrong. And since sin is a condition of spiritual slavery, **we cannot possibly save ourselves from it**. Sin is a deep pit that we cannot climb out of. It is a bed of quicksands that sucks us downward and we cannot get clear of it. It is a prison with granite walls and steel bars that we cannot break.

But sin is even worse than that—**much** worse than that. The awful truth is, that **sin makes a person love sin**. Sin makes a person **want** to be sinful. Sin makes a person want to continue just as he is. Sin makes a person so that he does not want to be freed from sin. Sin not only makes a person a slave; it makes a person a **willing** slave; it makes a person love to be a slave of sin. It makes him shrink back in fear from the very thought of deliverance from sin. Sin is a vicious habit-forming spiritual narcotic. It creates a perverse craving for itself. It makes a person complacent and satisfied with being sinful.

The person who is a slave of sin actually prefers to be that way. He is actually **afraid** of being liberated from sin. Offer him a full and free salvation from sin, and he shrinks back in horror. His whole nature

struggles to avoid accepting that offer. He thinks he could not live without his sinful lusts and pleasures. He is afraid of freedom. Sin has him hypnotized. He is **addicted** to sin. He fears freedom from sin. He would rather be a slave. For sin has made itself thoroughly at home in his heart. He is very comfortable as a sinner. If only the Holy Spirit of God and the preacher of the Gospel will leave him alone, he is sure he can enjoy life, in his own way, as a sinner. He does not want to be set free from sin.

Because sin is an enslaving power that has the very center of our personality hypnotized and addicted to sin, we cannot possibly free ourselves from sin. We cannot even arouse within ourselves a **desire** to be free from sin, for our will itself is in bondage to sin. Our nature, as the result of Adam's fall, is thoroughly perverted by sin. Not only our habits, but our **heart**, being thoroughly sinful, we are utterly helpless. We cannot change our own heart so as to awaken within us the thirst for freedom from sin.

A bird enjoys freedom to fly. But a bird that has been hatched and reared in a cage does not enjoy freedom to fly. Turn it loose in the great outdoors and it will fly around a little bit, and then, feeling lost in the great world, it will seek to return to its cage again. We human beings are like that. But the illustration is imperfect, for the bird's **nature** has not really been changed by its being hatched and reared in a cage; only its habits have been molded by its artificial environment. But we human beings are sinful not merely in our habits, or in our practice, or as the result of our environment, **but by nature**, not by nature as originally created by God, but by nature as members of a fallen race. We were born that way. We cannot free ourselves from this alien domination that has permeated our inner personality. If we are to be set free at all, liberation must come from an outside source; it must be accomplished for us by someone other than ourselves; of ourselves we are helplessly enslaved to sin.

II. Christ is the Only Liberator

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (verse 36). We cannot free ourselves, for our very heart is tangled with sin and addicted to sin. But if Jesus Christ, the Son of God, sets us free from sin, then we are going to be really free from the tyranny of sin. How does Christ set us free from sin?

It would require many sermons to tell the whole story. In fact, the whole story is

never going to be told. For this story of redemption from sin is so great that no matter how much of it is told, there will always be more left. Even in the life of eternal glory, there will always remain an element of the story of redemption from sin that finite human beings can never comprehend. So in the present sermon I shall present only a very brief summary of the redemptive acts by which Christ, the Son of God, sets his people free from sin.

First of all, **Jesus Christ lived a perfect life** when he was here on this earth. He did what no human being before him had ever done. He lived a morally perfect life, literally. Never for one moment did he fall short of absolute moral perfection. Never did he do a wrong action; never did he speak a wrong word; never did he have a wrong thought; never did he have even the suggestion of a wrong motive in his heart. Through his whole life he fulfilled the whole law: he loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and he loved his fellow-man as himself. Thus, for the first time in human history, **a human being really fulfilled the law of God.** Christ fulfilled the law perfectly.

This is what Adam failed to do. Adam failed, but Jesus succeeded. By his success in living a perfect life, **Jesus worked out a complete righteousness.** God could look down from heaven on Jesus and say: "There, at last, is a man who fully meets the requirements of my holy law." So God the Father bore witness to him: "This is my beloved Son, **in whom I am well pleased.**"

Jesus was a perfect man, but he was more than that. He was and is the Son of the living God. Therefore that perfect righteousness which he worked out during his blameless life on earth **has an infinite value.** This absolute righteousness of Christ is therefore sufficient for all the elect of God. It would be sufficient for every human being without exception, if that had been its intended purpose. This righteousness of Christ is on deposit in the Bank of Heaven, ready to be applied to you and me, miserable, bankrupt sinners as we are

God requires righteousness. That is our debt to God's holy law. But we are bankrupt. We are spiritual and moral paupers. We cannot pay the debt. But Christ has provided the required righteousness. It is available today. To those who believe on him, that perfect righteousness is **imputed** or **reckoned**; it is credited to their account in the records of heaven.

In the second place, **Jesus Christ suffered and died as a sacrifice for sin.** He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

III. Truth is the Only Connection with Christ

As sinful human beings, we are enslaved to sin. Christ came to set men free. He is the great Liberator. But how can we come in contact with Jesus Christ?

Long ago it was very simple to come

That blameless, perfect human life was laid down in a voluntary sacrifice. He was crowned with thorns, cursed, spit upon, mocked and derided, his hands and feet were nailed to the cross, his precious blood was shed, his body was broken, his life was given up. He endured the wrath of God, the cursed death of the cross, he died, was buried, and continued under the power of death for a time.

Jesus died as **a substitute for sinners.** He bore the penalty for sin in our stead. Not only did he provide a perfect righteousness, but he also provided an atonement for our sin. He took care of the penalty of God's holy law. He made it so that God could forgive our sins and admit us to his favor without violating his attribute of absolute justice, "that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Just as Christ's righteousness has an infinite value due to his divine nature, so his atonement has an infinite value due to his divine nature. Because he was the very Son of God, he could suffer and die as the substitute of a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, who someday are going to stand before the throne of God and before the Lamb clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cry with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9, 10).

Now Christ's righteousness and Christ's atonement are on deposit in the Bank of Heaven. But they will not do any of us a bit of good until they are "imputed" or **applied to us.** This redemption is applied to us **by the Holy Spirit,** who causes us to be born again, giving us a new heart, and thus **works faith in us,** giving us the desire and ability to believe on Christ, so that Christ's righteousness and his atonement are imputed to us, or reckoned to our credit. "How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ? The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling" (Shorter Catechism, 30). Christ is the great Liberator. He is the one who sets the captives free. He came to proclaim release, to set at liberty them that are bound.

in contact with him. Men saw him face to face, heard his words, witnessed his mighty works. But remember, that was two thousand years ago. A chasm of two thousand years of time separates us from the Christ

who walked by the shores of the Sea of Galilee and in the streets of Jerusalem and Bethany. How can that chasm be bridged?

The plain fact is, that **our only possibility of contact with Jesus Christ lies in the truth concerning him which is set down in the pages of sacred Scripture.** If it were not for the Gospel message given in the Bible, we would know virtually nothing concerning Christ. Contact with him would be out of the question.

You read the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and marvel at what Jesus did for men so long ago. But what about us? What he did for those people in Judea and Galilee ages ago will not help you and me at all. What we need is for Jesus to do something for us personally.

Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. He never changes. Therefore he is mighty to save, today as of old. But how can we get in touch with him? Only through the Bible record, the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

The Holy Spirit works faith in us, and thus applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ. But the Holy Spirit does not work faith in us apart from the Scripture record. That written record of the Gospel is the necessary, indispensable connecting link between us and Jesus Christ our Saviour. So Jesus says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

It is popular today to say that "Christianity is not a doctrine but a way of life." This is very dangerous and misleading way of stating the matter. It is one of the subtle half-truths of our day. Notice that Jesus did not say, "Ye shall experience the life, and the life shall make you free." Not at all. He said "Ye shall **know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**"

The fact is, Christianity is both a message of truth and also a way of life. **But first of all, Christianity is a message of truth.** Knowledge and belief of the truth comes first; living the life comes second. Life is founded on truth; truth is not founded on life.

These words of Jesus are often misused: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." People often quote

these words as if they stood alone by themselves, and not in the context of Jesus' discourse to the Jews. People quote these words by themselves, as if they implied that any kind of truth will make men free—scientific truth, truth about ourselves and other people, truth in general. But truth in itself does not make men free from the slavery of sin. It is not truth in general, truth as such, that frees men from the tyranny of sin. It is **Christian truth**—the truth about Christ and his way of salvation—that makes men free.

Note what Jesus says in verses 23 and 24: "And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

Now stop and think how Jesus tells us that a person's **eternal destiny** depends on whether he believes in Jesus Christ as his Saviour: "if ye believe not that I am he"—that is, the promised Redeemer—"ye shall die in your sins."

Now note verse 36: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." It is not truth in the abstract that makes men free. It is the truth concerning Christ, the Son of God, that makes men free. The truth concerning Christ, heard with the ears, understood with the mind, believed with the heart—but always the **truth concerning Christ**—that liberates men from the bondage of sin.

That message of truth, recorded in the Holy Bible, is our connecting link with Jesus Christ. That message of truth is what the Holy Spirit uses in applying Christ's redemption to us so that his righteousness and his atonement are reckoned to our account.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." That word "know" means far more than just to know with our minds. It means to know **with our hearts.** It means to have a real conviction of the truth in our deepest heart and soul. It means to love the truth and to hold it with the utmost earnestness and sincerity, realizing that it is our life-line, it is what connects us with our divine Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Cross: A Modern Interpretation

By the Rev. W. R. McEwen

(**Note:** We are indebted for the following timely article to **Evangelical Action**, official organ of the Bible Union of Australia. The author, the Rev. W. R. McEwen, is a minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and has been laboring in Australia for several years. As a former student at the Reformed Presbyterian Seminary in Pittsburgh, and from his attendance at the Synod and visiting many congregations of the denomination, Mr. McEwen is personally known to many readers of "Blue Banner Faith and Life." We wish to express to him our hearty thanks for his faithful analysis and exposure of a typically "modern" view of the Cross of Christ.—Editor)

The Cross is the touchstone of faith, and the great central fact of Christianity. It was the great theme of Apostolic preaching and of all true preaching since Apostolic times. But how do modern preachers treat this subject? Of course some ignore it, concentrating on the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. But the Cross is too central in the history and teaching of the New Testament to be so easily set aside. It demands attention.

That is what Leslie D. Weatherhead discovered. And he gives the result of his fresh thinking on this great theme in his book entitled "A Plain Man Looks at the Cross." In this he confessed to a change of view in some respects and a deeper appreciation of the Cross. Perhaps he interprets the viewpoint of the plain man and the modern preacher. But is it the true Biblical and evangelical view?

The Plain Man

Mr. Weatherhead writes for the plain man, he says, "to translate a modern view of the Cross as far as possible into the language of the fireside." Now the "plain man" has learnt something in the last few years. He has lost some confidence in himself and is feeling a sense of disillusionment. He realises that Christ the Teacher, the Hero, the Communist, the Martyr, the Example, the Revealer of the nature of God is not enough, and has learned from the New Testament that the Figure there presented is much more than that. He is, or was, the Son of God and His death has some connection with the forgiveness of sins. So much, Mr. Weatherhead acknowledges though he confesses that his early preach-

ing centered round the life of Jesus, and still maintains that converting sermons might be made about such a theme. But the plain man does not understand, according to him, "the thought-form in which St. Paul and the early Apostles expressed their message," and he makes little attempt to help him to understand them. He sees no significance in the Jewish sacrifices of the Old Testament. "I don't believe the blood of goats and bulls does anything," he frankly states. The word "propitiation," he maintains, "takes us away again into heathen rites."

The real objection to the Jewish sacrifices is that they emphasise the fact that God has been offended by man's sin. Mr. Weatherhead does not accept that. According to him the average plain man is a "pretty decent chap," who "rarely thinks of himself as a sinner needing salvation." When he does think of salvation he is still in such good conceit with himself that he feels he can save himself with a little help from God or Christ. Here also Weatherhead fails to give clear guidance. While he acknowledges that "a new world needs new men" and new men have to be "born from above," as there is no human way of producing them, yet he still leaves a good deal of salvation in man's hands. "We fail," he says, "because we haven't enough power to carry out our own planning. We can devise the apparatus, but we are not linked to the source of supply." This emphasis upon man's ability to co-operate with Christ apart from any prior supernatural work of the Holy Spirit runs through the whole book. Christ "can be enthroned in and integrated with, every human personality, by means of the latter's conscious surrender." Because he sees so much depends on man, Mr. Weatherhead states that his heart grows faint and faith falters as he sees "evil enthroned against Him, in the selfish, cruel, indifferent, lustful, jealous, proud, cowardly, power-craving world of men and women." Even when men are won to surrender their will, there is no assurance of personal salvation. Of himself he confesses, "I may go back on Christ. I know myself and my past record well enough to say that probably I shall." Of course, if "in the last analysis," our salvation depended on our will, we all would fail and no one would be saved.

Mr. Weatherhead substitutes for the personal assurance, in which the saints of

old rejoiced, grounding their assurance, not on their weak wills, but on the sovereign grace of God, a larger hope that "all the sons of men become the sons of God, save those, if any there should be, who finally reject Him." Of course, if as Weatherhead states, "the mighty task to which Christ set Himself" was to effect the reconciliation of all mankind with God, surely He will accomplish it. If He is "betrothed to the human race" He will "at least present mankind as a spotless bride to God." Mr. Weatherhead fails to distinguish between Christ's love for the world and His love for the Church.

The Purpose of the Cross

But how is this mighty task accomplished? That the Cross of Christ has something to do with it is granted. But what? Mr. Weatherhead agrees with Dr. W. R. Matthews that "no doctrine of atonement is part of the Christian faith," which simply means that the death of Christ is unintelligible. It bears no weight with him that Paul propounds a very definite doctrine of atonement. He was only "a Jewish thinker . . . using the metaphors and thought forms which were real and meaningful to him and to his listeners . . . to make sense of what from the human side was a ghastly crime." "If that particular figure of speech (the Lamb of God) not only clouds but repels the minds of those one is seeking to help" he will abandon it and use "metaphors and illustrations which are acceptable to the modern mind." Unfortunately by thus seeking to accommodate to "the modern mind" the truth enshrined in the Biblical "thought-forms", the truth itself is often lost.

Mr. Weatherhead approaches the subject from the point of view of "How Jesus Came to the Cross." But he ignores His Jewish background, steeped in the idea of substitutionary sacrifice — a background which Jesus did not repudiate. He does not deduce from the Gospel story that Jesus, in the early days of His ministry, contemplated His death at all. He sums up His message as:—"God was the Father of all men. All men were brothers . . . the Kingdom of Heaven would be seen on earth. That was the good news. That was God's plan. Let them repent, for that was their task. Let them change their way of looking at life, and believe the good news." Not much need of a Cross there!

Indeed, Mr. Weatherhead maintains that the Cross may not have been necessary. He does not think that "Jesus had any thought that men would fail to react rightly

to a message which so obviously both came from God and, if carried out, would spell blessedness for themselves." Yet John tells us that at His first appearance at Jerusalem, "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not than any should testify of men; for He knew what was in man" (John 2:23-25). How mistaken was the beloved disciple who leaned on the Master's breast that a London psychologist should be able to put him right!

Further, he maintains that Jesus changed as His ministry proceeded, and only towards the end, because of the general opposition to "His Father's primary plan", did He see that the Cross was inevitable and accepted it as His.

He also maintains that there was a development in Christ's vision of the work from His Galilean ministry, when "His thought was primarily for Israel," to a world vision which came after His retirement on the coast of Tyre. "When Jesus came back from Tyre, he was not the Messiah of Israel only. He was, and knew Himself to be, the Saviour of the world." Here he is at variance with many modern critics who place the dawning of the Messianic consciousness later. Both are wrong. In this connection, Mr. Weatherhead quotes John 3:16 as expressing Christ's world purpose. But these words were spoken to Nicodemus before His Galilean ministry. It should also be noted that the previous verses 13 and 14 refer to His death on the Cross, and thus contradict the contention that the Cross was a kind of after-thought with Christ.

Although Mr. Weatherhead denies the necessity for any doctrine of atonement, yet he reviews several and also propounds his own. In referring to the Old Testament ritual he misses its typical significance. The pious intelligent Israelite realised that his sacrifice was not effective, per se, to atone for his sin, but only pointed to "a sacrifice of nobler name," as Weatherhead's quotations from the Psalms and prophets show. His objection however is that they set forth the principle of the transference of guilt, which is at the heart of the substitutionary theory, which he definitely repudiates. He does not like the "theories centring round the metaphor of the law courts." He thinks this "would make God like the less-attractive humans". "If my child 'sins' and is sorry," he says, "effects may follow, but I don't demand suffering on his part, far less on the part of any other, as satisfaction." He seems to forget that the parent child relationship does not represent the whole

relationship, or the primary relationship, of God to man. There are the relationships of the Creator to the creature, of the Sovereign to the subject, of the Judge to the criminal. This last best represents the relationship of a holy God to a guilty sinner.

While Mr. Weatherhead emphasises the reality of sin and the guilt it incurs, yet he sees no Godward aspect in the death of Christ. All that is needed is to win men. Since Christ's first method of teaching failed, He tried this. "If not by His words, then by His deed He will win men. If not by the way of success, then by the way of so-called failure. If He cannot make them see by living, He will by dying." The Cross gives "an incentive to surrender again and again to that awesome love of His."

This is the moral influence theory of Atonement. But he adds to this a kind of mystical theory . . . "Behold the Lamb of God," he exclaims, "who gradually taketh away the sin of the world by His union with every sinner, a union made conscious in all who will receive Him." Instead of the finality of Christ's atoning deed upon the Cross he maintains that Calvary merely reveals His reaction to sin always, as it did once. Referring to "the Temple sacrifices where blood (life) was offered to God on behalf of men," he adds, "Christ did that very thing. He still does it in the sense that He is still pouring out His energies (life) for us." "In His life, in His death, in His life after death, in His endless ministry for men now, He offers uttermost self-giving that He may change our nature and make us like Himself." "The historic act of dying on the Cross was not the redemptive factor in our deliverance," he states, "save that it was the pledge of His age-long giving of Himself to us, the promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us."

Justification by Faith

It seems strange, after repudiating the theories which centre round "the metaphor of the law courts," that there should be a

chapter on "Justification by Faith," for justification is a legal term. However, an original definition of justification, which eliminates any forensic conception is given, namely, "the divine activity which gradually disperses the sense of guilt by continually treating the sinner as guiltless." "Christ, then, sees us in the light of what we are becoming, of what He is making us." "Clinging to Christ, however, by faith, that faith is 'reckoned for righteousness' (Rom. 4:5), for because of it, the sinner is potentially righteous already." Weatherhead misses the whole point of Paul's reasoning here. Paul introduces Abraham as an example of one who was justified without works. According to Paul (Rom. 4:5) God "justifieth the ungodly," not "the potentially righteous."

According to Mr. Weatherhead it is not the imputed righteousness of Christ which enables the sinner to stand acquitted and accepted before a holy God—that he regards as a "fiction"—but his own righteousness. What that righteousness is we gather from the following sentences. "Trust and obedience which together constitute faith." "He won't despise the lowly offering of faith." So faith, instead of being the empty hand by which we receive God's gift of justification freely, is the gift we present to God by which we merit His justification.

Yet in his epilogue, Mr. Weatherhead confesses that "the substitutionary theory includes a truth which we cannot let go," and on the basis of it concludes with a most telling appeal which some might think had the true evangelical note. But the Gospel is a consistent whole; it is a system which is destroyed when one part is missing. And there are so many deficiencies in the "Gospel" which Mr. Weatherhead presents in this book that we have sadly to acknowledge that it is "another Gospel," which is not really a gospel at all, but another scheme of man's devising which seeks to eliminate the offence of the Cross, but is impotent to meet the need of guilty hell-deserving sinners.

Some Noteworthy Quotations

"Devout souls do not take offence at the depths and difficulties of God's Word, but are thereby drawn to intenser contemplation of them."

Alexander Maclaren

"The Holy Ghost hath purposely

penned the Scriptures so as to challenge all serious study of them . . . He could have penned all so plain, that he that runneth, might have read them; but he hath penned them in such a style, that he that will read them, must not run and read, but sit down and study."

John Lightfoot

"These holy writings are the Word of God himself, who speaks unto us in and by them. Wherefore when we take in hand the Book of the Scriptures, we cannot otherwise conceive of our selves, than as standing in God's presence, to hear what he will say unto us."

John White

"The same Spirit which assureth an honest heart, that the Bible is the Word of God, will guide him to find out the right sense of the Word."

Richard Capel

"The 'problem of God' is to be solved for the twentieth century as for all that have preceded it, not by deifying man and abasing God in his presence, but by recognizing God to be indeed God and man to be the creation of His hands, whose chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

B. B. Warfield

"The issue that is drawn between the Reformed thought of the sixteenth and the Kantian thought of the nineteenth century is not between a sovereign and an ethical God; it is between God and man. And the movement from the one to the other is a veritable revolution by which God is dethroned and man elevated to His place as the center of the universe."

B. B. Warfield

"It is not lawful for you to make such

a compromise with God, as to undertake a part of the duties prescribed to you in his Word, and to omit part of them, at your own pleasure."

John Calvin

"Truly wonderful and monstrous is the extravagance of our pride. God requires of us nothing more severe than that we most religiously observe his sabbath, by resting from our own works; but there is nothing which we find more difficult, or to which we are more reluctant, than to bid farewell to our own works, in order to give the works of God their proper place."

John Calvin

"I have been a man of great sins, but He has been a God of great mercies; and now, through His mercies, I have a conscience as sound and quiet as if I had never sinned. It is long since I could have adventured on eternity, through God's mercy and Christ's merits; but death remained somewhat terrible, and that now is taken away; and now death is no more to me, but to cast myself down into my husband's arms, and to lie down with Him. And however it be with me at the last, though I should be straitened by God or interrupted by men, yet all is sure, and shall be well. I have followed holiness, I have taught truth, and I have been most in the main things; not that I thought the things concerning our times little, but that I thought none could do anything to purpose in God's great and public matters, till they were right in their conditions."

Donald Cargill

Religious Terms Defined

A few definitions of important religious terms will be given in this department in each issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life." The aim will be conciseness without the sacrifice of accuracy. Where possible the Westminster Shorter Catechism will be quoted.

Decrees of God. "The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." (S.C. 7).

Foreordination. God's determination, from all eternity, of every fact in the universe, including every event that takes place in time.

Predestination. God's determination, from all eternity, of the final destiny of every individual among angels and men.

Election. God's sovereign choice of particular angels and men to eternal life and glory.

Reprobation. God's sovereign act of passing by those angels and men not elected to eternal life, and his act of ordaining them to dishonor and wrath to be inflicted for their sin.

Creation. "The work of creation is, God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good." (S.C. 9).

Universe. The sum total of all that God has created; all that exists excepting God himself.

Angels. Intelligent, purely spiritual beings created by God for his service.

Man. A special creature of God consisting of body and soul united in a single personality, distinguished from all other creatures in this world by being created in the image of God, thus being originally a perfect, though finite, replica of the God-head.

Evolution. The false biological theory that all forms of life have developed, by inherent natural forces, from earlier and simpler forms, implying that one species may develop into another, and that the human race has descended from a non-human ancestry.

Providence. God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions." (S.C. 11).

Ordinary Providence. God's preserving and governing his creatures and their actions by the use of means, or second causes.

Special Providence. Those acts of God's providence which are especially directed toward the care and welfare of his Church. (Cf. Confession of Faith, V.7).

Miraculous Providence. God's preserving and governing his creatures and their actions without, above or against the use of means or second causes.

Miracle. A supernatural event, which is not the product of any cause except the will of God.

Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly

Lesson 79

For Week Beginning July 6, 1947

Q. 97. What special use is there of the moral law to the regenerate?

A. Although they that are regenerate, and believe in Christ, be delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works, so as thereby they are neither justified nor condemned; yet, besides the general uses thereof common to them with all men, it is of special use, to show them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring the curse thereof in their stead, and for their good; and thereby to provoke them to more thankfulness, and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience.

Scripture References:

Romans 6:14; 7:3-6. Galatians 4:4, 5. The regenerate are not under the law as a covenant of works.

Romans 3:20. Galatians 5:23. Romans 8:1. The regenerate are not justified by obedience to, nor condemned because of violation of, the moral law.

Romans 7:24, 25; 8:3, 4. Galatians 3:13, 14. The moral law shows the Christian how much he owes to Christ, who fulfilled the law's requirements for him, and bore its penalty on his behalf.

Luke 1:68, 69, 74, 75 The moral law incites the Christian to thankfulness to God for the redemption provided in Christ.

Romans 7:22; 12:2. Titus 2:11-14. The moral law is the Christian's standard of obedience, not in order to earn eternal life by obeying it, but in order to express his gratitude to God for the free gift of salvation.

Questions:

1. When a person is "born again", and becomes a Christian, how does his relation to the moral law change?

He is instantly and forever delivered from all useless labor of trying to save himself by obedience to the law, and also delivered from the condemning power of the law.

2. When did the Covenant of Works come to an end?

(a) As a way of earning eternal life for all mankind by human obedience to God's law, that is, by Adam's obedience as the representative of mankind, the Covenant of Works ended when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in Eden. (b) As the way of earning eternal life for the elect by obedience to God's law on the part of Christ, the divine-human Mediator and Second Adam,

the Covenant of Works was incorporated into, and became a part of, the Covenant of Grace, and so is still in effect today. (c) In the case of those who have not yet come to Christ and received the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, they are still under the condemnation of the broken Covenant of Works, and such people often make a desperate and futile attempt to earn eternal life on the basis of the Covenant of Works, that is, by **personal** obedience to the moral law.

3. What term describes the type of religion which seeks to earn eternal life by personal obedience to the moral law?

Legalism, also called Moralism.

4. What sect of the Jews in the time of Christ was dominated by Legalism?

The Pharisees.

5. What is wrong with Legalism?

It is "too little, and too late." Too little, because God demands **perfect** obedience to the moral law, whereas the sinner renders a very imperfect obedience; too late, because the possibility of earning eternal life by law-obedience ceased in Eden ages ago.

6. Are modern Christians ever affected by Legalism?

It is sad but true that they often are. (a) Where the Bible teaching of **salvation by grace** is not known or understood, professing Christians are often completely legalistic, frankly trying to earn eternal life by good works. (b) Even those who really know and understand the Bible teaching of salvation by grace, often fall unconsciously into a legalistic way of thinking. A person may profess the **theology of grace**, and yet, without realizing the inconsistency, may be greatly influenced by a legalistic attitude or way of thinking about life and religion.

7. What is the remedy for Legalism?

(a) A realization of the utter failure and futility of Legalism. (b) A deeper understanding and personal experience of the Bible teaching of salvation by grace.

8. Should a Christian be afraid to commit sin?

Yes.

9. Should a Christian be afraid to commit sin because of the danger of eternal condemnation?

No. I John 4:18.

10. Then why should a Christian be afraid to commit sin?

Because it is right to fear that which is contrary to God's holiness, and which will offend God and hide the light of his countenance from us, even though in the case of the Christian it involves no danger of eternal condemnation.

11. How does the moral law enable the Christian to appreciate Christ?

The moral law enables the Christian to appreciate Christ by showing him how much he owes to Christ, that is, how much Christ has done for him in perfectly keeping the whole law and bearing its penalty on the Christian's behalf.

12. How does the moral law provoke the Christian to thankfulness?

The moral law provokes the Christian to thankfulness by giving him an appreciation of Christ's work and sufferings on his behalf.

13. Instead of thankfulness, what state of mind does a legalistic type of religion tend to produce?

A legalistic type of religion cannot lead to an attitude of real thankfulness to God, but on the contrary leads to a self-righteous spiritual pride.

14. How should a Christian express his thankfulness to God?

A Christian should express his thankfulness to God not only in words of prayer and praise, but also in taking care to live according to God's moral law as the rule of obedience.

15. Since the Bible teaches that the Christian is not under the law but under grace (Romans 6:14), how can he be under the moral law as the rule of obedience?

The Christian is freed from the **penalty** of the law, but not from the **precept** of the law as the standard of right living.

16. Prove from the Bible that the Christian is not freed from the **precept** of the moral law as the standard of right living.

(a) Scripture teaches that Christians may and do commit sin (I John 1:8; 2:1; James 5:16). But Scripture defines sin as "the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). Therefore Scripture teaches that Christians may and do **transgress the law**. Therefore Christians must be under the precept of the law, for otherwise they could not be said to transgress it. (b) In I Cor. 9:19-21 the apostle Paul expressly denies that he is "without law to God", and affirms on the contrary that he is "under the law to Christ". These words, of course, were

written years after he became a Christian. Those modern Christians who claim that faith in Christ has set them free **from the precept of the moral law as the standard**

of right living are claiming something that the apostle Paul did not venture to claim for himself, but rather emphatically disclaimed in the reference quoted above.

Lesson 80

For Week Beginning July 13, 1947

Q. 98. Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?

A. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, which were delivered by the voice of God upon Mount Sinai, and written by him in two tables of stone; and are recorded in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. The first four commandments containing our duty to God, and the other six our duty to man.

Scripture References:

Exodus 34:1-4. Deut. 10:4. The Ten Commandments divinely revealed and written by God on two tables of stone.

Matthew 22:37-40. The moral law summarized by Christ as requiring total love for God, and to love our neighbor as ourself.

Questions:

1. Where in the Bible are the Ten Commandments recorded?

Exodus 20:1-17. Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

2. Are the Ten Commandments a complete statement of the moral law of God?

The Ten Commandments are not a complete statement in detail of the moral law, but rather a **summary** of the moral law. Rightly interpreted, they include every moral duty enjoined by God. However the more detailed statements of God's will are needed for a right interpretation and application of the Ten Commandments. For example, the eighth commandment forbids stealing, but only by a study of other parts of the Bible can we learn what "stealing" includes and frame a correct definition of it.

3. How are the Ten Commandments commonly divided?

Following Christ's analysis of the moral law, the Ten Commandments are commonly divided into two "tables", the first four commandments containing our duty to God and the last six our duty to ourselves and to our fellow men.

4. Do not **all ten** of the Commandments deal with our duty to God?

Yes. We should not think that the last six commandments are simply a matter be-

tween ourselves and our fellow men. They too, are a matter of our duty to God. The true understanding of the matter is that the first four commandments concern the duty which we owe **directly** to God, while the last six concern the duty which we owe **indirectly** to God, that is, the duty which we owe to God in matters involving ourselves and our fellow men.

5. Why do the last six commandments concern our duty **to God** in connection with our fellow men?

Because God, not man, is the Lord of the conscience. God is our Creator; to God we are morally responsible; by God we will be judged at the Last Day. It is only **because of our moral responsibility to God** that we owe any duties at all to our fellow men. If we ask why we should not steal or commit murder, the answer must be that to steal or commit murder would be a sin against God, because we are **responsible to God** for our conduct in the social sphere.

6. Are the two tables of the moral law equally important?

(a) So far as our obedience to the law is concerned, every one of the Ten Commandments is **absolutely** important, so that to break any one of them, whether of the first or the second table, is to transgress the whole moral law of God (James 2:10, 11). (b) But so far as the logical structure of the Ten Commandments is concerned, it is correct to say that the second table of the law is subordinate to the first table. That is to say, our moral responsibility to God is the basis of our duties to our fellow men. Thus Christ said that the "first and great commandment" is to love God, while to love our neighbor, though it is "like unto" the command to love God, none the less is "the second", that is, secondary or subordinate to the first.

7. What wrong views of the Ten Commandments are common today?

(a) The view that the Ten Commandments are a **code of human laws**, composed either by Moses or by other persons among the Jews. (b) The view that the Ten Commandments are **the product of human experience**, that is, that they are a summary of what people have found to be necessary for the general welfare of **mankind**. (c)

The view that the Ten Commandments were **only of temporary significance**, having later been superseded by the so-called "law of love" in the New Testament, or by the evolutionary progress of the human race. All three of these views are wrong. The Ten Commandments are not a code of human laws, but a **code of divine laws**.

Lesson 81

Q. 99. What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments?

A. For the right understanding of the ten commandments these rules are to be observed: 1. That the law is perfect, and bindeth every one to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience for ever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.

Scripture References:

Psalm 19:7. God's law is perfect.

Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28, 33, 34, 37-39, 43, 44. God's law requires absolute moral perfection, and cannot tolerate the slightest deviation from perfect and total righteousness.

Matthew 5:48. God's own perfection demands that man, his creature and image-bearer, be perfect.

Questions:

1. Why do we need rules for the right understanding of the Ten Commandments?

Because the Ten Commandments are not a complete application or detailed statement of the moral law, but only a comprehensive summary.

2. How many rules does the Catechism present for understanding the Ten Commandments?

Eight.

3. For what source are these eight rules derived?

From the Bible itself. The rules the Catechism presents are a formulation of the Bible's application of the moral law to particular problems and situations.

4. What is meant by saying that God's moral law is perfect?

This means that the moral law is a perfect revelation of God's will for man, and that we are bound to fulfill it perfectly.

They were not composed by Moses or any other human being, **but were spoken and written by God himself**. They were not of temporary validity, **but of permanent validity**, and until the end of the world they can never be changed, or superseded by any other laws or principles.

For Week Beginning July 20, 1947

5. What degree of conformity to righteousness does God's moral law require?

Full conformity; therefore partial conformity is worthless in God's sight.

6. What part of our nature is involved in God's requirement of obedience to his moral law?

The moral law binds "the whole man", that is, our **entire** nature, body and soul, including the state of our heart, as well as our thoughts, emotions, words and deeds.

7. How long will the moral law of God continue to be binding on human beings?

For ever; that is, both in this life and in the life to come. However, in the life to come the **specific form** of the revelation of God's moral law to man will no longer be the Ten Commandments, which are suited to our life in this present world, but a new and more direct revelation of God's will, suited to the life of eternity.

8. Wherein does God's moral law differ from all human laws?

Human laws, including all the laws of the various non-Christian religions, are satisfied with a partial, approximate and imperfect obedience, whereas God's law requires **absolute moral perfection** and cannot tolerate the slightest degree of any sin.

9. Does God's law, in demanding absolute moral perfection of human beings, demand what is impossible?

Yes. No person in the world can meet the demand of God's law for absolute moral perfection.

10. Is God unreasonable in demanding what is impossible for human beings to attain or achieve?

No. As created by God, before the fall into sin, man could have attained absolute moral perfection. Man fell into sin by his own fault and thus moral perfection became impossible. But God could not lower the demands of his law to meet our sinful condition as members of a

fallen race. God's law, being the expression of God's own character, is unchangeable. Since our inability to fulfill the law is our own fault, God cannot be expected to lower the demands of the moral law to fit our sinfulness, and there is nothing unreasonable in his demanding what is impossible for us to render.

11. Did any human being ever fulfill the moral law perfectly?

Yes. Jesus Christ lived a life of absolute moral perfection in this world for the

entire period from his birth to his crucifixion. During this time he never broke any of God's commandments in the slightest degree in thought, word or deed, and he also perfectly fulfilled the whole positive side of the law, loving God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength, and loving his fellow man with a love second only to his love to his Heavenly Father. In our Lord Jesus Christ we see the absolute moral perfection required by the moral law, not in the abstract, but actually realized in a human life.

Lesson 82

For Week Beginning July 27, 1947

Q. 99 (Continued). What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments?

A. For the right understanding of the ten commandments these rules are to be observed: 2. That it is spiritual, and so reacheth the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works, and gestures.

Scripture References:

Romans 7:14. The moral law is spiritual in nature.

Deut. 6:5 compared with Matthew 22:37-39. The moral law requires conformity of all faculties of our mind or soul.

Questions:

1. What is the derivation or original meaning of the word "spirit" in the Bible?

The word "spirit" in our English Bible is the translation of a Hebrew word of the Old Testament and a Greek word of the New Testament, both of which primarily mean "wind."

2. Apart from the original meaning of "wind", what meaning does the word "spirit" have in the Bible?

The word "spirit" means a self-conscious, active, living being, which may be divine, angelic, demonic or human. God, the angels and the demons are **pure** spirits, having no material body. The human spirit is **normally** united with a material body to form a composite personality of spirit (or soul) and body. However the human spirit can live apart from a material body, as is the case between death and the resurrection at the Last Day.

3. What is the meaning of the adjective "spiritual" in the Bible?

The adjective "spiritual" in the Bible is **never** used in the popular modern sense

of "religious" or "devotional". It is always used in the strict sense of **connected in some way with a spirit**. Almost always in the Bible the adjective "spiritual" means **connected with the Holy Spirit of God**. Thus in the Bible usage of the word, a "spiritual" man is not just a religious man, but a man in whom the Holy Spirit of God dwells.

4. What is the meaning of the word "spiritual" in Q. 99 of the Catechism?

In this question of the Catechism the word "spiritual" is used in the sense of "pertaining to the human spirit", or "concerning the spirit of man." Thus the Catechism asserts that the moral law of God is **spiritual**, that is, it concerns not only our outward conduct or actions, but our spiritual life, our thoughts and mental states, our emotions, desires and the resolutions of our will **as well**.

5. Are human laws "spiritual"?

No. Human laws, that is, laws enacted by the civil government, are not spiritual. They make no claim to govern the spiritual or mental life of the people. Human laws demand outward conformity of conduct only, not conformity of thoughts, desires, beliefs, emotions, etc. For example, the civil government can make a law requiring citizens to **pay** an income tax, but it has no right to require them to **believe** in the principle of the income tax, nor to pay it with joy and gladness. The civil government has no jurisdiction over men's mental and spiritual life, but only over outward conduct. Under totalitarian governments the attempt has been made by the State to control people's thoughts, as in Japan where special police bureaus existed for the control of "dangerous thoughts"; but all such attempts are an iniquitous usurpation of the prerogatives of God, and are destructive of the liberties of men.

6. How did the Pharisees misunderstand the scope of the moral law of God?

They overlooked the spiritual character of the law, and wrongly supposed that it claimed jurisdiction only over their outward conduct. Because of this faulty and partial view of the nature of the moral law, the Pharisees could deceive themselves into thinking that they had attained moral perfection. By a scrupulous observance of the details of the law they thought they had conformed to all its requirements. What they lacked was not outward literal obedience to the precepts and prohibitions of the law, but inward spiritual conformity to its requirements. They cleansed the outside of the cup and platter, while inwardly they were full of wickedness; they worshipped God with their lips, while their heart was far from him.

7. What error concerning the moral law is just the opposite of that of the Pharisees?

Just the opposite of the Pharisees' error is the view held by some modern professing Christians who say that inward spiritual conformity to the law is all that is necessary, and we need not bother to conform our outward life and conduct to the literal requirements of the law. Such people say that if we have an attitude of love to God and our neighbor, we need not concern ourselves about such outward details as the literal observance of the sabbath. They fail to realize that our outward life is the expression of our inward spiritual life, and if the law of God is really engraved upon our hearts it must inevitably come to expression in our outward life and conduct.

8. What is meant by saying that the moral law concerns **the understanding**?

This means that our intellect is subject to the moral law of God, and it is a sin to believe what is false, to reject what is true, or to have our thinking blinded or warped

by prejudice. We are responsible for our thinking just as we are for our actions.

9. What is meant by affirming that the moral law concerns **the will**?

This means that our power to make decisions or choices is subject to the moral law of God, and it is a sin to make a choice contrary to the law of God, to fail to make a choice which is according to the law of God, or to be actuated in our decisions by wrong, sinful motives.

10. What is meant by the statement that the moral law concerns **the affections**?

By "the affections" the Catechism means what are commonly called "emotions" today, such as love, hatred, anger, joy, sorrow. These emotions are subject to the moral law of God, so that to have wrong feelings, or emotions contrary to the requirements of the law, is sinful.

11. What are the "other powers of the soul" to which the Catechism refers?

Possibly the reference is to **the memory** and also to **the artistic sense** which includes the capacity for producing or appreciating beautiful music, pictures, poetry, literature, etc. All these capacities of the human spirit are strictly subject to the moral law of God.

12. In addition to our inward or spiritual life, what activities of human life does the moral law concern?

Our words, works and gestures. That is to say, the moral law concerns every possible way by which our inward or spiritual life finds expression in the external world which is around us. It concerns every possible relation of our spirit to our environment. There is nothing we can possibly do, whether in our inward spiritual life or in our outward conduct, which is not subject to the moral law of God. Truly, God's commandment is exceeding broad (Psalm 119:96).

Lesson 83

For Week Beginning August 3, 1947

Q. 99 (Continued). What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments?

A. For the right understanding of the ten commandments these rules are to be observed: 3. That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden in several commandments. 4. That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden: and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded:

so, where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.

Scripture References:

Col. 3:5. Covetousness is idolatry, hence forbidden in two commandments.

Amos 8:5. The same sinful desire violated both the fourth and the eighth commandment.

Prov. 1:19. The same sin may involve both covetousness and murder.

I Tim. 6:10. The love of money also involves many other kinds of sin.

Isaiah 58:13. Negative and positive aspects of sabbath observance.

Deut. 6:13 with Matt. 4:9, 10. Positive and negative aspects of fearing God.

Matt. 15:4-6. Positive and negative aspects of the fifth commandment.

Questions:

1. May the same duty be required in more than one of the Ten Commandments?

Yes. For example, "six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work" is a part of the fourth commandment, relating to the sabbath; but the eighth commandment, which forbids stealing, also requires a person to work for his living, for the person who lives without working is really stealing his living from someone else.

2. May the same sin be forbidden by more than one of the Ten Commandments?

Yes. For example, to bear false witness in a murder trial, resulting in the death of an innocent person, is a violation of both the sixth and the ninth commandment ("Thou shalt not kill"; "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.")

3. What is the reason why the various commandments overlap in this way?

Because **human life is complex**, and every fact of our life is related in some way to all the other facts of our life. Consequently when we look at the facts of our life from the standpoint of God's moral law, we realize that any one fact of our life may be related, in some way or other, to several of the Ten Commandments.

4. Do the Ten Commandments ever contradict each other, so that what is forbidden by one commandment is required by another?

No. Because God is the Author of all, and they are the expression of one moral law, the Ten Commandments form a harmonious whole. There can be no real contradiction between any of them. If there seem to be contradictions, we may be sure that there is an error in our interpretation of them somewhere. For example the young man who told his pastor that obedience to the fifth commandment required him to break the fourth commandment (because to honor his father and

mother, he must comply with their wishes, and to comply with their wishes he must stay home from church to attend a wedding on the sabbath day) was mistaken in his interpretation of the fifth commandment. For the command to honor our father and mother requires obedience to parents "in the Lord", that is, in matters not contrary to the law of God. The fifth commandment does not require a person to obey his parents by disobeying a command of God.

5. What is the teaching of the Catechism concerning positive and negative aspects of the Ten Commandments?

The Catechism teaches that in the Ten Commandments, positive and negative elements imply each other, even though only one or the other is expressly stated. Where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; where a sin is forbidden, it is implied that the contrary duty is commanded; and the same principle applies to the matter of threatenings and promises.

6. What do we mean by the negative aspect of the Ten Commandments?

Their prohibition of transgression of the law of God, or doing something which God has forbidden.

7. What do we mean by the positive aspect of the Ten Commandments?

Their requirement of conformity to the law of God, that is, doing whatever God requires.

8. In the form in which the Ten Commandments are stated, which of these aspects is the more prominent?

The negative aspect is the more prominent, as eight of the Ten Commandments begin with the expression "Thou shalt not" or similar words. Eight of the Ten Commandments are **negative in form**, whereas only two are **positive in form** (the fourth and fifth).

9. Does this negative emphasis in the form of the commandments mean that God's moral law is negative rather than positive?

No. While the **form** of the Ten Commandments is largely negative, the meaning, as properly interpreted by the Catechism, is both negative and positive, with an equal emphasis on both. This interpretation is warranted by comparing the Ten Commandments with Christ's summary of the moral law as requiring us to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength; this is positive in form.

10. Which of the commandments contain threatenings and promises?

The second and third contain threaten-

ings; the fifth contains a promise. In each case, if we interpret the commandments aright, we will realize that **both** threatening and promise are involved.

Lesson 84

For Week Beginning August 10, 1947

Q. 99. (Continued). What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments?

A. For the right understanding of the ten commandments these rules are to be observed: 5. That what God forbids, is at no time to be done; what he commands, is always our duty; and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times. 6. That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.

Scripture References:

Job 13:7, 8. We may not do what God forbids, even for a "good" purpose.

Rom. 3:8. The notion of doing evil that good may come is perverse.

Job 36:21. Heb. 11:25. We should choose rather to suffer than to commit sin.

Deut. 4:8, 9. What God commands is always our duty.

Matt. 12:7. Sometimes one duty has priority over another, as mercy over sacrifice.

Eccl. 3:1-8. Every particular duty is not to be done at all times.

Matt. 5:21, 22, 27, 28. Under one sin or duty all of the same kind are included.

Matt. 15:4-6. The command to honor parents, and the prohibition of cursing parents, is rightly understood to include the duty of providing for the support of parents if they are in need.

Heb. 10:24, 25. The duty of provoking one another to love and to good works implies that it is wrong for Christian people to forsake assembling themselves together, that is, to be neglectful of the regular services of their own Church.

I Thess. 5:22. The Christian must abstain from every form in which evil appears.

Jude 23. The Christian is to hate, and abstain from, even the slightest involvement in wickedness.

Gal. 5:26. The Christian must abstain

from provoking and envying other Christians, and also from **the desire for vain-glory**, which is the cause of provoking and envying.

Col. 3:21. Fathers should not provoke their children (by unreasonable requirements) lest the children fall into the sins of anger and discouragement; God forbids not only these sins, but the provocations thereunto.

Questions:

1. What great principle of ethics does the Catechism lay down concerning what God forbids?

That what God forbids, is at no time to be done.

2. What popular notion contradicts this great principle?

This great principle is contradicted by the popular notion that **whether something is right or wrong depends on the purpose for which it is done**. According to this popular notion, it may be right to do something which God forbids, provided we do it for a good purpose. For example, it may be right to tell a lie to save some person's life; or to gain money by gambling in order to donate it to foreign missions; or to maintain a gambling scheme in order to raise money to support the Church.

3. Is this popular notion a new idea?

No. It is really extremely ancient, and was known in the days of the apostle Paul, who undertook to expose its unsoundness in his epistles (Romans 3:8).

4. Why is this notion that "the end justifies the means" perverse?

This notion is perverse because it breaks down the distinction between right and wrong. To say "Let us do evil that good may come" amounts to saying "Let us do right by doing wrong". Such a notion implies that there is no real difference between right and wrong; black and white are mixed into some shade of gray. Throughout the whole Bible the distinction between right and wrong is represented as an **absolute** one. There is simply no such thing as doing wrong without committing sin, or committing sin without doing wrong.

5. Why is this perverse notion popular at the present day?

Partly, no doubt, because it naturally appeals to our sinful human hearts, and is a very convenient and easy doctrine to live by; and partly because the modern world is dominated by a non-Christian philosophy which teaches that right and wrong are not absolute matters, but changing all the time, so that what is right today may be wrong 100 years from now, and vice versa.

6. What is the importance of the principle that what God commands is always our duty?

This implies that we are **always** under the moral government of God, and responsible to him for the state of our hearts and for all our thoughts, words and deeds; we can never take a vacation from our duty to God; all our life long, every moment, we have a moral obligation to God.

7. Why is not every particular duty to be done at all times?

It would of course be not only impossible but absurd to attempt to do every particular duty at all times. God's law, while it does present an ideal so high that we cannot attain it in this present life, still does not present an **absurdity**. Some duties are specifically limited to **certain times**, as for example sabbath observance. But even the duties that are not so limited are not to be done all at once. We are to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep, but not both at the same time.

8. According to the Catechism, what are included under each sin or duty mentioned in the Ten Commandments?

Under each sin or duty are included **all others of the same class**. For example, the ninth commandment forbids bearing false witness against our neighbor. While this commandment specifically mentions only this one form of untruthfulness, it is rightly understood to prohibit **all** forms of untruthfulness. For from other parts of the Bible we learn that **all** liars shall have their part in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8; 22:15). That is to say, the Ten Commandments are not to be taken alone, as if they

stood by themselves, but **must be taken in their context of the whole Bible**, and we must take the entire Word of God into account in deciding the true and proper meaning of the Ten Commandments.

9. Why is it correct to say that the causes, means, occasions, appearances and provocations of or to any sin or duty are included in the meaning of the Ten Commandments?

Because God's law is spiritual, and involves thoughts, motives and intents of the heart as well as outward conduct; and because any particular act in our outward life is not something isolated, by itself, but the product of a complex chain of events and motives. Thus the commandment which forbids the sin of **murder** is interpreted by Jesus as forbidding the sin of **hatred** which is a cause of murder. And the commandment which forbids adultery is interpreted by Jesus as forbidding the sin of lust which leads to adultery.

10. What danger must we guard against in applying these rules of interpretation to the Ten Commandments?

In saying that a certain commandment includes something else, which is not specifically mentioned in that commandment, we must take the greatest care to make sure that we are not reading our own thoughts, preferences or prejudices into the Ten Commandments. We must take the greatest care that whatever we say is included in a certain commandment is really based on the teaching of God's Word and is not just our own human idea or opinion. For example, it has been claimed that the sixth commandment forbids capital punishment and defensive warfare, but a study of the Bible as a whole shows that such an interpretation is not legitimate. It has been claimed that the second commandment forbids honoring the national flag of our country, but this claim is based on a failure to discriminate between religious worship and civil allegiance. Similarly to claim that the sixth commandment forbids eating meat, and requires a vegetarian diet, is entirely unwarranted; the person who makes such a claim is merely reading his own prejudices into the Ten Commandments.

Lesson 85

For Week Beginning August 17, 1947

Q 99 (Continued). What rules are to be observed for the right understanding of the ten commandments?

A. For the right understanding of the ten commandments these rules are to be

observed: 7. That what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavor that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places. 8.

That in what is commanded to others, we are bound, according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them; and to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them.

Scripture References:

Exodus 20:10. Lev. 19:17. Gen. 18:19. Josh. 24:15. Deut. 6:6, 7. It is our duty to encourage righteousness and discourage sin on the part of others.

2 Cor. 1:24. We are under obligation to try to help others do right.

1 Tim. 5:22. Eph. 5:11. It is our duty to keep ourselves clear of participation in the sins of others.

Questions:

1. What is the general scope of the last two rules for the right understanding of the Ten Commandments?

The general scope of the last two rules is **responsibility for the moral welfare of our neighbor**. These two rules remind us that righteousness, or obedience to God's will, is not merely an individual matter, but involves a concern for others too. While it is of course true that in the end each individual must give his own account to God, we must remember that part of that accounting will deal with the effect of our lives on the moral well-being of other people.

2. Why does the Catechism include the phrase "according to our places" in the seventh rule?

Because in determining the degree and nature of our responsibility for the moral character and life of others, our own position in human society, and our relationship to others, must be taken into account. Thus, for example, the responsibility of a parent for a child is far greater than that of a child for a parent; yet even a child has a responsibility to endeavor, **according to his place**, that his parents practice right and avoid wrong. Similarly a minister or elder has a greater responsibility for influencing the members of the church, by reason of his position of authority, than the members have for influencing their minister and elders toward what is right; yet in each case a certain responsibility exists.

3. Is it right to arrange for someone else to do something that we will not do ourselves because we believe it to be wrong?

Certainly not. If a matter is wrong, we must neither do it ourselves, nor ar-

range for anyone else to do it. Yet this principle is frequently violated in practice. A Christian business man should not keep his store or office open for business on the sabbath day, and he should also not employ someone else to keep it open for him. If a book or magazine is not fit to read, we ought not only to refrain from reading it ourselves, but also from giving or selling it to others for them to read. It makes no difference whether these other persons are Christians or not. God's moral law is the same for all people; it does not provide one standard of life for Christians and another for non-Christians. God requires absolute moral perfection of everybody, Christian or non-Christian. It is very perverse to say that a Christian, who would not do certain things himself, may engage or employ someone that is not a Christian to do them for him.

4. How are we to endeavor that others practice righteousness and avoid sin?

We should endeavor to accomplish this result (a) by showing a good example ourselves; (b) by witnessing to others, or seeking to persuade them, as we have opportunity and as occasion may require; (c) by the exercise of whatever measure of authority God has committed to us. The first two methods may and should be practiced by every Christian; the third is limited to those persons to whom God has committed authority in family, Church and State. Thus any Christian should set a good example of sabbath observance, for example, and on occasion should seek to persuade others to keep the fourth commandment; but in addition to these ways, a parent has the authority to **forbid** his children to violate the sabbath. A civil official should promote honesty by his example and his testimony, but it may also be his duty to exercise his authority by **prosecuting** those who are guilty of theft. In each case the exercise of authority must be limited by the measure of authority granted by God and the nature of the relation to the persons involved.

5. How should we try to be helpful to others in doing their duty?

There are of course many ways of being helpful to others, which change with changing circumstances. We can always be helpful by trying to understand the difficulties and temptations that others must cope with, and maintaining a sympathetic attitude toward them. We should avoid an unduly critical spirit, and even when it is our duty to reprove someone for wrongdoing, we should do it with kindness

and Christian love, not in a bitter, harsh or self-righteous spirit. If someone is facing a hard battle against sin, temptation and discouragement, we should do what we can, in word and deed, to encourage and help such a person. We should never rejoice in iniquity, or take a secret delight in some other person's wrongdoing. And avoidance of petty gossip about the sins and failures of others will go a long way toward healing the sore spots in the Visible Church.

6. Why should we "take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them"?

To participate with others in what is

Lesson 86

For Week Beginning August 24, 1947

Q. 100. What special things are we to consider in the ten commandments?

A. We are to consider, in the ten commandments, the preface, the substance of the commandments themselves, and several reasons annexed to some of them, the more to enforce them.

Q. 101. What is the preface to the ten commandments?

A. The preface to the ten commandments is contained in these words, **I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.** Wherein God manifesteth his sovereignty, as being JEHOVAH, the eternal, immutable, and Almighty God; having his being in and of himself, and giving being to all his words and works: and that he is a God in covenant, as with Israel of old, so with all his people; who, as he brought them out of their bondage in Egypt, so he delivereth us from our spiritual thralldom; and that therefore we are bound to take him for our God alone, and to keep all his commandments.

Scripture References:

Exodus 20:2; Deut. 5:6. The preface to the Ten Commandments.

Isaiah 44:6. The absolute sovereignty of God.

Exodus 3:14. The self-existence of God.

Exodus 6:3. The revelation of the name JEHOVAH.

Acts 17:24, 28. God the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

Genesis 17:7 compared with Romans 3:29. God in covenant not only with Israel

forbidden them is to encourage them in wrongdoing, and thus to incur a share in their guilt, even though the matter in question may be something not forbidden to ourselves. It is wrong, for example, to accept a ride in a stolen automobile if we know that the car is stolen; to accept a ride in a car is not wrong, but in this case we would be participating in the wrongdoing of another person. If a child has been forbidden by his parents to leave home and go to a ball game at a particular time, but disobeys his parents and goes to the game, it is wrong for another child, knowing the circumstances, to accompany him, for this would encourage him in his disobedience to parental authority.

of old, but with believers from the Gentiles also.

Luke 1:74,75. God redeems his people from spiritual bondage, as well as from human tyranny.

I Peter 1:15-18 Lev. 18:30; 19:37. God's sovereignty and his work of redemption require us to render him total allegiance and absolute obedience.

Questions:

1. Why is the preface to the Ten Commandments important?

The preface to the Ten Commandments is important because it is an integral part of the Ten Commandments, and constitutes the foundation of the specific commandments which follow. The preface states the reasons why we are under obligation to obey the commandments; it lays the foundation for moral responsibility in the two facts of (a) God's absolute sovereignty; (b) God's work of redemption. It is a tragedy that children are often taught the Ten Commandments **with the preface omitted**, as if it were unimportant. It is deplorable that Sabbath School rooms often have attractively printed wall charts of the Ten Commandments, **with the preface omitted**. This widespread tendency to disregard the preface to the Ten Commandments is a symptom of the religious declension of our time. The tendency today is to regard morality as grounded in human considerations, such as the welfare of the human race, the safety of society, and similar utilitarian concepts. People whose religious thinking is of this type will consider the preface to the Ten Commandments more or less irrelevant; they will think that we can retain the "values" of the Ten Com-

mandments even if they are detached from the foundation of divine sovereignty and redemption. We should resist this modern tendency, and insist on the God-centered emphasis of the moral law. The preface states **the authority back of the moral law**; to disregard the preface is to overlook the importance of the source of the law's authority, and inevitably to misunderstand the Ten Commandments.

2. What is meant by the **sovereignty** of God?

By the **sovereignty** of God is meant the absolute, supreme and unchallengeable authority and dominion of God over the entire universe. Because God is **sovereign** he is supreme over all creatures, "and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth" (Confession of Faith, II.2). No creature may question the righteousness of any act of God; to do so is the height of impiety and irreverence. The sovereignty of God also implies that God is **ultimate**; there is no principle or law above or beyond God to which God himself is responsible. God is responsible only to himself; his own nature is his only law. There is nothing above or beyond him. God's sovereignty is manifested in a special way in his **work of redemption**. Redemption from sin is wholly God's work, and its benefits are bestowed wholly according to God's sovereign good pleasure. He saves exactly whom he purposes to save, and does it by his absolute, almighty power.

3. What is the origin of the name JEHOVAH?

This divine name, which is usually represented in the Authorized Version by LORD (printed in capital letters), is based on the Hebrew consonants JHVH. The Hebrew alphabet consists of consonants only, and the early Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament had only consonants. In reading, the correct vowel sounds were supplied by the reader. At a later period a system of writing the vowels was devised, by means of "points" written above, beneath or between the consonants. Just what vowel sounds originally belonged to the divine name JHVH is uncertain. The pronunciation "JAHVEH" is thought by many scholars to be correct, but this has not been proved, and it is only a matter of opinion. The Jews considered the divine name JHVH too sacred even to be pronounced, so in reading, whenever they came to JHVH they substituted another word, **Adonai**, meaning "Lord". Then when the vowel "points" were added to the He-

brew text of the Old Testament, the vowels of "Adonai" were inserted with the consonants JHVH, resulting in a hybrid word which is commonly pronounced "Jehovah" in English and European languages. The important thing, of course, is not the pronunciation of the name, but its meaning.

4. What is the meaning of the name JEHOVAH?

This name of God was specially revealed in the time of Moses (Ex. 6:2, 3). The key to its basic meaning is found in Exodus 3:14, 15 and Exodus 33:19. God said to Moses, "I AM THAT I AM", and instructed Moses to tell the people of Israel, "I AM hath sent me unto you". In the next verse the verb "I AM" is changed to the third person, meaning "HE IS", written by the Hebrew letters JHVH, and translated LORD in the Authorized Version. Thus the expression "I AM THAT I AM" gives a key to the meaning of JEHOVAH. It signifies that God is sovereign and self-determined, not limited or influenced by anything outside of himself. Exodus 33:19 further explains the name as signifying **God's sovereignty in bestowing salvation upon men**: "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of Jehovah before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (American Standard Version). Accordingly, we may say that the name JEHOVAH describes God as the God who in his absolute sovereignty and freedom bestows his covenant mercies upon his people, redeeming them from sin by almighty power and drawing them into fellowship with himself.

5. Why does the preface to the Ten Commandments mention God's delivering Israel out of Egypt?

Because we must understand that salvation comes first, and keeping God's commandments comes afterwards. We cannot really even begin to keep God's holy law until we have been redeemed from Satan's kingdom, just as the people of Israel could not really keep God's law until they were set free from Egyptian bondage. We are not saved because of obedience; we are saved **unto** obedience. Since Adam fell, redemption is the basis of obedience. Also God's work of redemption places upon us **an added obligation** to obey God's law. All men are under obligation to obey God's law, by reason of their relation to him as their Creator; but God's own people are under an added obligation to obey, by reason of their relation to him as their Redeemer.

6. Why did God refer to the land of Egypt as "the house of bondage"?

Because the land of Egypt was not only a literal place of bondage to the people of Israel, but also **symbolizes the spiritual slavery of sin**. Every child of God has been redeemed from a "house of bondage" vastly more powerful, cruel and tyrannical than the physical bondage of ancient Egypt. This statement in the preface to the Ten Commandments causes us to realize (a) that as Christians, we have been delivered from bitter slavery; and (b) that this deliverance was not our own achievement,

Lesson 87

For Week Beginning August 31, 1947

Q. 102. What is the sum of the four commandments which contain our duty to God?

A. The sum of the four commandments containing our duty to God, is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind.

Q. 103. Which is the first commandment?

A. The first commandment is, **Thou shalt have no other gods before me.**

Q. 104. What are the duties required in the first commandment?

A. The duties required in the first commandment are, the knowing and acknowledging of God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly, by thinking, meditating, remembering, highly esteeming, honoring, adoring, choosing, loving, desiring, fearing of him; believing him; trusting, hoping, delighting, rejoicing in him; being zealous for him; calling upon him, giving all praise and thanks, and yielding all obedience and submission to him with the whole man; being careful in all things to please him, and sorrowful when in any thing he is offended; and walking humbly with him.

Scripture References:

Luke 10:27. Christ's summary of the moral law, showing that **love to God** is the sum of the first four commandments.

Exodus 20:3. Deut. 5:7. The first commandment.

1 Chron. 28:9. Deut. 26:17. Isa. 43:10. Jer. 14:22. Knowing and acknowledging God to be the only true God, and our God.

Psalm 95:6, 7. Matt. 4:10. Psalm 29:2. Worshipping and glorifying God as the only true God, and our God.

but was accomplished by the sovereign, almighty power of God.

7. What two obligations does God's work of redemption place upon us?

(a) The obligation of **allegiance**, "to take him for our God alone"; (b) The obligation of **obedience**, "to keep all his commandments." We are to realize that we are not our own, we are bought with a price, the precious blood of Christ, and therefore we must render absolute allegiance and obedience to the God who has redeemed us to himself at infinite cost.

Mal. 3:16. Eccles. 12:1. We must think about God, and remember him.

Psalm 71:19. We must have a high idea of God.

Mal. 1:6. The duty of honoring God.

Isa. 45:23. The obligation to adore God.

Josh. 24:15, 22. The duty of choosing God as our God.

Deut. 6:5. Psalm 73:25. Isa. 8:13. We must love, desire and fear God.

Exod. 14:31. The duty of believing God.

Isa. 26:4. Psalm 130:7. Psalm 37:4; 32:11. We must trust, hope, delight and rejoice in God.

Rom. 12:11 compared with Num. 25:11. The duty of being zealous for God.

Phil. 4:6. We are to call upon God with thanksgiving.

Jer. 7:23. The obligation of total obedience to God.

James 4:7. The duty of submission to God.

1 John 3:22. We are to be careful to please God.

Jer. 31:18. Psalm 119:136. We are to be sad when we have offended God.

Micah 6:8. The duty of walking humbly with God.

Questions:

1. What does it mean to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind?

This means not merely an emotional attitude toward God, but an all-inclusive practical devotion to God that leads us to honor and obey him in every element,

sphere and relationship of our life. Everything in our life must be determined by our love to God. Thus there can be nothing in our life separate from our religion. We may not draw a boundary line and mark off any sphere or area of life and say that in that area our relation to God does not count. Whatsoever we do, we must do all to the glory of God. The man who thinks he can carry on his business life, or his political life, or his social life, without God, **is to that extent an irreligious person.** The teacher who thinks that his relation to God does not affect his teaching of chemistry, or his interpretation of European history, is to that extent an irreligious person. The consistent Christian will realize that **his religion is the ruling principle of all his life,** and that there is nothing in life which can be isolated from his relation to God.

2. Why is the first commandment placed first in the Ten Commandments?

Because this commandment is the foundation upon which the others depend. Our obligation to God is the source and basis of all other obligations. It is the primary and fundamental obligation of our life.

3. Why are we obliged to acknowledge God as the true God, and our God?

Because God is our Creator. It is he that made us, and not we ourselves. Also God is the Redeemer of his people from sin and hell. Therefore every thought of being independent of God is rebellious, irreligious and wicked.

4. Shall we be dependent on God for ever?

Yes. To all eternity, the relation between Creator and creature will remain. It can never be changed or pass away. **The distinction between Creator and creature is the most fundamental distinction of the Bible. It is assumed or implied in every verse of the whole Bible.**

5. How are we to express our dependence upon God?

We are to express our dependence on God (a) By a right attitude toward him; (b) by right thoughts about him; (c) by right

responses to his revealed will, the Holy Bible.

6. What is a right attitude toward God?

A right attitude toward God is a **reverent** attitude, which realizes and acknowledges the relation between Creator and creature and the **infinite** difference and distance between the two, and which recognizes that God is an **infinite** being whom we can never comprehend, but who will always remain mysterious and wonderful to us.

7. What do we mean by right thoughts concerning God?

By right thoughts concerning God, we mean thoughts about God which are **according to the truth of his revelation of himself in his Word,** and which therefore do not come from our own imaginations or desires, but from God's own revelation of himself. Thoughts about God which arise from the opinions, speculations or philosophy of sin-darkened human minds cannot be right thoughts about God. The only right thoughts about God, on the part of sinful human beings, are those derived from the Bible.

8. What do we mean by right responses to God's revealed will?

By right responses to God's revealed will, we mean a conscientious and whole-hearted willing obedience to all that he has commanded, and avoidance of all that he has forbidden, in his Word, so that the Bible is the real guide of our life.

9. What are some of the great truths **assumed** in this answer of the Catechism?

(a) The **existence** of God. (b) The doctrine of **creation.** (c) The **personality** of God. (d) Man's **moral responsibility** to God.

10. How may the duties required in the first commandment be summarized?

We may summarize these duties by saying that this commandment requires a devotion to God which shall be supreme, total and all-inclusive, so that our relation to God is the supreme and all-important fact of our lives. If we regard our relation to God as a side-issue or minor detail of our lives, we have not even begun to take the first commandment seriously.

Lesson 88

For Week Beginning September 7, 1947

Q. 105. What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the first com-

mandment are, Atheism, in denying or not having a God; Idolatry, in having or worshipping more gods than one, or any with

or instead of the true God; the not having and avouching him for God, and our God; the omission or neglect of anything due him, required in this commandment; ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions, false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts of him; . . .

(Note: because of the length of the answer to Q. 105, it will be divided into several lessons instead of attempting to deal with it in a single lesson).

Scripture References:

Psalm 14:1. The sin of atheism.

Eph. 2:12. Those who are without God have no hope.

Jer. 2:27, 28 compared with 1 Thess. 1:9. The sin of idolatry contrasted with serving the true God.

Psalm 81:11. The sin of rejecting God as the object of our supreme devotion.

Isa. 43:22-24. The sin of neglecting God and the worship he requires.

Jer. 4:22. Hos. 4:1, 6. The sin of ignorance concerning God and his will.

Acts 17:23, 29. The sin of misapprehending the nature of God and his will.

Isa. 40:18. The sin of false opinions concerning God.

Psalm 50:21. The sin of unworthy and wicked thoughts about God.

Questions:

1. What is the literal meaning of the word "atheism"?

"Atheism" literally means **no-God-ism**; it designates the teaching or belief that there is no God; hence it signifies **the denial of God's existence**.

2. What three kinds of atheism are there?

(a) Theoretical atheism. (b) Virtual atheism. (c) Practical atheism.

3. What is theoretical atheism?

Theoretical atheism is the absolute denial, as a matter of opinion or belief, of the existence of any God or gods.

4. What is virtual atheism?

Virtual atheism, which is very common and popular in America today, is **the denial of the existence of the God of the Bible**, the God who is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth, in

whom there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. Since this God of the Bible is the only living and true God, he is the only God that really exists. Therefore to deny the existence of the God of the Bible is **virtual atheism**. The virtual atheist believes in a God, but not in **the** God. His "God" is a finite, limited being, who is regarded as a necessary implication of the human mind. This "God" is usually regarded as having no absolute, independent existence apart from man and the universe. Just as "husband" and "wife" are correlative terms, which imply each other and depend on each other for their meaning, so the virtual atheist regards "God" and "man", or "God" and "the universe", as correlative terms which imply each other and depend on each other for their meaning. Such a belief differs from bald theoretical atheism in that it is more subtle, and does not seem to be so wicked. The virtual atheist may be a very religious person, in his own way. But at bottom his belief is no better than plain theoretical atheism.

5. What is practical atheism?

Practical atheism is conducting our lives as if there were no God, even though as a matter of belief we may admit that there is a God.

6. Which form of atheism is most common?

Downright theoretical atheism is comparatively rare, and does comparatively little harm because it is honestly and frankly labelled and it is quite easy to recognize as false. Virtual atheism is common among ministers, professors of theology, college and university professors, and especially philosophers. It is held especially by those who pride themselves on being "intellectuals". It is extremely dangerous because it is so subtle and often appears to be very religious. Practical atheism is by far the most common of all forms of atheism. It is the position of plain people who are simply indifferent to God.

7. What is the literal meaning of the word "idolatry"?

"Idolatry" literally means **the worshiping of images**, or of a god or gods by means of images.

8. In what sense does the Catechism use the word "idolatry"?

This answer of the Catechism uses the term "idolatry" in a broad, inclusive sense,

making the term include **polytheism** (belief in more than one God).

9. Why is atheism, in any form, a terrible sin?

Because God is the Creator of all men, and the atheist refuses to recognize or worship his Creator. The relation between Creator and creature is the most fundamental relationship in the Bible, and in human life. The person who denies this most fundamental of all relations is a thoroughly perverse and wicked person, for he has gone to the limit in denying the God who gave him life.

10. Why is it a terrible sin to have more gods than one, or to have any other god with or instead of the true God?

Because the nature of man's relation to his Creator is such that the true God demands his total, undivided devotion and allegiance. To divide our religious devotion, and give part of it to the true God who created us, and part to some other person or object of worship, is highly insulting to God. God will have all or nothing. To offer him a **part** of our loyalty and service is to dishonor and offend him.

11. Why is ignorance concerning the true God a great sin?

(a) Because only as we have a true knowledge of him can we worship, love and serve him aright. (b) Because abundant provision has been made, not only in Scripture, but also in the book of nature, for mankind to have a true knowledge of God. The person who is **ignorant** concerning God has already sinfully disregarded or misused God's revelation of himself, and shows that he does not really **want** to have a true knowledge of God (Romans 1:28).

12. Why is forgetfulness of God a great sin?

Because our forgetfulness of God indicates that our hearts are hardened by sin and that we do not really **care** very much about God. We remember what we are really interested in and concerned about. Our forgetfulness of God is a product of our sin-hardened **hearts**.

13. Why is it sinful to have misapprehensions, false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts about God?

Because our mistakes, errors, and false ideas about God do not spring merely from lack of intelligence, but from the fall of the human race into sin, which has not only hardened our hearts and inclined us to all kinds of wickedness, but has also darkened and clouded our minds so that we fail to discern the truth, and fall victims to all kinds of errors. **Every false idea or unworthy thought about God arises from sin**—not only from our own personal sin, but also from the fall of the human race into sin by Adam's transgression against God.

14. Does not every person have a right to his own opinion about God?

When we speak of "rights" we must distinguish between **civil** rights and **moral** rights. As to moral rights, the answer to the above question is No. No person has any moral right to believe anything false about God, or to believe otherwise about God than as he is revealed in the Scriptures. As to civil rights, the person who has false ideas about God has a civil right to hold his false beliefs without interference by his fellow-citizens or the State; that is, the civil government does not properly have any jurisdiction over people's thoughts and beliefs, and may not persecute or punish any person for his false beliefs or opinions, or even for being an atheist; but such a person will have to give answer to God at the Judgment Day. We believe, however, that the civil magistrate may rightly, **for civil reasons**, prohibit the **public propagation** of atheism and of the denial of man's moral responsibility to God. For a civil court to refuse to grant a charter of incorporation to an association the purpose of which is publicly to propagate atheism, is no real infringement of civil or religious liberty. The **success** of such a corporation would result in the destruction of the moral foundations of human society and of the State itself. Civil and religious liberty do not include even the civil right to attempt to destroy the very basis of human civilization.

Lesson 89

For Week Beginning September 14, 1947

Q. 105 (Continued). What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the first commandment are . . . bold and curious searching into his secrets; all profaneness, hatred of God; self-love, self-seeking, and all other

inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from him in whole or in part; vain credulity, unbelief, heresy, misbelief, distrust, despair; . . .

Scripture References:

Deut. 29:29. Bold and curious searching into God's secrets.

Tit. 1:16. Heb. 12:16. The sin of profaneness.

Rom. 1:30. The sin of hating God.

2 Tim. 3:2. The sin of inordinate self-love.

Phil. 2:21. The sin of immoderate self-seeking.

1 John 2:15, 16. The sin of setting our hearts on created things rather than on God.

1 Sam. 2:29. Col. 3:2, 5. Love of the world and earthly things more than God.

1 John 4:1. The sin of vain credulity.

Heb. 3:12. The sin of unbelief.

Gal. 5:20. Tit. 3:10. The sin of heresy.

Acts 26:9. The sin of misbelief, or sincere belief of what is false.

Psalms 78:22. The sin of distrust.

Gen 4:13. The sin of despair.

Questions:

1. What is meant by "bold and curious searching into God's secrets"?

This statement, which might easily be misunderstood, does not mean that it is wrong for us to search into the mysteries of God's revelation, whether in nature or in Scripture. What is forbidden is not searching, but **bold and curious** searching into God's secrets; that is, searching **with a wrong attitude** (boldness or irreverence), or **with a wrong motive** (curiosity, rather than a desire to glorify God and benefit mankind). The person who searches into God's secrets with a reverent attitude and a right motive will always realize that he must come to a stopping place where he can proceed no further but **is faced with baffling and impenetrable mystery**. His aim will be to think God's thoughts after him, that is, to understand what God has revealed for men to understand, not to **comprehend God with his human intellect**.

2. What is the meaning of "profaneness"?

"Profaneness" is not the same as **profanity**, which means taking God's name in vain. Profanity is a sin of speech, whereas **profaneness** is a sin of character, a sin of the whole life. A profane person is one who regards sacred and holy things as if they were ordinary or commonplace. Esau

was a profane person because he regarded his birthright as worth no more than an ordinary dinner. Cannibals are profane people because they regard the human body, which is inherently sacred, as having only the value of common food. The heathen who will tear a Bible up and use the paper to make cigarettes or to line shoes are profane people because they have no comprehension of the sacredness of the Word of God, and they treat it as having only the value of the paper it is printed on.

3. How can we explain the fact that unregenerate people really hate God?

This fact, which cannot be denied (Romans 1:30), can only be explained on the basis of the Bible doctrines of original sin and total depravity. The fact that there are people who even boast that they hate God, shows the abysmal depths of moral evil to which the human race has sunk through the fall of Adam.

4. Is self-love a sin?

Self-love is not a sin unless it is **inordinate** self-love. The command "Thou shalt love thy neighbor **as thyself**" implies that **self-love is a duty**. As self-preservation is the basic instinct of our nature, to love one's self cannot be a sin, but must be a divinely implanted impulse in the human soul. But when self-love gets out of balance, so that a person loves himself more than his neighbor, and especially more than God, then it is **inordinate** self-love, and therefore sinful. The same is true in the matter of "self-seeking".

5. What is the real nature of the sin of **worldliness**?

Christian people often have very mechanical and superficial ideas of what worldliness is. Worldliness is commonly identified with three or four of its ordinary external manifestations, such as dancing, gambling, card-playing, and the like. But worldliness, in its essence, is really **loving and seeking the things of the world more than we love and seek God**. It is a matter of "setting our mind, will or affections upon other things" rather than upon God. A person can be a very worldly person without ever indulging in the common forms of worldliness such as dancing or gambling. For example, a great musician who loves his musical art more than he loves God is a **worldly** person. A famous scientist who is absorbed in his scientific researches more than he is in knowing and honoring God, is a **worldly** person.

6. What is the meaning of "vain credulity"?

This means a readiness to believe or accept that which is really unworthy of belief or acceptance because it lacks evidence of truth. The common word for it is **gullibility**. The gullible person is ready to believe anything he hears. He is unable to discriminate between what is worthy of belief and what is not. In the religious sphere, the gullible person is greatly influenced by any preacher who presents a message with enthusiasm and eloquence and tells some interesting stories as illustrations. The gullible hearer does not weigh the preacher's statements and compare them with the Scriptures; he just swallows them whole without any accurate or careful thinking. Such people are greatly influenced by the last book or article they have read; soon they will read another book or article, and will change their views accordingly. They follow every changing fad in the realm of religion, and lack discernment and stability.

7. Why is unbelief a dreadful sin?

Unbelief is a dreadful sin because **we are saved by means of faith**, and since unbelief is the opposite of faith, it cuts off the possibility of a person's salvation as long as he continues in his unbelief. Of course there are degrees of unbelief, and even the best Christian has some degree of unbelief. It is only when the person is **dominated** by unbelief that salvation is out of the question. This condition the Bible describes as having an **evil heart of unbelief** (Heb. 3:12).

8. What is the meaning of **heresy**?

In the Bible the word "heresy" means

carrying on propaganda for false doctrine, for example by forming a sect or party in the Church to teach and propagate false doctrines, contrary to what God has revealed in his Word. In modern usage the term "heresy" has come to mean **false doctrines**, and especially **believing and holding false doctrines which are contrary to the essential truths of Christianity**. While heresy in this modern sense is certainly sinful, still in the Bible the word includes the idea of **forming a party or faction** to carry on propaganda for false doctrines.

9. What is **misbelief**?

The term "misbelief" means **religious delusion**, that is, a firm, confident faith in something which is false or wrong. Paul thought he was doing the will of God in persecuting Christian people. This was **misbelief** on his part.

10. What is meant by **distrust** and **despair**?

These two terms are related to each other. **Despair** is simply **total distrust**. **Distrust** means doubting or disbelieving God's promises, love and goodness. **Despair** means disbelieving God's promises, love and goodness totally, to the limit. Cain gave way to despair, because he said that his punishment was greater than he could bear. He had no faith to ask God to forgive his sin of murdering his brother. Judas gave way to despair when, instead of praying to God for forgiveness, he went and hanged himself. Despair is a common motive for suicide; when a person has come to think that there is no more hope of God's help he may, in his desperate unbelief, seek to "end it all" by taking his own life.

Lesson 90

For Week Beginning September 21, 1947

Q. 150 (Continued). What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the first commandment are . . . incorrigibleness, and insensibleness under judgments, hardness of heart, pride, presumption, carnal security, tempting of God; using unlawful means, and trusting in lawful means, carnal delights and joys; corrupt, blind, and indiscreet zeal; . . .

Scripture References:

Jer. 5:3. The sin of being incorrigible.

Isa. 42:25. Insensibleness under divine judgments.

Rom 2:5. The sin of hardness of heart.

Jer. 13:15. Prov. 16:5. Psalm 138:6. 1 Tim. 6:4. The sin of pride.

Psalm 19:13. 2 Pet. 2:10. The sin of presumption.

Zeph. 1:12. Rev. 18:8. Isa. 28:15. Carnal security a sin.

Matt. 4:7. Tempting God a sin.

Rom. 3:8. The sin of using unlawful means.

Jer. 17:5. The sin of trusting in lawful means.

2 Tim. 3:4. Loving pleasure more than we love God is wicked.

Gal. 4:17. John 16:2. Rom. 10:2. Luke 9:54, 55. Misguided zeal is sinful.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of **incorrigibility**?

This word literally means **being incapable of being corrected**. Both God's goodness and his judgments ought to bring men to repentance, but unless accompanied by the special work of the Holy Spirit, they do not lead to true repentance. There are many people who in time of welfare and prosperity simply ignore or forget God, and then in time of trouble or calamity they become stubborn and defy God in their persistent unbelief. This is the state of incorrigibility.

2. What is meant by **insensibility under judgments**?

This means failure to recognize God's hand in the troubles and calamities that come upon a person or a nation. Those who attribute all their troubles to "fate" or "chance" or "bad luck", or to the **mere** operation of natural laws, never see God's hand in what happens to them. They fail to realize that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, and that all things are under God's providential government and all work together in God's moral government of the world. While people are in such a state of mind, no judgments that God might send will make any impression on them. A person who is totally blind will not see the brightest light, nor will a person who is totally deaf hear the loudest sound.

3. What do we mean by the expression **hardness of heart**?

"Hardness of heart" is an expression used to describe a state of character in which spiritual sensitivity has been largely or entirely lost. When a person is in this condition his conscience functions very little, or not at all. He is indifferent to God, spiritual things, and the eternal salvation of his soul. Both the law and the gospel fail to impress or influence him. Unless God in his special grace and mercy gives such a person a **new heart**, he cannot be saved.

4. Give a Bible example of a person whose spiritual condition was "hardness of heart."

Pharaoh, king of Egypt, in the days of Moses, when in spite of repeated warnings and judgments he would not let God's people go, and even after he had let them go, he changed his mind and pursued after them to the Red Sea.

5. What is **pride**, and why is it condemned in the Bible as a great sin?

Pride is an unjustifiable and falsely high opinion of ourselves, our character or achievements. It is the perversion of **self-respect**, which is legitimate and not sinful. Pride is wicked for two reasons: (a) It is contrary to our position before God as **dependent creatures**; and (b) it is contrary to our position before God as **guilty and helpless sinners**. The things people pride themselves on, if they are real, are after all **only gifts of God**, and therefore they are nothing to be proud of. Thus the apostle Paul in Romans 4:2 informs us that even if Abraham had been justified by works, he would have no ground of glorifying before God. Read 1 Cor. 4:7 and note the three questions which are asked in this verse, which are calculated to puncture the balloon of human pride. In essence pride amounts to a **declaration of independence of God**; it rests upon an assumption that we can do something, or be something, or accomplish something good and worth-while, of ourselves, apart from God and his foreordination and gifts of nature and grace. Therefore pride is based on a lie, which is very offensive to God.

6. What is **carnal security**, and why is it wrong?

Carnal security means an easy-going confidence that everything is going to be all right, when we have no legitimate grounds for such confidence. It is carnal security that leads people to say "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. Carnal security involves a complacent attitude toward sin and a lukewarm, indifferent attitude toward God. This is wicked because it dishonors God, whom we ought to seek earnestly and serve faithfully, and it deceives our own selves instead of knowing and facing the real truth about our condition.

7. What is meant by **tempting of God**?

The Gospel record of the temptation of our Saviour gives the key to the meaning of this expression. It means deliberately or carelessly acting in a wicked or foolish manner and counting on God's goodness and power to keep us out of the trouble that would come upon us because of our actions. For Jesus to jump off the pinnacle of the Temple, trusting in God to send angels to protect him from bodily injury, would have been to tempt God, which is forbidden in Scripture. For a person to neglect ordinary care and precautions to prevent sickness or accident, and then claim to be trusting in God to keep him safe and in good health, amounts to tempting God, and therefore is wicked.

8. What is meant by **using unlawful means**?

This expression means "doing evil that good may come", that is, trying to accomplish a good purpose by doing something that is wrong and sinful. There have always been people who have advocated such a course of conduct.

9. What do we mean by **trusting in lawful means**?

By affirming that trusting in lawful means is a sin forbidden in the first commandment, the Catechism means that even when we are using means that are lawful and right, we must put our real trust and confidence in God, not in our own methods. It is right to consult a physician and take medicine if we are sick, but we must put our real trust in God, not in the physician or the remedies he may prescribe.

10. What is the meaning of the phrase **carnal delights and joys**?

The word **carnal** is derived from a Latin word meaning **flesh**, from which our English word **carnival** is also derived. **Carnal** is an adjective and means **pertaining to the flesh**. In this statement of the Catechism the word **carnal** does not necessarily refer to **the body**; rather, it refers to "the flesh" as used by the apostle Paul to mean **our sinful nature**, which he describes by such expressions as "the old man," "the law of sin in our members", "the mind of the flesh", etc. 2 Tim. 3:4 shows that it is characteristic of our sinful nature **to love pleasure more than we love God**. "Carnal delights and joys", therefore, are those delights and joys which appeal especially to our old, sinful nature, but which are far from delightful or joyful to our new nature which we receive when we are born again of the Holy Spirit.

11. What is **corrupt, blind, and indiscreet zeal**, and why is it sinful?

The word **zeal** means enthusiasm for something, which leads to vigorous activity for that cause or idea. The Chinese word

for zeal is literally a **hot heart**, which gives a good idea of the meaning. To have zeal, or to be zealous for God, is good and right. But there are also wrong kinds of zeal, which the Catechism describes as "corrupt, blind, and indiscreet zeal." This means that even when we are zealous **for the true God and his service**, still our zeal may be sinful. **Corrupt zeal** is zeal that proceeds from our own sinful heart and its desires and impulses, rather than from our new nature and the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. When a Christian, in arguing with some person about the truth of the Bible, in his zeal to defend God's Word loses his temper and becomes angry, instead of having a meek and patient spirit, that is an example of **corrupt zeal**. **Blind zeal** is a zeal which is not founded on true knowledge. When Paul, before his conversion, persecuted Christian people, that was an example of **blind zeal**, as he came to recognize later. The Jews of Paul's day had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; therefore it was a **blind zeal**. Another sinful kind of zeal is **indiscreet zeal**: this means zeal for something that is true and right, but zeal lacking in wisdom or common sense. For example, to urge Christian people to attend prayer meetings regularly is zeal for something that is right. But if someone insists on having prayer meetings for several hours every day, and tries to persuade his fellow Christians that all their free time must be spent in prayer meetings and nothing else, that is **indiscreet zeal**, because it is not according to wisdom or common sense. A case was reported in a newspaper of a zealous Christian spoiling the finish of a newly painted automobile which was some other person's property, by writing on it with hard chalk, in large letters, the words "JESUS SAVES"; that was **indiscreet zeal**, because lacking in wisdom or common sense. All corrupt, blind or indiscreet zeal is sinful because it proceeds from our own **wickedness, ignorance or foolishness**, instead of from the **holiness, knowledge and wisdom** which the Holy Spirit imparts to us by his work in our hearts and lives.

Lesson 91

For Week Beginning September 28, 1947

Q. 105 (Continued). What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the first commandment are . . . lukewarmness, and deadness in the things of God; estranging ourselves, and apostatizing from God; praying, or giving any religious worship, to saints, angels, or any other creatures; all compacts

and consulting with the devil, and hearkening to his suggestions; . . .

Scripture References:

Rev. 3:16. The sin of lukewarmness.

Rev. 3:1. Deadness in the things of God.

Ezek. 14:5. Isa. 1:4, 5. Estranging ourselves from God.

Rom. 10:13, 14. Hos. 4:12. Acts 10:25, 26. Rev. 19:10. Matt. 4:10. Col. 2:18. Rom. 1:25. Religious worship is to be paid to God only and not to any created being.

Lev. 20:6. 1 Sam. 28:7, 11 compared with 1 Chron. 10:13, 14. God has forbidden all attempts to communicate with the dead, or to consult with the devil or evil spirits.

Acts 5:3. It is wrong to pay heed to the suggestions of Satan.

Questions:

1. What is meant by **spiritual lukewarmness**?

Spiritual lukewarmness is a condition of sluggish indifference or complacency about the things of God and the salvation of our souls, that leads a person to be satisfied with things as they are and to have no earnest desire to make progress in the Christian life. God's Word teaches us that a condition of spiritual lukewarmness is even more displeasing to God than for a person to be **cold** in the things of God (Rev. 3:15).

2. Is spiritual lukewarmness a common condition at the present day?

No doubt spiritual lukewarmness has always been a common condition, and it is something that every Christian has to fight against continually. However it may be that spiritual lukewarmness is more prevalent among Christian people in our own day than in former times.

3. What is the remedy for spiritual lukewarmness?

Although all kinds of programs and methods have been advocated for dealing with the spiritual and religious lukewarmness of the present day, we may be sure that there is no shortcut by which this condition can be easily or quickly changed. The only remedy is more of the grace of God in Christian people's lives — more heed paid to the teachings of the Bible, more repentance and sorrow for sin, more love to God and man—that is, more of the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christian people.

4. What is meant by **deadness in the things of God**?

We understand lukewarmness to be a sin of Christian people who really are born again of the Holy Spirit, whereas **spiritual deadness is the total lack of spiritual life**, which is the condition of those who have never been born again of the Holy Spirit. Such people are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). This is the condition of all

infidels or unbelievers, and of the non-Christian or heathen world as a whole. But there are also **professing Christians** who really lack all spiritual life. These have only the form of godliness, but lack the power thereof. They may go through the outward forms and motions of the Christian life, attend Church services, and the like, but they do not have the new life and the power of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. It was such people that constituted the membership of the Church in Sardis, of which Christ said, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Rev. 3:1).

5. What is the remedy for spiritual deadness?

The only remedy for spiritual deadness, whether in an individual person's life, or in a church or a nation, is the old Gospel of Jesus Christ, accompanied by the life-giving renewing power of the Holy Spirit. Where the Gospel message is faithfully proclaimed, the Holy Spirit will be at work and there will be those who will pass out of death into life, and become "new creatures in Christ Jesus."

6. What does the Catechism mean by "estranging ourselves, and apostatizing from God"?

This means what is sometimes called "backsliding" or "falling away from God". It is what happens when a professing Christian loses interest in the things of God and gives up **even the formal profession** of Christianity. Such a person is **hardened**; he is not concerned about spiritual things; he fails to make any use of the means of grace (the Bible, the sacraments, prayer). Ordinarily he will not attend Church services or engage in even the forms of the worship of God. We should realize that a Christian who has been born again of the Holy Spirit will not totally or permanently fall away from God. However even a born-again Christian may fall away from God to a degree, and for a time, as Peter did when he denied Christ three times in one night. Another form of "estranging ourselves, and apostatizing from God" is to give up real Christianity and become a member of a false religion or cult. This of course is the height of wickedness.

7. Why is it wrong to give religious worship to saints, angels, or other creatures?

It is wrong to give religious worship to saints, angels, or other creatures because: (a) They did not create us, and therefore have no claim on our religious devotion. (b) They did not redeem us from sin, and

therefore our gratitude for salvation is not due to them, but to God alone. (c) They are not mediators between God and us, for there is only one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore all religious worship given to saints, angels, or other creatures, **inevitably detracts from the worship and honor that is due to God alone.** No person can worship saints or angels, and still give God the devotion that is due to him.

8. What church sanctions and practices praying to saints and angels?

The Roman Catholic Church, which wrongly regards saints and angels as mediators between the worshipper and God.

9. Why is **spiritism**, or the attempt to communicate with the dead by means of **spirit mediums** or persons with "familiar spirits", a great sin?

God has strictly forbidden this practice in his Word. Those who disregard the Scripture warnings against it will become terribly entangled in the snares of Satan,

from which it may be impossible for them ever to escape. This wicked practice is common today, but Christian people should maintain the strictest separation from everything connected with it.

10. Why should Christian people avoid "all compacts and consulting with the devil, and hearkening to his suggestions"?

Christian people have been translated from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. Their only attitude toward Satan should be a negative one. The only word a Christian ever ought to say to any suggestion of Satan is the word **No**. Harkening to Satan's suggestions began when Eve listened to the serpent and thereupon began to doubt the truth of what God had said. Of course "compacts and consulting with the devil" are wickedly wrong regardless of whether actual contact with Satan is established or not; the mere attempt to do such a thing is giving aid and comfort to God's greatest enemy, and can bring nothing but anguish and woe to human lives.

Blue Banner Question Box

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

Open Letter

Dear Editor:

In your reply in last issue to the inquiry as to why the American Covenanters did not formulate their Covenant until 1871, you seem to endorse the sentiment of your correspondent who says that prior to this there is "no record of any Covenant being signed either in Britain or America among those who are called Covenanters" (Blue Banner Faith and Life, April-June, 1947, page 95).

Granting that we have no record of any **new** Covenant Bond being written in America within that time, should no account be taken of the famous Covenanting service that was held by the scattered American Covenanters at Octorara, Pennsylvania, in 1743, of which Glasgow says, "They denounced in a public manner the policy of George the Second, renewed the Covenants, and swore with uplifted swords that they would defend their lives and their property against all attack and confiscation, and their consciences would be kept free from the tyrannical burdens of

Episcopacy" (W. M. Glasgow, **History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America**, pp. 65, 66).

Personally I deeply regret finding no record of this in the "Historical" part of our Testimony, and that in 1943 we allowed the two hundredth anniversary of that most vital service to pass unrecognized. For note what Glasgow further says: "Thomas Jefferson says in his autobiography, that when he was engaged in preparing the National Declaration, he and his colleagues searched everywhere for formulas, and that the printed proceedings of Octorara were before him" (same reference).

Faithfully,
T. M. Slater

Note: We are very glad to publish this letter of Dr. Slater which calls attention to an outstanding event in the history of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America. There is a very brief and inadequate mention of the Octorara covenanting service in the Historical part of the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, Chapter III (page 95). The Octorara service was remarkable especially in view of its early date, 1743, the same year that the Reformed Presbytery was first constituted in Scotland, and thirty-one years before the first American Reformed Presbytery was consti-

tuted in 1774. As Dr. Slater points out, the lack of a new Covenant formulated in America does not mean that prior to 1871 the obligations of the old Scottish Covenants were forgotten by American Covenanters. The Octarara service shows that these vows were remembered and renewed, and that the American Covenanters of that day were zealous in their love of liberty.—Editor.

Some More Good Books

Christianity Rightly So Called, by Samuel G. Craig. The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 525 Locust St., Philadelphia 6, Pa. An excellent piece of straight thinking that is much needed in our day of religious vagueness and confusion. Clear as crystal, pungent as peppermint and unanswerable as the multiplication table. 270 pages. \$2.00.

A Child's Story of the World and its People, by Amelia C. Krug. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis 18, Mo. This book is a history of the world from the beginning to the present, written in language which can be understood by children. Its purpose is to correlate Biblical and secular history, demonstrating that there is only ONE history, with God at its beginning and end and Calvary at its center. Profusely illustrated with drawings, pictures, and maps. 176 pages. \$1.10.

Why We Baptize Infants, by Albertus Pieters. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. A clear and convincing statement and defense of the doctrine of Infant Baptism. \$40.

Calvinism: Six Stone Foundation Lectures, by Abraham Kuypers. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. A popular discussion of Calvinism as a philosophy of life, by the great theologian and one-time Prime Minister of The Netherlands. This book discusses Calvinism as a Life-system, Calvinism and Religion, Calvinism and Politics, Calvinism and Science, Calvinism and Art, Calvinism and the Future. Truly an illuminating volume. 199 pages. \$2.50.

Note: Additional outstanding religious books will be listed in our next issue. The listing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Please purchase books through your local bookstore or direct from the publishers; do not send orders to the publisher of "Blue Banner Faith and Life."

Question:

In the Old Testament it appears that one who became a member of the Visible Church through circumcision had the same status as our communicant members today. History shows no distinction between a circumcized member of Israel, or a baptized member of the Christian Church, and a full communicant member, until about the 15th century. How does the Church justify this distinction without admitting a failure in discipline?

Answer:

(a) Among the Jews those circumcised as infants were thus recognized as members of the covenant people, but did not have all the obligations and privileges of membership until they reached a certain age (John 9:21, 23). Probably children partook of the Passover along with their parents, but still there was a distinction between them and those who, having attained legal age, had been admitted to all the privileges and responsibilities of adult membership. (b) In the Christian Church, persons baptized in infancy were expected, on reaching a suitable age, to make a **personal** profession of their faith, whereupon they were admitted to the Lord's Supper and other privileges and obligations of "communicant membership". In the course of time the practice of **confirmation** became associated with this profession of faith, and confirmation came to be regarded as a sacrament; in the Latin Church it could be administered only by the bishop. This rite of confirmation marked the transition from "baptized membership" to **full communicant membership**, and it was practiced in the Church long before the 15th century. At the Reformation, it was generally recognized by Protestants that the Bible gives no sanction to a **sacrament of confirmation**, and in the Reformed Churches its place was taken by the practice of **public**

profession of faith, at a proper age, on the part of those who had been baptized on their parents' profession in infancy. (c) The Church justifies the distinction between "baptized members" and "communicant members" on the basis of the Scriptural doctrine of the Covenant of Grace. The infants of believers, by reason of God's covenant promises to their parents, are members of the Church by birth, and as such are entitled to the sacramental sign and seal of Baptism. But in the nature of the case they are not qualified for the privileges and responsibilities of "communicant membership" until they have reached years of discretion. The Lord's Supper, as set forth in the New Testament, requires **self-examination and discernment of the Lord's body**, of which infants are not capable. Nor are persons who have not reached years of discretion qualified to vote in the election of church officers. They are, however, subject to the discipline of the Church, and may be called to account by the Session, even though they have not made a public profession of faith. Every person, old or young, who has been baptized in a congregation is subject to the jurisdiction of the Session of that congregation **until his name is actually removed from the roll**. Those who, having been baptized in infancy and having attained years of discretion, neglect or refuse to make a public profession of faith, are to be entreated and encouraged to do so. If they persist in their neglect their names must finally be removed from the roll of baptized members. There is no justification for the "Half-Way Covenant" which was practiced in the New England Churches in the 18th century, which permitted those who were only baptized members to have **their** children baptized, and so on from one generation to the next without becoming communicant members. But there is no failure of church discipline involved in maintaining a roll of baptized members who have not yet made a profession of faith, and a separate roll of communicant members who have personally professed their faith in Christ.

Question:

Is it wrong to perform magic tricks for people's entertainment?

Answer:

(a) What is commonly called "black magic", that is, the attempt to use super-human powers such as the devil, evil spirits, etc., to accomplish our purposes, is certainly wicked. This is true regardless of whether there is any real connection with super-human powers or not; the mere **attempt** to

use such powers is a heinous sin. (b) What is commonly called "parlor magic", that is, sleight of hand tricks, is not sinful in itself, for it does not profess to use demonic powers nor is it intended really to deceive people. Everyone knows that the performer's "trick" is accomplished by manual dexterity and cleverly diverting the observer's attention from the actual scene of operations. The performance then becomes a contest of wits and attention between the performer and the observers. When a rabbit is pulled out of a hat, everyone knows that the performer had the rabbit concealed somewhere, and tries to figure out how he did it. There is nothing morally wrong in this. (c) Sleight of hand has sometimes been used really to deceive people; for instance, in some countries it has been used by priests to produce counterfeit "miracles". This is of course wickedly deceitful.

Question:

The larger Catechism, Q. 32, represents faith as a condition required by God of sinners to give them an interest in Christ, whereas the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony rejects as an error the proposition "That faith is the condition of the Covenant of Grace" (Chapter IX, Error 4). How can these statements be reconciled?

Answer:

In the history of Reformed theology there have two ways of formulating the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace. What may be called the Two-covenant view distinguishes between the **Covenant of Redemption**, made between God the Father and God the Son, and the **Covenant of Grace**, made between God and his elect people. According to this view, the Covenant of Redemption lays the basis for the Covenant of Grace. The condition of the Covenant of Redemption is the perfect righteousness of Christ; the condition of the Covenant of Grace is faith in Jesus Christ on the part of elect sinners.

Opposed to this view is what may be called the One-covenant view, which regards **redemption** and **grace** as both aspects of one and the same Covenant. Both the Westminster Standards and the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony set forth this One-covenant view. The Testimony expressly condemns the Two-covenant view (Chapter IX, Error 3). Since the Testimony adopts the One-covenant view, of course it must hold that the righteousness of Christ is the only condition of the Covenant of Grace.

The statement of the Larger Cate-

chism, Q. 32, seems to contradict the statement of the Testimony, but the contradiction is only apparent. It should be noted that the Catechism does not represent faith as the condition of the Covenant of Grace, but as a condition required by God of sinners to interest them in Christ and his salvation. Clearly the Catechism does not represent faith as the condition upon which **God's saving mercy to sinners is contingent**, for the Catechism immediately adds that in the Covenant of Grace God "promiseth and giveth his holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces". Thus the Catechism uses the word "condition" in the sense of **instrument**, just as in Q. 73 the Catechism states that "Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God . . . only as it is an **instrument** by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and his righteousness".

In accordance with the One-covenant view, the perfect righteousness of Christ is the one and only condition of the Covenant of Grace. On the ground of the righteousness of Christ, all the benefits of the Covenant of Grace are freely bestowed on elect sinners, **including the gift of saving faith**. Within the Covenant of Grace, faith is required of the sinner as the means or instrument (or "condition") of participation in the benefits of Christ's mediation. If we follow the Catechism in calling faith a "condition" in this sense, we should realize that this is not the ordinary usage and meaning of the word "condition". For the faith which God requires **he also bestows as a free gift**; that very faith is itself one of the **benefits** of the Covenant of Grace procured for the elect by Christ's fulfilling the real condition of the Covenant of Grace by his blood and righteousness. Since saving faith is itself a **benefit** of the Covenant of Grace, it clearly cannot be the **condition** of that same Covenant. Faith is simply the means God is pleased to use to connect elect sinners with Christ for their salvation. (For the Scripture references dealing with these matters the reader is referred to the texts printed with the Larger Catechism, Q. 30-32, The Confession of Faith, Chapter VII. and the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, Chapter IX).

Question:

In the October-December, 1946, issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" (page 179), in answer to the questions "Does God speak to people directly today as he did in Bible times? Is it correct to say that in prayer we not only talk to God but also pause and listen to his voice?", the statement is made that "God's providence may indicate that

it is not God's will for me to go to Africa as a missionary . . .". But what about the positive side of the question? Does not God by his providence, or by the Holy Spirit producing a direct impression upon a person's mind, call people to special forms of Christian service, as for example to the work of the Gospel ministry, or to service in some foreign mission field? If a person claims to have been specially called by the Holy Spirit to serve as a missionary in China or Africa, should we say that such a person is mistaken? Or does the Holy Spirit in such cases produce a direct impression upon a person's consciousness?

Answer:

(a) Since the completion of the canon of Scripture, the Holy Spirit does not reveal any truth to God's people in addition to what is in the Bible, but only illuminates their minds to enable them to grasp and appropriate what is already revealed in Scripture. (b) By his work of providence, God may lead a person into a special form of Christian service, such as the ministry or the foreign mission field. That is to say, God in his providence, which controls all that ever comes to pass, may give a person good health, an adequate education, the ability to learn a foreign language, and a knowledge of the needs and opportunities of foreign missionary work. This person realizes that he is qualified for missionary work, and being an earnest Christian, he offers his services to a mission board or other agency, which appoints him as a missionary and sends him to the foreign field. Such a person certainly ought to regard himself as called to be a foreign missionary. The Visible Church represents Christ in carrying out the Great Commission, and the person who has been lawfully appointed by Christ's Church as a foreign missionary has in very truth been called by Christ to that service. (c) The question of **direct** calls of the Holy Spirit to special service is a more difficult one. The Holy Spirit is sovereign and works when and where and how he pleases. We may not deny the reality of such special guidance or calling as is described in the above query. However we must be on guard against fanatical and extravagant claims such as are made by many people. Any person who tends at all toward slighting the Bible as his only rule of faith and life, and depending on "guidance" from the Holy Spirit instead of the Bible, must be regarded as a mistaken mystic. We may be very sure that the Holy Spirit **never** leads people to neglect or disregard the

written Word of God. Also we should realize that no doctrinal question of truth and error, and no ethical question of right and wrong, is ever to be settled by any alleged direct guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit being almighty can of course produce direct impressions upon the human consciousness, but he does not do so to give us answers to the questions "What is true?" and "What is right?" The history of the Church records some remarkable instances of persons who believed they had a direct call from the Holy Spirit, whose subsequent life and work abundantly indicated that they were indeed called of God to his service. In this connection the account of the conversion of Augustine of Hippo, as given in his "Confessions", Book VIII, Section 29, is of great interest. We should not say that those who claim a special direct call of the Holy Spirit are mistaken. But we should always be on guard against the tendency (which is far from imaginary) to claim or expect such special calling as something promised to all believers, to reduce it to a uniform or mechanical pattern, and to expect it to be similar in all cases. In the nature of the case such special calling is to be regarded as **exceptional**. God's ordinary and regular way of working is through the facts of his providence and the call of his Visible Church. If a person has experienced a special call of the Holy Spirit, that is a matter between that person and God, not something to preach and talk about to other people. In fact we could almost say that the reality of such a call should be questioned if the person is inclined to talk about it or be proud of it. A call of the Holy Spirit is to be **obeyed**, not talked about. The person who is most filled with the Holy Spirit will not be one to talk a great deal about the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the person who is really most filled with the Holy Spirit will be most faithful in humbly following and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ. Where Christ is most exalted, there is the greatest work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was not sent to bear witness of himself, but of Christ.

Question:

Is it proper to administer the sacrament of Baptism privately, that is, in a private home with only the family and a few friends present?

Answer:

Private Baptism, if administered by a lawfully ordained minister of Christ, is **valid but irregular**. The Reformed Pres-

byterian Testimony, Chapter XXV, rejects as an error the proposition "That a private administration of the sacraments is as proper as the administration of them in the presence of the Church" (Error 11). That is, while private administration of the sacraments does not render them **invalid**, still it is an **irregular** act. A minister may be called to account by his Presbytery for administering either of the sacraments privately.

Both Baptism and the Lord's Supper are essentially **Church ordinances**. Baptism is the badge of membership in the Visible Church. The Lord's Supper sets forth, among other things, the unity and solidarity of Christians as members of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16, 17). When the sacraments are administered privately, or in any other gathering than a congregation of Christ's Church, this corporate character of the ordinances is disregarded, and they are represented as a private matter between the believer and God. Also the minister who administers the sacraments privately does not appear in his true character as the Church's representative and servant in her stewardship of the sacraments; he appears rather to be a priestly individual who dispenses the sacraments apart from the congregation of God's people.

Another bad feature of private administration of the sacraments is the fact that in such administration the sacraments are nearly always divorced from the preaching of the Word of God. In the Middle Ages the Romish Church came to regard sacraments as more important than preaching, and the sacraments were frequently — indeed usually — administered without the preaching of the Word. The Reformers, and especially Calvin, saw that this was wrong, and recognized as a sound principle that the administration of the sacraments must always be accompanied by the preaching of the Word. We should emphasize this.

Of course there may arise circumstances in which one of the sacraments ought to be administered otherwise than in a regular service of a congregation. For example, a person who because of illness has been unable to attend Church for a long time may wish to partake of the Lord's Supper. Under such circumstances a special service can be arranged for the purpose, which should be attended by the elders of the Church and some of the members, to preserve the corporate character of the sacrament. There should also be preaching of the Word, although this may

have to be comparatively brief; but it should never be omitted.

All tendencies to regard the Baptism of an infant as a **social** occasion for family, relatives and friends, should be avoided. The administration of Baptism is a **religious** matter pure and simple and should not be associated with social festivities of any kind. We should also avoid the use of the term "christening" for Baptism, as it is without warrant in the Bible and misleading in its associations.

There sometimes exist circumstances when Baptism must be administered without the presence of a congregation of Christ's Church. For instance, the **first** converts on a new mission field must be baptized by the missionaries in that field without the presence of a congregation, for the simple reason that there cannot be a congregation until enough converts have been baptized to constitute one. This is one of the exceptions to ordinary practice that are inevitable in the early stages of missionary work. But there is no warrant for private Baptism where a congregation of believers exists.

Question:

Since it seems to be generally recognized that the early Christian Church observed the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day, should we not follow this example? Is it justifiable to have the Communion only two, three or four times a year?

Answer:

Not every practice of the early Church is necessarily a pattern for us to follow. In the Lord's Supper as administered by Christ there were **essential** and **incidental** elements. Among the essential elements we may list the elements of bread and wine, the words of institution, the blessing or consecration of the elements, the breaking of the bread, giving the elements to the communicants, partaking of the elements by the communicants. Among the incidental features may be mentioned the day and hour of administration of the Lord's Supper, the meeting in an upper room, the fact that only men were present, the posture of the communicants. Jesus administered the Lord's Supper on a Thursday evening, in an upper room, with no women present, and the posture of the communicants was reclining on couches. All of these features were incidental and do not constitute a pattern for us to follow today. Also non-essential is the matter of the **frequency** of the Lord's Supper. The New Testament says nothing about how often

the Lord's Supper is to be observed; it only says "as oft as ye drink it"; "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death, till he come" (1 Cor. 11:25, 26). The fact that it was common in the early Church to observe the Lord's Supper weekly does not prove that we should observe it weekly today. We are obligated to observe those practices of the early Church which were based on **the teachings of our Lord and his apostles**. Such practices are **matters of principle**, not mere customs. But Christ and the apostles taught nothing about the frequency of the Lord's Supper, and accordingly the usual practice of the early Church in this matter must be regarded as a **custom**, not a principle; and therefore the frequency of the Lord's Supper in any church is to be regarded as a matter to be decided according to Christian prudence and expediency. Certainly it is justifiable to have the Communion only two, three or four times a year. But we should take care that we do not regard this as a matter of **principle**, and say that Churches which observe the Communion more frequently are doing wrong. We must always distinguish carefully between customs and principles.

Question:

Is the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament correct in its translation of Romans 3:30?

Answer:

In the Revised Standard Version Romans 3:30 appears as follows: "Since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised because of their faith." The American Standard Version reads: "If so be that God is one, and he shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith." The Authorized Version is similar to this and also gives "by faith" and "through faith."

The Greek original of these two phrases may be literally translated "from faith" and "through the faith". The Authorized and American Standard Versions give the verse accurately, but the Revised Standard Version gives a translation which is contrary to the Greek grammar of the verse and which works havoc with the great doctrine of justification by faith. The Greek New Testament speaks of justification **by faith** and **through faith**, but never **because of faith**, **on account of faith** or **on the ground of faith**. Faith is the means or instrument of justification, not its cause or ground. The only **ground** of justification

is the perfect righteousness of Christ. To translate Romans 3:30 so as to make it say that God justifies people "on the ground of their faith" and "because of their faith" is an inexcusable blunder. The first phrase in the Greek has the preposition **ek** with the genitive case, which cannot mean "on the ground of"; the second has the preposition **dia** with the genitive case, which cannot mean "because of"; it would have to have **dia** with the **accusative** case to read the way the Revised Standard Version translates it.

Doctrinally, this translation of Romans 3:30 perverts justification by faith into **justification by works**. If people are justified "on the ground of their faith" and "because of their faith", they are simply justified by works. If our faith is the **ground** and **cause** of our justification, where does the righteousness of Christ come in? What room is left for it?

Question:

Why does the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament use "thee" and

"thou" where God is addressed, but "you" in the case of Jesus Christ?

Answer:

The new version does make this distinction. If the translators wished to use "you" they should have used it consistently and not made a distinction between God the Father and Jesus Christ. The new version makes Peter say "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16), and makes Paul address the glorified Christ with the words "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). In view of the fact that the new version regularly uses "thou" or "thee" where God is addressed, it would seem that its translators wanted to make it appear that those whose words are reported in the New Testament regarded Jesus as a mere man. In spite of its many excellent features, the new version has serious faults, and should be used with caution.

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Clay Center, Kansas



**BLUE
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AND
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NUMBER 4

“We promise and swear, by the **GREAT NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD**, to continue in the profession and obedience of the aforesaid religion; and that we shall defend the same, and resist all these contrary errors and corruptions, according to our vocation, and to the uttermost of that power that God hath put in our hands, all the days of our life.”

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Clay Center, Kansas

IN IMMANUEL'S LAND

By ANNE ROSS COUSIN

(Based on the life, sufferings and death of Samuel Rutherford)

The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for,
The fair, sweet morn awakes;
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand,
And glory—glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's Land.

Oh! well it is for ever,
Oh! well for evermore—
My nest hung in no forest
Of all this earth-doomed shore;
Yea, let the vain world perish,
As from the ship we strand,
While glory—glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's Land.

There the Red Rose of Sharon
Unfolds its heartmost bloom,
And fills the air of heaven
With ravishing perfume:
Oh! to behold its blossom,
While by its fragrance fann'd,
Where glory—glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's Land.

The King there in his beauty,
Without a veil is seen;
It were a well spent journey,
Through sev'n deaths lay between;
The Lamb, with his fair army,
Doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory—glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's Land.

Oh! Christ he is the fountain,
The deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above;
There to an ocean fulness
His mercy doth expand,
And glory—glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's Land.

Oft in yon sea-beat prison
My Lord and I held tryst;
For Anwoth was not heaven,
And preaching was not Christ:
And aye, my murkiest storm-cloud
Was by a rainbow spann'd,
Caught from the glory dwelling
In Immanuel's Land.

But that He built a heaven
Of his surpassing love,
A little New Jerusalem,
Like to the one above;
'Lord, take me o'er the water',
Had been my loud demand;
'Take me to love's own country,
Unto Immanuel's Land.'

But flow'rs need night's cool darkness,
The moonlight and the dew;
So Christ from one who loved it,
His shining oft withdrew;
And then for cause of absence
My troubled soul I scann'd—
But glory, shadeless, shineth
In Immanuel's Land.

The little birds of Anwoth,
I used to count them blest—
Now, beside happier altars
I go to build my nest;
O'er these there broods no silence,
No graves around them stand,
For glory, deathless, dwelleth
In Immanuel's Land.

Fair Anwoth, by the Solway,
To me thou still art dear;
E'en from the verge of heaven
I drop for thee a tear.
Oh! if one soul from Anwoth
Meet me at God's right hand,
My heaven will be two heavens,
In Immanuel's Land.

I've wrestled on towards heaven,
'Gainst storm, and wind, and tide;
Now, like a weary traveler
That leaneth on his guide,
Amid the shades of evening,
While sinks life's lingering sand,
I hail the glory dawning
From Immanuel's Land.

Deep waters cross'd life's pathway;
The hedge of thorns was sharp;
Now, these lie all behind me—
Oh! for a well-tuned harp!
Oh! to join Hallelujah
With yon triumphant band
Who sing, where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's Land.

With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove,
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lustered with his love.
I'll bless the hand that guided,
I'll bless the heart that plann'd,
When throned where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's Land.

Soon shall the cup of glory
Wash down earth's bitt'rest woes,
Soon shall the desert briar
Break into Eden's rose;
The curse shall change to blessing—
The name on earth that's bann'd
Be graven on the white stone
In Immanuel's Land.

(Continued on Back Cover)

BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 2

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Sketches From Our History

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH THROUGH THE AGES

CHAPTER I THE CHURCH STRUGGLES WITH ARIANISM

About 320 years after the birth of Christ the Church found itself faced with a new heresy, Arianism, of such seriousness that it threatened the very existence of Christianity as the way of salvation by the divine-human Mediator Jesus Christ. It required some sixty years of earnest effort and conflict before the Church was able to gain a conclusive victory over the Arian heresy.

Arianism derived its name from Arius, a minister of the Gospel in the city of Alexandria, in Egypt. When the conflict broke out, Arius had been preaching in Alexandria for several years. Contemporary writers describe him as a tall, thin, abstemious man, well educated and of an attractive personality, but also possessed of an opinionated, proud and disputatious spirit.

The chief point of the Arian heresy was its denial of the true deity of Jesus Christ. Arius admitted, indeed, that Jesus Christ was more than human; he even held that Christ was the creator of the world; but at the same time he asserted that Christ was himself a **creature of God**, which implied, of course, that Christ could not be truly and properly divine.

The bishop of Alexandria at the time was a man named Alexander, who believed and defended the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Arius started the controversy by accusing Alexander of heresy because the bishop taught that Christ was not a created being. Soon Arius had a number of followers who agreed with his views. In the year 321 a council of one hundred bishops was held at Alexandria, and at this council

Arius and those who followed him were deposed from Church office and excommunicated from Church fellowship because of their denial of the true deity of Jesus Christ. The matter was not to be disposed of so easily, however. Like many of the great heretics that have troubled the Church through the centuries, Arius and his followers proved to be extremely slippery people to deal with, and it took the Church some sixty years to pin the charge of "heresy" on Arianism in such a way as to make it stick.

In spite of having been excommunicated, Arius and his party continued to carry on an active propaganda for their unsound doctrine. Being forced to leave Alexandria, Arius carried on propaganda in Palestine and also in Nicomedia. As he became more prominent, a number of bishops rallied to his support, or at least to his defence. Among these were Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, and Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, who defended Arius' views as harmless.

Meantime Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, sent letters to all the bishops warning them against the new heresy of Arianism. Soon the whole eastern region of the Christian Church was involved in serious controversy over Arianism. The orthodox faith, which held to the true deity of Jesus Christ, was challenged by the denial of this doctrine on the part of the new heresy. It seemed uncertain which doctrine would win in the East. In the West, however, Arianism made much less headway and the orthodox faith was much stronger.

Constantine, the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire, was inclined to intervene in this controversy, although the evidence indicates that he did not really

understand the issues at stake. Regarding the controversy as a meaningless and needless strife about words, Constantine made an effort to bring about a reconciliation between the Arians and the orthodox party. As the two views about the deity of Christ are mutually contradictory, and there can be no real middle ground between them, this attempt on the part of the emperor of course proved futile. Christ either is or is not truly God; he either is or is not a created being. There is no possibility of compromise between such mutually exclusive views; either Arianism or orthodoxy must be vindicated as the truth; one doctrine or the other must gain the victory in the end; there could be no permanent compromise or adjustment between them.

Constantine next called a universal council, to represent the Christian Church in all parts of the Roman Empire, for the purpose of deciding the issue of Arianism versus orthodoxy, and also to settle certain other and less important questions which had arisen in the Church. The council was accordingly summoned to meet in the city of Nicaea, located in the province of Bithynia in Asia Minor, not far from the city of Nicomedia where the emperor's residence was. Nicaea, where perhaps the most important assembly of all Christian history since the days of the apostles was held, exists today as a Turkish town named Iznik, with a few hundred inhabitants.

To Nicaea, in the year 325, by invitation of the emperor Constantine, came bishops, presbyters and other Church officers as representatives of the whole Christian Church throughout the Roman Empire. The number of bishops in attendance is variously given from 250 to 318. Probably some arrived during the proceedings so that the attendance was larger at the end of the council. At that time there were perhaps eighteen hundred bishops in the Roman Empire, so it appears that about one-sixth of the total number made the journey to Asia Minor to attend the council. In addition to the bishops, there were a great many presbyters, deacons and other Church officers. Dr. Philip Schaff in his "History of the Christian Church" estimates the total number of persons in attendance at 1,500 to 2,000.

After some preliminary debates between the Arians and the orthodox party, the Council of Nicaea was formally opened at the time of the arrival of Constantine, in June 325. The sessions continued for about five or six weeks. The entrance of the emperor Constantine is thus described by the Church historian Eusebius:

"After all the bishops had entered the central building of the royal palace, on the sides of which very many seats were prepared, each took his place with becoming modesty, and silently awaited the arrival of the emperor. The court officers entered one after another, though only such as professed faith in Christ. The moment the approach of the emperor was announced by a given signal, they all arose from their seats, and the emperor appeared like a heavenly messenger of God, covered with gold and gems, a glorious presence, very tall and slender, full of beauty, strength, and majesty. With this external adornment he united the spiritual ornament of the fear of God, modesty, and humility, which could be seen in his downcast eyes, his blushing face, the motion of his body, and his walk. When he reached the golden throne prepared for him, he stopped, and sat not down till the bishops gave him the sign. After him they all resumed their seats." (Quoted in Schaff, "History of the Christian Church", III, 624-5).

Of course we must recognize that the calling of a Church council by an emperor was wrong in principle, and that the honor and glory accorded an earthly monarch in an assembly of the Church of Jesus Christ was entirely out of place. However in studying the history of the Church we must deal with what actually occurred, and we may not alter the historical facts to make them conform to our convictions concerning what would have been right and proper under the circumstances. While recognizing that civil rulers, as such, have no legitimate authority in the Christian Church, we must realize that this principle was not clearly grasped in those days; and at the same time we must remember that in the providence of God the Council of Nicaea, in spite of its defects, served to defend and promote the real truth of Christianity and the true unity of the Church. In spite of the excessive honor paid to Constantine, we believe that the Holy Spirit was truly in charge of the Council and that the principal conclusions of the council were indeed the mind of the Spirit who was guiding the Church, as Christ had promised, into all truth. This was no "puppet" council, nor were its decisions dictated by the civil government; it was a true court of the Church of Jesus Christ, and its decisions were properly arrived at by the accredited representatives of the churches.

Constantine himself opened the council with a speech in Latin, which was presently translated into Greek, urging the council to remove all causes of discord and strife and to seek peace and unity. Follow-

ing this speech, the business of the council was begun. Constantine himself, although he had not yet even been baptized, took part in the deliberations of the council, and was not without influence in its decisions.

Several members of the council were outstanding leaders in the Church of their day. Among these may be mentioned Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, a very learned man; Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, where Arianism had originated; Athanasius, a young minister from Alexandria, who was to spearhead the attack on Arianism in years to come; Hosius, bishop of Cordova in Spain, a champion of the sound doctrine concerning Christ; and others, including some who had suffered torture and disfigurement for the sake of Christ during the recently-ended days of persecution.

As the council began its deliberations, it became evident that the membership was divided into three groups: the orthodox party, that stood for the true deity of Christ, but was in the minority; the Arian party, that rejected the true deity of Christ, and was also in the minority; and a large middle group, constituting the majority of the council at the beginning of the sessions, which was more or less undecided at first, but which during the course of the council came to favor the orthodox position.

Early in the council the Arian party submitted a creed signed by eighteen persons. This Arian creed was however immediately rejected by the council, with the result that all of the signers except two renounced the Arian belief. Next an ancient Palestinian creed was proposed by the historian Eusebius on behalf of the middle party. This creed had already been approved by the emperor, and it was known that the Arian party would be willing to accept it. The proposed creed affirmed the divine nature of Christ in a general way, but avoided the word **homo-ousios**, which was the question at issue in the controversy. This Greek word means **of the same substance**, and was used by the orthodox party to affirm that **Christ is of the same substance with God the Father**. The Arians, on the other hand, used the term **hetero-ousios**, meaning **of a different substance**. Thus the creed proposed by Eusebius was really an evasion of the issue, for while it expressed a general faith in the divinity of Christ, it did not decide the all-important question of whether Christ is or is not **of the same substance with the Father**; that is, whether Christ is truly God in the full and proper sense of the term.

The orthodox party knew very well

that the difference between themselves and the Arians was real and irreconcilable. They were not willing to accept a "solution" which evaded the real point at issue. They sought, not inclusive vagueness, but precision, in the statement of the doctrine of the deity of Christ. In their view, the purpose of the council was not to attempt to make Arianism and orthodoxy appear to be the same thing, but to find and adopt a formula which would differentiate between the two faiths; in other words, they wanted a creed which no Arian could sincerely accept, and therefore they insisted on the inclusion of the disputed term **homo-ousios** which was an offence to every Arian.

Constantine saw that the compromise creed proposed by Eusebius could not command enough votes to be adopted, and as he desired that the decisions of the council should be as nearly unanimous as possible, he declared that he was in favor of the inclusion of the term **homo-ousios**, that is, in favor of the council declaring that **Christ is of the same substance with God the Father**.

The orthodox party now presented a creed which they had prepared, which formed the substance of what has been known through the history of the Church as the Nicene Creed. This creed affirms the true deity of Jesus Christ in unmis-takeable language. It was adopted by the overwhelming majority of the council. Almost all the bishops present at the council signed the creed, though a few hesitated for a time before doing so. Only two bishops resolutely refused to sign the creed, and they, together with Arius himself, were banished to Illyria (modern Albania). This was the beginning of the punishment of heresy by **civil** penalties, a thing which cannot be justified on sound Scriptural principles. At the same time it must be recognized that Arius and his followers fully deserved the **ecclesiastical** censures which were imposed upon them. The books written by Arius were ordered burned; Arianism was declared to be a heresy, and its adherents were denounced as enemies of the Christian faith.

An English translation of the Nicene Creed as adopted by the Council of Nicea in 325 reads as follows:

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father; only-begot-

ten, that is, of the substance of the Father; God of God and Light of Light; very God of very God; begotten, not made; of the same substance with the Father; by whom all things were made, both those in heaven and those upon earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh and was made man; he suffered, and arose again on the third day, ascended into the heavens, and shall come to judge the living and the dead.

“And in the Holy Spirit.

“And the holy catholic and apostolic Church condemns those who say: that there was a time when He did not exist;

and: that before He was begotten He did not exist; and: that He was made out of nothing; or, who affirm the Son of God to be of another substance or essence, or created, or changeable, or alterable.”

Thus the Church gained its first victory over the Arian heresy, and affirmed its faith in the true deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. It proved, however, to be not the end but only the beginning of a long controversy about the deity of Christ. The real and final victory over the Satanic lie inherent in Arianism was still far in the future.

(To be continued)

THE SCOTTISH COVENANTERS

Their Origins, History and Distinctive Doctrines

(Selections from the book with the above title, by J. G. Vos, published by the author in 1940)

PART I

THE ORIGINS OF THE COVENANTERS

CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND UNDER THE COMMONWEALTH, 1651-1660

1. Scotland Subjected to the Commonwealth, 1650—1652.

The Battle of Naseby, June 14th, 1645, marked the destruction of the power of Charles I. Cromwell's victorious army placed its leaders in the highest offices in England. The English Parliament was alarmed that the Scotch received Charles II, and prepared to invade Scotland. Cromwell consulted the Psalms and then decided to take command of the invading army, confident that the Lord would “enable this poor worm and weak servant to do his will”. He entered Scotland the 22nd of July, 1650, with sixteen thousand soldiers and a fleet along the coast. As the invaders approached Edinburgh they were opposed by the Scotch under General Leslie. At the battle of Dunbar, September 3rd, Cromwell attained a notable victory over the Scotch. Four thousand prisoners were sent to England; many of these died of disease on the way, and by November only 1,400 of them remained alive. On September 7th Cromwell's army captured Edinburgh.

On January 1st, 1651, Charles II was crowned King of Scotland at Scone. Considering the later life and activities of Charles II, it may not be amiss to quote the coronation oath which he swore at this time: “I, Charles, King of Great Britain,

France and Ireland, do assert and declare, by my solemn Oath, in the Presence of Almighty God, the Searcher of Hearts, my Allowance and Approbation of of the National Covenant, and of the Solemn League and Covenant, above written, and faithfully oblige myself to prosecute the Ends thereof in my Station and Calling; and that I for Myself and Successors shall consent and agree to all Acts of Parliament enjoining National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant, and fully establishing Presbyterian Government, the Directory for Worship, Confession of Faith, Catechisms, in the Kingdom of Scotland, as they are approved by the General Assemblies of this Kirk, and Parliaments of this Kingdom; and that I shall give my royal assent to Acts or Ordinances of Parliament passed, or to be passed, enjoining the same in my other Dominions: And that I shall observe these in my own Practice and Family, and shall never make Opposition to any of these, or endeavour any change thereof”. A man who could take such an oath, and later order copies of the Covenants to be burned by the hangman, and order those who adhered to the Covenants to be tried for treason, certainly holds a high rank among the great perjurers of history.

In March, 1651, the Scottish Parliament made Charles II commander-in-chief of the army. Although a large part of Scotland was in Cromwell's hands. Charles II and General Leslie invaded England in July of that year. The great battle took place at Worcester. The Scotch had about 16,000 men, and the English Parliamentary army twice as many. It was September 3rd, 1651, precisely a year after the battle of Dunbar. The Scotch were again completely defeated by the soldiers of the Commonwealth.

Thousands of the Scotch troops were taken prisoners or killed. The King escaped, and after wandering about England for some weeks, finally reached France on October 16th, 1651, a miserable figure in utter poverty and dependent on the pity of his friends. By May, 1652, all of Scotland was reduced to submission to the army of the Commonwealth.

Not long after the battle of Worcester, the English Parliament asserted the proprietorship of the Commonwealth in Scotland. England and Scotland were to be governed by a council of twenty-one members, of whom Cromwell was one. In 1652 commissioners were sent to Scotland to institute this government. The people of Scotland were strongly opposed to the Commonwealth, but they were powerless to resist it. All judicatories not licensed by Parliament were prohibited, and all oaths and covenants were forbidden unless sanctioned by the government. On February 4th, 1652, the royal arms were publicly destroyed at Edinburgh and the authority of Charles II was pronounced abolished.

On February 13th, 1652, the commissioners proposed to the Scotch the "Tender", an offer of incorporation of Scotland with England. According to the terms of the proposal, ministers both of the established Church and of dissenting sects were to have freedom to preach. Although some of the Scotch favored the Tender, most of the ministers were against it. The Rev. James Guthrie opposed it and in consequence had soldiers quartered in his house. The Presbytery of Dunfermline even advised against a marriage between an English soldier and a Scotch girl, because of the sinfulness of the Commonwealth. Very few of the Scottish ministers ever signified their approval of the Tender.

2. The Controversy between Resolutioners and Protestors, 1650—1653.

After Cromwell's capture of Edinburgh in 1650, King Charles II and the royalists in Scotland determined to seek a more united support by the different parties in the Church and nation. The outcome of this determination was a proposal known as the "Public Resolutions". The Estates of Parliament consulted the General Assembly, whether some way could not be found by which those persons who had been disqualified by the Act of Classes could be restored to positions in the State and in the army. The General Assembly held in July, 1651, passed the Resolutions, and declared that "In this case of so great

and ardent necessity, we cannot be against the raising of all fencible persons in the land, and permitting them to fight against this enemy for defence of the kingdom; excepting such as are excommunicated, forfeited, profane, flagitious", etc. The "ardent necessity" to which the Assembly referred was the defeat of the Scottish army by Cromwell at the Battle of Dunbar, and the subsequent capture of Edinburgh. From July, 1651, on, the Covenanters were divided into Resolutioners and Protestors. Those who favored the Public Resolutions were called Resolutioners, and those who opposed them were called Protestors, because they protested against the legality of the General Assembly which had ratified the Public Resolutions.

The leaders of the Protestors were James Guthrie, Patrick Gillespie, Johnston of Wariston and Samuel Rutherford. Even before the adoption of the Resolutions, in September, 1650, these men published "A Shorte Declaratione and Varninge", in which they called the land to national repentance and especially called upon the King to repent for his sins, and especially to consider whether he had not been guilty of hypocritical acceptance of the Covenants in order to obtain the crown.

In later times it has been common to represent the controversy between the Resolutioners and the Protestors as a quarrel over trifles, an utterly unnecessary division of the forces of Presbyterianism. History has shown, however, that the Protestors were right and the Resolutioners wrong. Many of the persons admitted to power under the Public Resolutions become persecutors of Presbyterianism after 1660. If the Protestors had been able to control affairs, Scotland might have been spared twenty-eight years of terrible persecution under the bloody and perjured Stuarts.

The question involved in the controversy was whether it was proper, under the existing circumstances, to repeal the Act of Classes. The General Assembly approved of such repeal, but with certain restrictions concerning the excommunicated, profane, etc. When this approval had been granted by the General Assembly, the parliament repealed the Act of Classes entirely, taking no notice of the exceptions reserved by the Assembly. This opened the way for a flood of ungodly men and open enemies of the covenanted Reformation to receive places of responsibility in the government and army.

It is clear that the Resolutioners and the Protestors differed from each other not

only in the specific matter of the propriety of the repeal of the Act of Classes, but in their whole view of the principles and ethics of Christian civil government. The Protestors viewed the calamities of the nation as the consequences of national sin. In their view, the remedy lay in repentance, confession of sin and a new obedience to the divine law. That is to say, they looked at the situation from the spiritual viewpoint and they were sure that not carnal, but spiritual remedies must be used if real relief was to be had. Along with this they maintained the Christian ethical principle that it is never right to do evil that good may come, that the end cannot justify the means, and that circumstances can never justify sin; and they applied these principles not merely to individual and ecclesiastical life, but to the life of the nation as such. They would obey God, put their trust in God, and leave the issue with God.

The Resolutioners, on the other hand, looked upon the national calamities as the result of lack of unity in the nation. In their view, the remedy lay in healing the breaches caused by the Act of Classes, and rallying all the people of Scotland to the defence of the King and the kingdom, regardless of difference in religion or past conduct. They looked at the situation from the worldly viewpoint, and wished to apply mechanical rather than spiritual remedies. They appear to have felt that whatever might be the abstract right or wrong of the thing, the national emergency justified overlooking such considerations and taking all possible measures against the enemy.

It may be said, too, that most of the really earnest Christians of Scotland were numbered in the ranks of the Protestors. Hetherington says that "the writings of the Protestors are thoroughly pervaded by a spirit of fervent piety, and contain principles of the loftiest order, stated in language of great force and even dignity, of which we find but few similar instances in the productions of the Resolutioners".

The controversy between the two parties continued for a long time. In 1652 the Protestors held a General Assembly, and after their adjournment the Resolutioners held an Assembly, at which representatives of the Protestors appeared and handed in a protest signed by sixty-three ministers and eighty laymen, which declared the Resolutioner General Assembly to be "unlawful, unfrie and unjust". The Resolutioner Assembly threatened to censure the Protestors, but the latter obtained the protection of the Commonwealth. In 1653 the two par-

ties held General Assemblies at the same time in the same building, St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, with a partition between them.

3. Cromwell Suppresses the General Assembly, 1653.

While the Resolutioner and Protestor Assemblies were meeting in July, 1653, Lieutenant-Colonel Cotterel, an officer in Cromwell's army, appeared on the scene with a body of soldiers, entered the Church, and inquired by whose authority the Resolutioner Assembly was sitting. Was it by authority of Charles II or of Cromwell? The Moderator, David Dickson, replied, "We sit here by the authority of Jesus Christ and by the law of this land, whereby we are authorized to keep General Assemblies from year to year, according to the several Acts of Parliament, and every Assembly meets by appointment of the former". Cotterel then ordered the Resolutioner General Assembly to leave the Church, and after he had led them a mile outside of Edinburgh, he released the commissioners, ordering them to depart to their homes on pain of being held for breach of the peace.

The Protestor General Assembly, which was meeting at the same time and place, was allowed to continue its sessions undisturbed for the time being. Later their meeting, too, was suppressed, and the Protestors published a protest against Cromwell's unlawful suppression of the General Assembly. From 1653 the General Assembly was forbidden to meet without permission from Parliament.

4. The State of the Church of Scotland under the Commonwealth.

In 1655 Cromwell gave official support to the Protestors, in the form of a commission given to Patrick Gillespie and others authorizing them to settle the affairs of the Church of Scotland. After this the Protestors had the direct support of English troops to enforce their decisions on the Church. Cromwell gave orders that in the admission of ministers, the decision should be made by the most religious part of the people, even though not the majority.

Through the period of the Commonwealth, Scotland enjoyed complete civil peace. The General Assembly was not permitted to meet, but apart from this the life and activities of the Church continued as usual. It was a time of spiritual revival and strengthening. James Kirkton wrote "I verily believe there were more souls converted to Christ in that short period of time

than in any season since the Reformation, though of triple its duration."

The Protestors, though supported by Cromwell in their control of the Church, never acknowledged the right of his authority or that of the Commonwealth. It is probable that Patrick Gillespie was the only minister in all Scotland that prayed for Cromwell in his public prayers. Whether the Protestors were consistent in accepting civil and even military support from Cromwell, while denying the right of his authority, is a debatable question. However all through the Commonwealth period they maintained their independence of speech and action; though supported by Cromwell, they were not subservient to him; and when Cromwell forbade the General Assembly to meet, the Protestors did not hesitate to protest publicly against this action.

5. The Later Covenanters' Estimate of Cromwell.

Covenanters or Reformed Presbyterians since the Revolution of 1688 have unanimously regarded Cromwell as a usurper and a trampler upon the liberties of the Church of Scotland. The Original Judicial Testimony of the Reformed Presbytery (1761) makes the following remarks: "The Lord, then, in his righteous displeasure and controversy with the nation, for betraying of his cause and interest into the hands of his enemies, sold them into the hands of that conquering usurper, Oliver Cromwell, who, having stripped them of their civil liberties, as the most effectual method to rob the church of her spiritual privileges and nullify the forcible obligation of the sacred covenants (which, when preserved, serve as a strong barrier against all such usurpations,) framed a hellish and almost unbounded toleration in Scotland, of heretical and sectarian errors, for gratification of the abettors thereof, which was followed with a deluge of irreligion and impiety drowning the nation in a still deeper apostacy".

The American Reformed Presbyterian Testimony (1806) is somewhat milder but still speaks of Cromwell as a usurper: "That Cromwell was a usurper, was manifest. He was never chosen by the nation to govern it; and the constitution, ratified by solemn oath, excluded him from power. To this constitution the more faithful Presbyterians considered themselves bound by covenant to adhere".

The Irish Reformed Presbyterian Testimony speaks more favorably of Cromwell: "The administration of Cromwell, the Lord Protector in Scotland, was on the whole

injurious to ministerial freedom, and considerably obstructed the action of the Courts of the Lord's House. Nevertheless we regard it as a matter of devout gratulation that under the countenance and protection extended to the protestors—chiefly because they were believed to be less blindly devoted to the cause of royalty than the Resolutioners—they were kept from being borne down by ecclesiastical opponents, and were for a time preserved as a faithful and powerful protesting party in the land".

The Summary of the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland (1932) makes this statement: "Under Cromwell's rule, public order was strictly maintained in Scotland, and though for several years the Scottish Church was prevented from holding Assemblies, ministers enjoyed freedom to preach the Gospel and multitudes were converted".

It is apparent from the above citations that time has considerably modified the Covenanters' estimate of Cromwell's activities. The consensus of opinion would appear to be that Cromwell acted unjustifiably, but that much good resulted from his actions.

6. The Restoration of Charles II. 1660.

Oliver Cromwell died in 1658, on September 3rd, the anniversary of his great victories at Dunbar and Worcester. After his death, the power was held for a time by his son, Richard, who, however lacked his father's ability and force of character. A series of intrigues followed, ending in the Restoration of Charles II. These intrigues were furthered in Scotland by Robert Douglas, one of the leaders of the Resolutioners, and James Sharp, one-time Covenanter who became a persecuting Archbishop after the Restoration. King Charles II was received in London with great festivities on the 29th of May, 1660. He had been an exile from England for ten years.

When Charles II was crowned at Scone on New Year's Day, 1651, he had taken the coronation oath and bound himself to support the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant. When he was restored to the throne of Scotland in 1660, it was done with no conditions or precautions of any kind. The blame for this terrible blunder must be laid chiefly upon the head of James Sharp. Sharp had been sent to London early in 1660 as the agent of a group of Scottish ministers, and he went furnished with detailed instructions. While in England Sharp betrayed his trust and

acted a double part; while posing as the agent of Scottish Presbyterianism he was actually subverting it and plotting for the restoration of Prelacy in Scotland.

After the Restoration, the affairs of the kingdom of Scotland were administered by a council of state, and this council was made up of men known to be opposed to the Covenants and the cause of Presbyterianism.

The Restoration of Charles II marks the end of the Church of Scotland as a cov-

enanted Church, and the beginning of the history of the Covenanters as a dissenting group or party distinct from the judicatories of the Church of Scotland as by law established. The Church of Scotland became officially Episcopalian, and true Presbyterianism could be practiced only in dissenting conventicles and unofficial society meetings, until the Revolution of 1688. After 1688 Presbyterianism was indeed restored by law, but on a somewhat different basis from that of the covenanted Presbyterianism of the period of the Second Reformation.

Our Church Covenant and Modern Life

(Note: This is the first of a series of sermons on the obligations involved in the Church Covenant sworn and subscribed by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, May 21, 1871. The other sermons of the series will be published in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". The editor desires to acknowledge his great indebtedness to the

Rev. Frank D. Frazer, whose booklet entitled "Outline Studies in the Covenant" was very helpful in the preparation of this series of sermons. Every Covenanter should read and study Mr. Frazer's excellent booklet, which clearly and convincingly displays the Scriptural character of the obligations set forth in the Covenant of 1871. —Ed.)

I. THE FOUNDATION OF OUR GOD-CENTERED LIFE

Scripture Reading: Joshua 24:1-28

The Covenant of 1871, besides a preliminary confession of sins, consists of an introductory paragraph and six sections. This Covenant was adopted in 1871 after long and earnest preparation, and it is recognized by the "Terms of Communion" as binding on the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America today. In order that we may have a bird's-eye view of the Covenant as a whole, I shall present the subjects of the various sections as given in Mr. Frazer's "Outline Studies in the Covenant". These are as follows:

1. We hereby covenant to do our duty to God.
2. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the truth of God.
3. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the nation.
4. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the Church-at-large.
5. We hereby covenant to do our duty to the world.
6. We hereby covenant to perform these, our duties, faithfully.

The introductory paragraph and first paragraph of Section 1 of the Covenant read as follows:

"We, Ministers, Elders, Deacons, and Members of the REFORMED PRESBY-

TERIAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA, with our hands lifted up, do jointly and severally swear by the Great and Dreadful Name of the LORD OUR GOD:

"1. That coming into the presence of the Lord God with deep conviction of His awful majesty and glory, of His omniscience, His purity, His justice and His grace; of our guilt and total depravity by nature, and our utter inability to save ourselves from deserved condemnation to everlasting punishment; with renunciation of all dependence on our own righteousness as the ground of pardon and acceptance with God, we receive for ourselves and for our children the Lord Jesus Christ as He is offered in the Gospel to be our Saviour—The Holy Spirit to be our Enlightener, Sanctifier and Guide—and God, the Father, to be our everlasting portion; we approve and accept of the Covenant of Grace as all our salvation and desire, and take the moral law as dispensed by the Mediator, Christ, to be the rule of our life, and to be obeyed by us in all its precepts and prohibitions."

I. God is the starting Point of Our Covenant.

God is the starting point of the Bible and of the Christian religion. And God is the starting point of our Church Covenant. The starting point is not a God, nor any God

that men may frame in their minds, but **the living and true God**, the God of the Bible revelation, as described in the words of the Covenant quoted above. Our Covenant starts with GOD.

God is the great fact and end of life. The meaning of everything depends on God. Without God life is blank and meaningless and ends in a whirlpool of blind chance or fate. If we do not start out with faith in **the God of the Bible**, there is not a fact in the universe that can have a real meaning. Life has a meaning only because back of life there is God, the infinite God, whose sovereign counsel determines all created being. Facts have a meaning only because back of them is the infinitely wise counsel of the sovereign God who has determined, from all eternity, what their meaning shall be. So our Covenant, to be true to the Bible, must take the infinite God as its starting point.

We should note some of the truths here set forth about God. He is the **LORD** God, that is, he is sovereign and transcendent above all things. There is no person, principle or law above or beyond God, to which God is responsible or by which God is bound. God, being the **LORD**, is **ultimate** and **supreme**; he is responsible only to himself; his own nature is his only law.

The Covenant adds some of the attributes of God—his majesty, glory, omniscience, purity, justice, grace. It goes on to confess faith in the Trinity—the truth that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The God of the Bible is the Triune God. This is the only God that really exists; all others are idols or figments of the depraved imaginations of men. Our Church Covenant, then, takes its start from an explicit faith in the one God who exists eternally in three co-equal divine persons. That is to say, our Church Covenant starts out on the basis of **Christian Theism**, or the position that there is a personal, infinite, almighty, Triune God, who is distinct from the universe and who is the Creator and Ruler of all things.

Modern life and thought are dominated by a radically different faith. Modern thought **starts with man** and **assumes that man is self-sufficient and self-interpreting**. Modern thought brings God—not the God of the Bible but a “God” of its own fabrication—in later, when, as, and where needed, if needed at all. Modern thought regards God as a convenience, or at best as a support or sanction for the moral life of man. It does not regard God as the source and end of all things. This is because modern

thought is really based, not on the revelation given in the Bible, but on the speculations of human philosophy, and especially on the man-centered view of things which is derived from the German philosopher Immanuel Kant.

By its high, Scriptural idea of God, our Church Covenant sets us off as sharply as possible from the main currents of modern life. We are truly a different and a separated people, because we recognize that only in God's light can we see light. By God's grace, we dare to look the modern world in the face and affirm that we take the Triune God as our starting point and that we mean to adhere, with all our heart and soul, to the God-centered view of life and of the world that is taught in the Bible and that has come down to us from our fathers of the Reformation period. By thus taking the Triune God as our starting point, we at once make ourselves the objects of ridicule and reproach. We are looked upon as hopelessly behind the times, as people stuck in “the backwaters of fundamentalism” who have been left far behind by the parade of human progress. We need not fear this reproach, for it is really the reproach of Christ. So long as we are able to give a reason for the faith that is in us, we should hold our heads up and witness for the God of the Bible without compromise or apology.

II. Our Covenant Regards Man as Totally Sinful.

The Covenant confesses our “guilt” and “total depravity by nature”. Thus the Scriptural truth about man's utter sinfulness is affirmed, and the Pelagianism of the natural man is repudiated; the human heart's proud boast of its own goodness is rejected as a lie.

“Guilt” means ill-desert or **liability to suffer a penalty**. It means that we have offended against the righteousness of God and deserve to be **punished by God's just wrath**. Now the concept of “guilt” is foreign to modern ideas of sin. The idea that man's sin has offended God and that God's justice must be satisfied, the idea involved in the Scripture concept of **the wrath of God**, is scoffed at by modern religion. Modern religion, dominated as it is by the man-centered philosophy of our day, thinks of sin only in terms of its effects on the individual and on human society. Recently I saw a new theological book which dealt with the subject of sin. Though it used the word “guilt” constantly, it had nothing to say about guilt in the Bible sense of the term.

It did not deal with guilt as liability to the wrath and judgment of God; it treated guilt merely as the feeling of guilt in the human consciousness. In discussing "redemption" the author did not speak of satisfying the justice of God by an atonement so that guilty sinners could be forgiven; he only spoke of **ways of getting rid of the troublesome feeling of guilt**, largely by psychological methods. Thus "guilt" and "redemption" are explained to mean **the feeling of guilt and how to get rid of it**. This is a typically man-centered view of sin. But in the Bible guilt means being under the wrath of God and liable to God's just punishment in hell. And this is the primary idea of sin in the Bible.

The Covenant also speaks of our "total depravity by nature". Now "total depravity" is a doctrine much derided at the present day. It is also a doctrine that is greatly misunderstood. Total depravity does not mean that any man is as sinful as he can become; nor that any man in this world is as sinful as the lost in hell; nor does it mean that there is nothing in the sinner that can be called "good" in any sense whatever. These are all misunderstandings of "total depravity". What "total depravity" really means is, in the first place, that there is nothing spiritually good and therefore pleasing to God in the unsaved sinner; and secondly, that there is no part of our human personality that is not corrupted by sin and turned away from God.

We confess that we are totally depraved **by nature**. This guilt and depravity are not merely inherent in our actions or our habits—they are imbedded in our very nature. We do not acquire them from our environment; we are born with them. They are universal and inescapable. There have never been any exceptions save one, that is, our sinless Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.

This human sin our Covenant regards not merely as a misfortune or a calamity, but as **deserving condemnation to eternal punishment**. Thus we cannot be honest Covenanters unless we really and sincerely believe that we deserve to suffer the wrath of God for all eternity in hell.

The Covenant also regards man as **totally helpless** to save himself from his sinful condition. It speaks of "our utter inability to save ourselves" and of "renunciation of all dependence on our own righteousness as the ground of pardon and acceptance with God". Thus the Covenant affirms the twin truths of the **total depravity** and the **total inability** of sinful humanity.

We should realize once for all that the common idea of salvation by a human righteousness of works or character is utterly foreign to the faith of the Covenanter Church. Our Church has a very high ideal of Christian duty, but we affirm at the very outset that we cannot save ourselves by doing our duty. We recognize that we are spiritually helpless.

I have already spoken of how modern religious thought rejects the idea of guilt before God. By "guilt" modern religion means either the **feeling** of guilt or else **guilt against human society**. Of course modern religion rejects the whole idea of Adam, the Covenant of Works and the Fall of man. These truths are scoffed at and made the butt of ridicule. At best they are regarded as an interesting **primitive myth**. They are not taken seriously as historical facts and explanations of the present condition of humanity.

In a word, the modern idea of sin is thoroughly man-centered. It regards sin merely in terms of humanity. It is a part of the man-centered philosophy of the twentieth century. It tends toward obliterating the distinction between **sin** and **crime**.

Also modern thought regards sin as **only relatively evil**. It is represented as just the other side of what is good. It is regarded as inevitable in the evolutionary progress of the human race. But the Bible, on the other hand, regards sin as **absolutely evil** because it is an offence against the holy character of God.

Thus modern thought regards sin as far from a hopeless condition. Man can lift himself out of it by trying hard enough and long enough. So modern thought believes in **salvation by human achievement and character**. Modern thought glorifies MAN and depreciates GOD. Our Covenant glorifies GOD and assigns man his true place as a dependent creature of God.

III. Our Covenant Accepts God's Way of Salvation as our Only Hope.

The way of salvation revealed in the Bible is based on the doctrine of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Note what is said of each of these divine persons in Section 1 of the Covenant. We take the Lord Jesus Christ as he is offered in the Gospel to be our Saviour. We take the Holy Spirit to be our Enlightener, Sanctifier and Guide. We take God the Father to be our everlasting portion. The Bible presents the way of salvation as dependent on the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity.

If the doctrine of the Trinity is not true, then there is no way of salvation in the Bible meaning of the words.

"We approve and accept of the Covenant of Grace as all our salvation and desire"—this statement is the very heart of our Church Covenant. In essence our Church Covenant is a vow of hearty acceptance, on our part as a Church and as Christian people, of God's Covenant of Grace as our only hope of salvation, and a solemn pledge to conduct our lives according to the implications of that Covenant of Grace. All that follows in the Church Covenant deals with these implications of the Covenant of Grace, which we recognize as duties we are obligated to perform. This idea is first stated in summary form by the words: "We . . . take the moral law as dispensed by the Mediator, Christ, to be the rule of our life, and to be obeyed by us in all its precepts and prohibitions."

Concerning the foregoing we should note that the Covenant makes us **dependent on God at every point**. Every factor of salvation in man rests on a prior act of God. Thus our Church Covenant pledges us to the acceptance of a **God-centered faith, a God-centered salvation and a God-centered life**. Our dependence on God and duty to God must be the ruling principle of all our thinking, believing, worship and life. Yes, even in school, business, family, everywhere. God is to be the center around whom the wheel of our life rotates.

Modern thought, as already stated, starts with man. Its great question is not **WHAT DOES GOD'S GLORY REQUIRE?** but **WHAT DOES MAN NEED?** Human need rather than the divine glory is its main and all-absorbing concern. Modern thought presents a man-centered faith, a man-centered salvation and a man-centered life. Against the God-centered system of the Bi-

ble, modern thought sets up its man-centered system which can be traced back to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

Here is where the real battle of the future must take place—between the man-centered world-view of modern philosophy and the God-centered world-view of the Bible. There is no real middle ground between these two. They are mutually exclusive all along the line. There can be no compromise between the idea that the world is flat and the idea that it is round. Nor can there be a compromise between the God-centered and the man-centered view of the world, salvation and life. One or the other must prevail.

The man-centered view is all around us today. You do not need to hunt for it. You cannot walk around without bumping into it. It hits you in the face in the pages of the "Reader's Digest"; you hear it over the radio; it is in your daily newspaper. But the important thing is to see through it, to penetrate its attractive camouflage and to realize that it is anti-God, that it is of Satan, that it is thoroughly perverse and wicked.

Our Church Covenant takes for granted that there can be no **neutrality** as to God. There is no area or realm of life in which we can be neutral between God and the world. By attempting neutrality, we align ourselves against God. We should look this situation in the face. If we mean to keep our Covenant, we should do it with our eyes open, realizing what we are promising. It amounts to nothing less than a flat rejection of the whole man-centered, man-glorifying viewpoint of the modern world. In spite of its unpopularity, the viewpoint of our Church Covenant has one tremendous advantage: **it is true and will be true to all eternity**. That should be our comfort in the reproach that we must bear as Covenanters and Bible Christians.

Some Noteworthy Quotations

"Souls are not saved by 'systems' but by the Spirit of God. Organizations without the Holy Spirit are like mills without power. Methods and plans without the grace of God are pipes without water, lamps without oil, banks without money. Even a church that has an orthodox creed and accepts the Biblical standards is as useless as are clouds without rain until power comes from God."

Charles H. Spurgeon

"For whithersoever the soul of man turns itself, unless towards Thee, it is fastened upon sorrows, even though it be fastened upon things beautiful outside of Thee and itself."

Augustine of Hippo

"Men nowadays cheerfully give up the substance, but never the name of Christianity."

B. B. Warfield

"I consider that the chief dangers that confront the coming century (the twentieth century) will be: Religion without the Holy Ghost; Christianity without Christ; forgiveness without regeneration; worship without God; and heaven without hell."

General Booth

"No one will doubt that Christians of today must state their Christian belief in terms of modern thought. Every age has a language of its own and can speak no other. Mischief comes only when, instead of stating Christian belief in terms of modern thought, an effort is made, rather, to state modern thought in terms of Christian belief."

B. B. Warfield

"If men must have a reconciliation of all conflicting truths before they will believe any; if they must see how the promises of God are to be fulfilled before they will obey his commands; if duty is to hang upon the satisfying of the understanding, instead of the submission of the will,—then the greater number of us will find the road of faith and the road of duty blocked at the outset."

J. Oswald Dykes

"If there were no hardship in poverty, no agony in diseases, no distress in ignominy, no horror in death,—what fortitude or moderation would be displayed in regard-

ing them with absolute indifference? But since each of these, by its own essential bitterness, naturally preys on all our hearts, herein the fortitude of a believer is manifested, if, when he experiences such bitterness, how grievously soever he may be distressed by it, yet by valiantly resisting, he at length overcomes it; his patience displays itself, if, when he is sharply provoked, he is nevertheless restrained by the fear of God from any eruptions of intemperance: his cheerfulness is conspicuous if, when he is wounded by sadness and sorrow, he is satisfied with the spiritual consolation of God."

John Calvin

"As one tree of the forest protects another against the violence of the storm, so in the communion of saints does one protect the other against the storm-wind of doubt."

Abraham Kuyper

"Let us be sober, and awake from the intoxication of those who have become drunk on the wine of science."

Abraham Kuyper

"Though the world thinks my case most miserable, yet I think it so happy that I know not a man this day on the face of the earth with whom I would exchange my lot. Oh, it is more sweet and pleasant to be swimming in the swellings of Jordan for Christ and with Christ, than to be wallowing in the pleasures of sin and the delights of the flesh."

James Renwick

Religious Terms Defined

A few definitions of important religious terms will be given in this department in each issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life." The aim will be conciseness without the sacrifice of accuracy. Where possible the Westminster Shorter Catechism will be quoted.

Original righteousness. The real, but untested and changeable, righteousness of mankind as created by God, before the Fall.

Covenant of Works. A covenant made by God, at the dawn of human history, with Adam as the representative of the human race, according to which Adam's obedience to a specific revelation of God's will would bring unchangeable righteousness and eternal life to the entire human race, whereas his disobedience would result in the fall of mankind into a state of sin, misery, and sub-

jection to the wrath and curse of God, both here and hereafter.

The Fall. The radical change which came upon the human race as the result of Adam's first sin, whereby mankind lost "original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body." (C. of F., VI. 2).

Sin. "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God." (S. C. 14).

Original sin. The guilty and depraved condition in which we are born as the result of our representative, Adam, having broken the Covenant of Works.

Elements of original sin. "The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin . . ." (S. C. 18).

Imputation. God's act of reckoning righteousness or guilt to a person's credit or debit.

Imputation of Adam's first sin. God's act, in accordance with the terms of the Covenant of Works, of reckoning the guilt of Adam's sin of eating the forbidden fruit to every human being (except Jesus Christ), so that the whole world became guilty before God.

Guilt. Liability to the just wrath and punishment of God.

Wrath of God. God's righteous hatred of sin and anger against sinners, which require that sinners suffer just punishment.

Death. The "wages", or divinely appointed penalty, of sin.

Physical death. The separation of soul and body, and the dissolution of the body which follows thereupon.

Spiritual death. Separation from the favor of God, and subjection to his wrath.

Eternal death. Everlasting separation from the favorable presence of God, and condemnation to the endless sin and suffering of hell. Also called **the second death**.

Corruption of nature. The depraved, ungodly character or "heart" which became the natural condition of all descendants of Adam (except Jesus Christ) as the result of the guilt of Adam's first sin being imputed to them.

Total depravity. A term used to describe humanity's sinful corruption of nature, indicating (a) that in the "natural man" there is nothing spiritually good; and (b) that there is no part of our human nature that has not been thoroughly corrupted and spoiled by sin.

Acutal transgressions. Sins which a person commits himself personally, in distinction from **original sin** which is the condition in which the sinner comes into this world and which is the root of all actual transgressions.

Inability. The spiritual helplessness of the sinner, which results from his corruption of nature, and by reason of which he cannot originate a love for God and holiness in his own heart, nor initiate the process of his own salvation from sin.

Studies in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly

Lesson 92

For Week Beginning October 5, 1947

Q. 105 (Continued). What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the first commandment are . . . making men the lords of our faith and conscience; slighting and despising God and his commands; resisting and grieving of his Spirit, discontent and impatience at his dispensations, charging him foolishly for the evils he inflicts on us, and ascribing the praise of any good we either are, have, or can do, to fortune, idols, ourselves, or any other creature.

Scripture References:

2 Cor. 1:24. Matt. 23:9. We are not to make men the lords of our faith and conscience.

Deut. 32:15. 2 Sam. 12:9. Prov. 13:13. The sin of despising God and his commands.

Acts 7:51. Eph. 4:30. The sins of resisting and grieving the Holy Spirit.

Psalms 73: 2, 3, 13-15, 22. Job 1:22. The sins of discontent under God's dispensations, and charging God foolishly.

1 Sam. 6:7-9. It is wrong to attribute any event of our lives to chance.

Dan. 5:23. It is wicked to ascribe our success or prosperity to idols or false gods.

Deut. 8:17. Dan. 4:30. We may not take credit to ourselves for anything good that we are, have or can do.

Hab. 1:16. We may not regard any

creature as the source of any blessing or success that we may enjoy.

Questions:

1. What is meant by "making men the lords of our faith and conscience"?

This means making mere human beings our authority in religion, so that we believe and do what they tell us to believe and do, not because of the teachings of God's Word, but merely because of the influence or instruction of men.

2. Why is it wrong to make men the lords of our faith and conscience?

Because all merely human authority is **fallible** and therefore we cannot commit ourselves to it implicitly, to believe and obey what it teaches without question. Only God, whose Word is infallible, can be the Lord of our faith and conscience. We are to commit ourselves to God's Word **implicitly**, that is, to believe its teachings and obey its commands without question, just because they are from God. But we may not submit thus to any human authority; we must always inquire whether the instructions and commands presented to us are in accord with God's Word or not.

3. What large and influential institution demands that all men everywhere accept its teachings and obey its commands implicitly?

The Church of Rome, which claims that its utterances are equivalent to the voice of God and therefore to be accepted without question by all men.

4. Is it a sin for a Protestant to join the Roman Catholic Church?

Certainly this is a sin, for the Protestant who does this abandons **God's written Word** as his supreme authority in religion, and accepts instead **the voice of the Roman Church** as his supreme authority. He agrees to accept the teachings and obey the commands of the Roman Church **implicitly**, that is, without raising any questions. This amounts to making men the lords of our faith and conscience.

5. Are members of Protestant churches ever guilty of this sin?

Yes. Undoubtedly there are multitudes of careless Protestants who can give no better reason or higher authority for their faith and practice than **the customs or teachings of their church, or the statements of their minister**. To accept and obey the customs, teachings and rules of a church, or the statements of a minister, without sat-

isfying ourselves that they are in accordance with the Word of God, is wrong, for it amounts to making churches and ministers the lords of our faith and conscience. It is every Christian's duty to search the Scriptures for himself, to learn whether the statements of his church and minister are true or not.

6. Are there Protestant churches that try to exercise authority over people's faith and conscience?

Yes, there are. It is one of the evil signs of our times that some large and influential denominations which formerly regarded God's Word as the only authority over men's faith and conscience, now are coming, more or less, to regard **the voice of the church** as equivalent to **the voice of God**. Such denominations are coming to demand of their ministers, officers and people an absolute and unquestioning obedience to the decrees of Conferences, General Assemblies, church boards and agencies, and, it would even appear in some cases, to the utterances and orders of individual men who hold high positions in the denomination's organization. A very large and prominent denomination decided a few years ago that to disobey the command of its church courts was a sin of the same nature as if one were to refuse to partake of the Lord's Supper. This whole tendency is thoroughly perverse and wicked. As the voice of the church becomes more and more important, the Word of God is regarded as less and less important. In reality the voice of the church has weight and authority, to be believed and obeyed, **only when it is in accord with the written Word of God**.

7. Why is "slighting and despising God and his commands" wicked?

Because to slight and despise God and his commands involves **contempt for the authority of God**, regarding God and his will as less important than our own selfish human desires, the opinions of our fellow-men, the commands of the government, etc. To ask God to take second or third place in our thinking or devotion or obedience is an insult to the majesty and authority of God.

8. Why are discontent and impatience under God's dispensations sinful?

Because they are the result of **unbelief** or lack of faith in God's love, God's goodness, God's power, God's promises, etc. The person who gives way to discontent or impatience is no longer willing to take God's Word and God's promises at face value. He feels that God's Word has been contradicted and canceled by God's providential dispen-

sations. As long as we are walking **by faith** we will endure hardships and sufferings patiently and will be willing to wait for God to bring us help and relief in his own appointed time.

9. Why is it wrong to charge God foolishly for the evils he inflicts on us?

Because the person who dares to charge God foolishly, thinks that he can sit in judgment on God and decide whether God is acting rightly or not. This amounts to a claim to be as great and wise as God is, for unless a person is as great and wise as God, how can he decide whether God is doing right or not? All tendencies to charge God foolishly are forbidden by the Word of God. Read Romans 9:19-21.

10. Why is it wrong to ascribe our prosperity or success to "chance" or "fortune"?

This is wrong because there really is no such thing as "chance" or "fortune". What men call "chance" is simply **that which cannot be humanly calculated or predicted**. Every event that men say comes by "chance" really comes **by the decree and providence of God**. If a coin is tossed in the air, whether it comes up "heads" or "tails" is in every case determined by God. If a man were to find a million dollars in gold and treasure

buried on his property, he might regard this discovery as "chance" or "fortune", but in reality it would be the working out of the counsel and providence of God. If we believe that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, and that his providence controls all that happens, then there cannot be such a thing as "chance".

11. Why is it wrong to ascribe our success or prosperity to idols, ourselves, or any other creature?

Because the whole created universe, including ourselves, is absolutely dependent on God for its existence and activity. Idols, of course, have no life, nor power to help anyone. But it is equally true that we ourselves, and all other creatures, have no inherent power to accomplish anything. We are totally dependent on God from moment to moment.. When we ascribe our success or prosperity to ourselves or to any other creature, we are regarding ourselves as **independent of God**. This is the great delusion that started when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. We must always remember that we are created beings and that God is our Creator, on whom we are dependent for our very life and consciousness. **This Creator-creature relationship is and always will be the main fact of our existence**. To disregard it, even for a moment, is wicked.

Lesson 93

For Week Beginning October 12, 1947

Q. 106. What are we especially taught by these words, "before me", in the first commandment?

A. These words, "before me", or before my face, in the first commandment, teach us, that God, who seeth all things, taketh special notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other God: that so it may be an argument to dissuade from it, and to aggravate it as a most impudent provocation: as also to persuade us to do in his sight, whatever we do in his service.

Ezek. 8:5, 6. Psalm 44:20, 21. God sees, and is greatly displeased with, the sin of having any other God.

1 Chron. 28:9. Since God sees and knows all things, we should remember this, and realize that we are to live and work "in his sight".

1 Kings 18:15. A servant of God who lived and worked as in God's sight.

Heb. 4:13. All things are seen and known by God.

Questions:

1. In the first commandment ("Thou shalt have no other gods before me"), how may the words "before me" be literally translated from the Hebrew Bible?

In the Hebrew the words used mean literally **before my face**.

2. What is the meaning of this expression, "before my face"?

Since God is a Spirit and does not have a body, he does not have a face. In the Bible when we read of God's "face" or "countenance", we should realize that this is a figure of speech. The meaning of it is **in God's presence or in God's sight**.

3. What part of our lives is passed in God's sight?

All of our lives, including all our thoughts, words and deeds, as well as the inward state of our heart, are always known and observed by God. Heb. 4:13.

4. Why is it impossible to flee or escape from God's presence?

Because God is everywhere, and knows all things. Therefore it is absolutely impossible that anything could ever be concealed from God.

5. Name some Bible characters who attempted to hide or flee from God's presence.

Adam and Eve, Gen. 3:8. Jonah, Jon. 1:3.

6. Why did Adam and Eve attempt to hide from the presence of God?

Because of their guilty conscience, which was the result of their sin of eating the forbidden fruit.

7. Why did Jonah attempt to flee from the presence of God?

Because of his stubborn and disobedient spirit, which made him unwilling to obey the command which he had received from God.

8. What was the result of Adam, Eve and Jonah trying to escape from the presence of God?

They learned that it is impossible to escape from God's presence, and that where ever people may go, or whatever they may do, God's presence follows them and there is no hiding place from God.

9. How should we answer the person who says that God is too great to care whether we human beings worship him or not, or too great to care whether we worship some other god instead of him?

Scripture teaches that as there is nothing too great for God to control it, so there is nothing too small for God's interest and attention. God is the Creator and Ruler of all things, both great and small. Moreover the importance of anything, or God's concern about it, does not depend on its size

or weight. Human beings are creatures of God, made in his image, subject to his moral law, and the Word of God teaches that every thought, word and deed is subject to God's judgment.

10. When we read the words "before me" in the first commandment, what should our attitude toward this commandment be?

We should pause and consider whether we may in any way, or at any time, be guilty of the sin of having some other god, and realize that this sin is seen and known by the true God; and this should have the effect of persuading us to turn from this sin and repent of it.

11. How does the Catechism describe the sin of having another god in the presence of the true God?

It describes this sin as "a most impudent provocation" of the true God. Yet we are all guilty of this sin in some form or other. Every Christian is guilty, at least at times, of **an idolatrous love of the world**. We should realize that this is a **most impudent provocation** of God our Creator and Redeemer.

12. How should we perform all our service to God, and all the activities of our lives?

We should perform all our service to God and all the activities of our lives, "as in his sight", that is, realizing that God sees and observes every detail of our lives. This thought should serve to make us hate and fear sin, and seek to love and serve God conscientiously, moment by moment and day by day.

13. What great Old Testament prophet stated that he stood "in the presence of God"?

Elijah. 1 Kings 18:15.

Lesson 94

For Week Beginning October 19, 1947

Q. 107. Which is the second commandment?

A. The second commandment is, **Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.**

Q. 108. What are the duties required in the second commandment?

A. The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his word; particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ; the reading, preaching, and hearing of the word; the administration and receiving of the sacraments; church government and discipline; the ministry and maintenance thereof; religious fasting; swearing by

the name of God, and vowing unto him: . . .

Scripture References:

Ex. 20: 4-6. The second commandment.

Deut. 32:46, 47. Matt. 18:20. Acts 2:42. 1 Tim. 6:13, 14. The duty of receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire the ordinances of religious worship appointed in Scripture.

Phil. 4:6. Eph. 5:20. Prayer and thanksgiving in Christ's name is an ordinance appointed in Scripture.

Deut. 17:18, 19. Acts 15:21. 2 Tim. 4:2. James 1:21, 22. Acts 10:33. God has appointed the reading, preaching and hearing of his Word as ordinances of worship.

Matt. 28:19. 1 Cor. 11:23-30. The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are appointed ordinances of divine worship.

Matt. 18:15-17. Matt. 16:19. 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 12:28. Church government and church discipline are appointed in Scripture as divine ordinances.

Eph. 4:11, 12. 1 Tim. 5:17, 18. 1 Cor. 9:7-15. The work of the Gospel ministry, and its support by the members of the Church, are duties appointed by God in his Word.

Joel 2:12, 13. 1 Cor. 7:5. Religious fasting a divine ordinance.

Isa. 19:21. Psalm 76:11. Making and paying vows to God an ordinance of worship appointed in Scripture.

Questions:

1. What is the general subject of the second commandment?

The general subject of the second commandment is **religious worship**. The commandment deals with this on its negative side, forbidding idolatry or false worship. This of course implies the corresponding duty of observing the true worship of God.

2. With respect to the true worship of God, what three duties are imposed on God's people?

(a) To **receive** the true worship, that is, to recognize it as a binding obligation on the conscience and conduct. (b) To **observe** the true worship, that is, not merely to believe in it as an article of faith, but actually to practice it in our life. (c) To **preserve** the true worship, that is, to adhere to it strictly as it is appointed in Scripture, scrupulously avoiding all corruptions or human changes

in matters which God has appointed in his Word.

3. Why must we be so careful to receive, observe and preserve the true worship of God?

Because God is **jealous** concerning his worship, that is, he is not willing to allow us to do as we please in matters of worshipping him. God is sovereign; he is supreme over all; therefore we are bound to obey **his will**; and he has revealed in the Scripture that it is his will that he be worshipped **strictly and only according to his own appointed ordinances and in no other way whatever**.

4. How is this obligation commonly disregarded at the present day?

In our day and age, with its tremendous emphasis on the dignity and freedom of man, and its corresponding neglect of the majesty and authority of God, the tendency is to hold that men may worship God **as they please**, or, as the saying is, "according to the dictates of their own conscience," and that sincerity is more important than truth or divine appointment. It is quite common today for people to hold that even the false worship of the heathen is acceptable to God provided the worshippers are **sincere**. This whole notion is of course directly contrary to the statements of the Bible.

5. How is the obligation to maintain purity of worship nullified by the Roman Catholic Church?

The Roman Catholic Church, as well as some Protestant bodies, holds that the Church is not limited by the Scriptures in matters of worship, but that the Church may make decrees concerning ordinances of worship and even add new ordinances not appointed in the Scriptures. This mistaken attitude concerning worship is the explanation of many corruptions of divine worship which exist in the Church of Rome and those bodies which copy "Catholic" forms of worship.

6. How is the obligation to maintain purity of worship disregarded by many Protestant churches?

Many Protestant bodies, perhaps most Protestant bodies, have come to regard divine worship as more or less a matter of indifference, to be determined according to human preference or convenience. It is common to hold that whatever is not **forbidden** in the Bible is legitimate in worshipping God. This accounts for the introduction of many human corruptions into divine worship.

7. Into what two classifications may the ordinances of divine worship be divided?

Into those intended for **regular** use and those intended for **occasional** use. Prayer, preaching, and the sacraments, for example, are intended for regular use. Fasting, vowing, swearing by God's name, are for occasional use, that is, to be performed not at any recurring stated time, but when some special occasion calls for them.

8. In what four spheres of human life are ordinances of divine worship to be performed?

In the spheres of the individual Chris-

tian, the Christian family, the Christian Church, and the Christian State or nation.

9. Is every ordinance of divine worship intended for all four of these spheres of human life?

No. Some ordinances are limited to the Church; others are suitable only for the individual, Church and Family. For example, Baptism and the Lord's Supper are **Church ordinances** and may not be observed privately in families or voluntary associations. Swearing by the name of God, on the other hand, is an ordinance suitable for a Christian State or nation as well as for a Church.

Lesson 95

For Week Beginning October 26, 1947

Q. 108 (Continued). What are the duties required in the second commandment?

A. The duties required in the second commandment are . . . (as also) the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship; and according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.

Scripture References:

Acts 17:16, 17. Psalm 16:4. The second commandment requires strict separation from and rejection of all forms of worship not appointed in the Scriptures.

Deut. 7:5. Isa. 30:22. Monuments of idolatry are to be removed.

Questions:

1. What is the Christian's duty with reference to false worship?

It is the Christian's duty to disapprove, detest and oppose all false worship.

2. What is meant by "false worship"?

"False worship" means not only worshipping a **false god**, or practicing the rites of a false religion, but **attempting to worship the true God in any other manner than that appointed in his Word, the Holy Bible.**

3. How must a Christian "disapprove, detest and oppose" false worship?

It is a Christian's duty to "disapprove, detest and oppose" all false worship not merely by a general or theoretical testimony against it, but by a **practical** testimony against it, that is, by **dissenting and abstaining from participation in it as a matter of conscience as he shall give answer to God at the Judgment Day.**

4. Why should a Christian separate

from the religious worship of Freemasonry and similar secret "fraternal" orders?

It is clear that Freemasonry is essentially a religious institution, and that its religion is different in kind from the Christianity of the Word of God. This being the case, the religious ordinances and ceremonies of Freemasonry must be regarded as false worship, that is, worshipping otherwise than as appointed in God's Word. For a Christian—indeed for any person—to participate in such worship is to violate the second commandment.

5. What is meant by the expression "monuments of idolatry"?

This expression means the altars, images, temples, etc., of false religions. Scripture teaches that such "monuments of idolatry" ought to be **removed** lest they be a temptation to people to use them in religious worship, or a rallying point for a revival and growth of the false religions.

6. How are the "monuments of idolatry" to be removed?

The "monuments of idolatry" are to be removed from any nation or social organism, not by indiscriminate action on the part of the public in general, nor by mob violence such as often took place in the days of the Reformation, but in an orderly manner "according to each one's place and calling". That is to say, the work of removing "monuments of idolatry" is to be left in the hands of those persons in Family, Church and State who have the legitimate authority to carry out such a task. A private citizen who by reason of his Protestant convictions believes that the Roman Catholic mass is idolatrous, does not have the right to walk into a Roman Catholic Church and

smash the altar with an axe. The head of a family may remove "monuments of idolatry" from his own house but not from his neighbor's house. In a heathen country, Christian people should hope, pray and work for the removal of all "monuments of idolatry", but they have no right to undertake the removal by direct action, except where the "monuments of idolatry" exist in their own homes or on their own property. On the other hand, where a family is converted from idolatry to Christianity, it is proper that the "monuments of idolatry" in that household be removed, and other Christians may of course be requested to assist in such an undertaking.

7. How are the elements of false worship to be removed from Family, Church and State?

In this matter the Catechism specifies the same principle as is involved in the removal of "monuments of idolatry", namely that such elements of false worship are to be removed "according to each one's place and calling", that is to say, every Christian is bound to undertake the removal of false worship **according to the measure of authority which God has committed to him**, whether in Family, Church or State.

8. Does not the principle of religious liberty imply that every person has the right to worship as he pleases, or according to the dictates of his own conscience?

This question cannot be clearly and adequately answered unless we first define what we mean by a "right". The word "right" is ambiguous and its use in this connection leads to confusion and misunderstandings unless it is carefully defined. There is a basic distinction between **civil rights** and **moral rights**. A civil right is a right which has validity within the sphere of human society; a moral right is a right which is valid also within the sphere of God's moral law. A millionaire has a **civil** right to spend his money, after he has paid his taxes, on worldly pleasures for himself and his family, if he desires to do so. The

government may not step in and command him to spend his wealth in an unselfish or philanthropic manner. But he has no **moral** right, before God, to spend his money selfishly. If he does so, the government has no jurisdiction over the matter, but the millionaire will have to give answer to God at the Judgment Day. Similarly in the matter of religious liberty: a person may have a **civil right** to worship as he pleases, or not at all, (provided his manner of worship does not involve gross public blasphemy, nor destroy the rights of other persons, nor endanger the safety of civil society); and the government may neither forbid false worship nor enforce true worship. But no person has a **moral right** to worship as he pleases; and those who worship otherwise than as appointed in God's Word will have to give their answer to God at the Judgment Day. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and all such matters are under God's jurisdiction and will finally be adjudicated according to his moral law.

9. Does not the American ideal of "tolerance" imply that one religion, or manner of worship, is as good as another, and that all are equally pleasing to God?

Undoubtedly this is the popular American ideal of "tolerance", as inculcated by the motion picture industry, the press, the radio and the "liberal" churches. These powerful influences are molding public opinion to the idea that all religions and all forms of worship are equally good and valuable if only the worshipper is sincere. Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism are to be put on a level and all distinctive features of any of them regarded as unimportant in the interests of "Americanism" and "tolerance". **This is one of the most vicious and deplorable tendencies of our day, and we should be awake to its menace. If this emphasis on a false ideal of "tolerance" succeeds, true Bible Christianity will be eliminated as a powerful influence in our country, and the day may even come when orthodox Bible Christians will have to suffer persecution as "enemies of democracy".**

Lesson 96

For Week Beginning November 2, 1947

Q. 109. What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; tolerating a false religion . . .

Scripture References:

Num. 15:39. God's commandments con-

cerning worship to be observed without changes or additions "after our own heart".

Deut. 13:6-8. Counselling or urging people to adopt false worship is sin.

Hos. 5:11. Micah 6:16. The sin of commanding religious worship not instituted by God.

1 Kings 11:33, 12:33. The great sin of practicing worship not instituted by God himself.

Deut. 12:30-32. It is sinful to approve in any way of worship not instituted by God.

Deut. 13:6-12. Zech. 13:2, 3. Rev. 2:2, 14, 15, 20; 17:12, 16 17. It is a sin against God to tolerate a false religion.

Questions:

1. What is the Scriptural principle concerning divine worship?

The Scriptural principle concerning divine worship is that the only right and acceptable way of worshipping God is that appointed by himself, which may not be changed by men.

2. What is the basis of this Scriptural principle concerning divine worship?

The basis of this principle concerning divine worship is **the sovereignty of God in all spheres of life**. By the **sovereignty** of God we mean his supreme and absolute authority, which does not depend on the consent of any created being and cannot be changed or abridged by any created being. God, the almighty Creator, Preserver and End of all things, is supreme over all, and his revealed will is absolute law concerning all things, and especially concerning that which intimately concerns himself, namely the matter of how he is to be worshipped by his people.

3. Is the doctrine of the **sovereignty of God** widely held today?

No. Churches which nominally hold this doctrine have largely abandoned it. Modern philosophy since the time of Immanuel Kant has placed great emphasis on the **autonomy of man**, that is, man's free self-determination. The result of this tendency has been to give up belief in the real sovereignty of God. In some quarters we are hearing today a frank, outspoken demand for a **limited God**. Some scholars have gone so far as to assert that God does not have any **independent** existence, but is only an implication of the human mind. Still others say that when God created the universe **he limited himself**, and is now no longer sovereign, but must adapt himself to the desires and ideas of his creatures. Still others say that God exists for the benefit of the human race, and so they have tried to believe in a "democratic" God. The old-time Bible truth of the absolute, transcendent sovereignty of God is regarded as an outworn curiosity by the prominent leaders of many of the large bodies of present-day Protestantism. However the real sovereignty of God is still held by many individuals and by many small denominations and a few larger ones.

4. What is the relation between abandonment of belief in the sovereignty of God, and the adoption of all kinds of changes and corruptions in divine worship?

Undoubtedly when people have given up belief in the sovereignty, or absolute authority, of God, they naturally tend to do as they please, or act according to human feelings, desires and preferences, with respect to matters of divine worship. When men forsake the sovereign God of the Bible, and put in his place an imaginary God created in their own image, it is no wonder that they also forsake the pure, simple worship appointed in Scripture, and put in its place all kinds of humanly invented ritual and ceremonies, according to the desires of their own hearts.

5. How can we most effectively oppose and counteract corruptions in the worship of God in churches of which we are members or with which we come in contact?

Of course we should oppose all corruptions in the worship of God to the limit of our ability, as opportunities are afforded and as circumstances may require. But merely to witness against or oppose particular details of false worship will accomplish very little unless we also, and first of all, oppose the false **principle** from which these details of false worship have proceeded, and bear witness to **the true principle of divine worship** which is taught in the Scriptures. Merely to oppose instrumental music in divine worship, for example, will accomplish little unless we bear emphatic witness to the Scriptural principle that **God is to be worshipped only as he has appointed in his Word, and not according to human preferences or desires**. Unless we can succeed in convincing people of the validity of this principle, our opposition to particular details of false worship will seem to them to be merely a stubborn insistence on **our** customs of worship over against **their** customs of worship. To seek reform in particular matters of worship, without gaining acceptance of the underlying principle of worship, is like trying to build a beautiful and substantial house with no foundation under it but sand.

6. How can we most effectively convince people of the validity of this Scriptural principle of divine worship?

To convince people of the validity of the principle that God is to be worshipped only as appointed in his Word, and not according to human preferences or desires, it is absolutely necessary first of all to convince them of two basic principles which underlie this Scriptural principle of wor-

ship. These two basic principles are: (a) **The full inspiration and authority of the Bible;** (b) **The absolute sovereignty of God.** There was a time years ago when these two basic principles could be taken for granted in all denominations of the Reformed or Calvinistic branch of Protestantism, but they can no longer be taken for granted today, for they are no longer accepted, in their plain and true meaning, by the large and popular denominations which once adhered to them, and which still pay lip-service to them in their official creeds. Unless these two basic principles, the authority of the Bible and the sovereignty of God, are accepted, the Scriptural principle of divine worship will be meaningless, and we cannot expect people to accept it. Nothing is more foolish than to expect people **who are not willing to accept the Scriptural principle of worship** to adopt the practical applications of that principle; and nothing could be more futile than attempting to persuade people **who do not believe in the real authority of the Bible and the true sovereignty of God** to accept the Scriptural principle of worship. The foundation must be there or the building will not stand.

7. What is meant by "tolerating a false religion"?

The word "tolerating" means "sanctioning or permitting that which is not wholly approved". The Catechism teaches that it is a violation of the second commandment, and therefore a sin, to tolerate a false religion. This does not mean that it is the duty of the civil government to prohibit false religions by law, nor that Christian people are to destroy the temples and interfere with

the meetings of false religions by mob violence. It means, rather, that it is wrong to give a false religion even a limited endorsement by any **positive** toleration of it, that is, sanctioning or approving of it in any positive way. Simply to let it alone is not necessarily wrong. For a Christian parent to allow his children to attend meetings held by Jehovah's Witnesses is to tolerate a false religion, and therefore wrong. For a Christian church to allow its church building to be used by a Christian Science society for their meetings is to tolerate a false religion, and therefore wrong. For the civil government to enact a law giving legal sanction or recognition to a false religion, or in any way approving of it **as a religion**, is to tolerate a false religion, and therefore wrong. However, for the civil government to issue a **charter of incorporation**, dealing only with matters of property, real estate, inheritance, and the like, to an organization connected with a false religion, does not involve officially **tolerating** a false religion, since such a charter of incorporation deals only with the **civil aspects** of a religious organization and does not involve any sanction of its religious features, which in ordinary cases are outside the jurisdiction of the civil government. For the civil government to issue to a Buddhist temple a certificate showing that the fire prevention regulations have been complied with does not amount to tolerating a false religion, for such certificate concerns only civil matters; it deals only with those civil aspects of a religious organization which the latter has in common with all other human institutions; it does not deal with it as a **religious** organization, but merely as an **organization**, regardless of whether it is religious or secular in nature.

Lesson 97

For Week Beginning November 9, 1947

Q. 109 (Continued). What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the second commandment are . . . the making of any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever; all worshipping of it, or God in it or by it; . . .

Scripture References:

Deut. 4:15-19. Acts 17:29. Rom. 1:21-25. The sin of making any representation of God.

Dan. 3:18. Gal. 4:8. To worship any image or likeness of the deity violates the second commandment.

Ex. 32:5. To worship even the true God by means of any visible representation or image is a violation of the second commandment.

Questions:

1. Why is it wrong to make any representation or picture of God?

Because God is a pure Spirit, without bodily form, and any picture or representation which man can make can only give a false idea of the nature of God. This is true, as the Catechism intimates, regardless of whether an outward image or likeness is made, or only an inward image in a person's mind. In either case, the attempt to visualize God is sinful and can only falsify

or distort the revelation of God presented in the Bible.

2. Is it wrong to make paintings or pictures of our Saviour Jesus Christ?

According to the Larger Catechism, this is certainly wrong, for the Catechism interprets the second commandment as forbidding the making any representation of **any of the three persons of the Trinity**, which would certainly include Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, God the Son. While pictures of Jesus are extremely common at the present day, we should realize that in Calvinistic circles this is a relatively **modern** development, and our forefathers of the Reformation and perhaps three hundred years afterward scrupulously refrained, as a matter of principle, from sanctioning or making use of pictures of Jesus Christ. Such pictures are so common at the present day, and so few people have conscientious objections to them, that it is practically impossible to obtain any Sabbath School helps or Bible story material for children that is free of such pictures. The American Bible Society is to be commended for its decision that the figure of the Saviour may not appear in Bible motion pictures issued by the Society.

3. What attitude should we adopt in view of the present popularity of pictures of Jesus Christ?

The following considerations may be suggested as bearing on this question: (a) The Bible presents no information whatever about the personal appearance of Jesus Christ, but it does teach that we are not to think of him as he may have appeared "in the days of his flesh", but as he is today in heavenly glory, in his estate of exaltation (2 Cor. 5:16). (b) Inasmuch as the Bible presents no data about the personal appearance of our Saviour, all artists' pictures of him are wholly **imaginary** and constitute only the artists' ideas of his character and appearance. (c) Unquestionably pictures of the Saviour have been very greatly influenced by the theological viewpoint of the artist. The typical modern picture of Jesus is the product of nineteenth century "Liberalism" and presents a "gentle Jesus" who emphasized only the love and Fatherhood of God and said little or nothing about sin,

judgment and eternal punishment. (d) Perhaps more people living today have derived their ideas of Jesus Christ from these typically "liberal" pictures of Jesus than have derived their ideas of Jesus from the Bible itself. Such people inevitably think of Jesus as a **human person**, rather than thinking of him according to the Biblical teaching as a **divine Person with a human nature**. The inevitable effect of the popular acceptance of pictures of Jesus is to over-emphasize his humanity and to forget or neglect his Deity (which of course no picture can portray). (e) In dealing with an evil so widespread and almost universally accepted, we should bear a clear testimony against what we believe to be wrong, but we should not expect any sudden change in Christian sentiment on this question. It will require many years of education in Scriptural principles before the churches and their members can be brought back to the high position of the Westminster Assembly on this question. Patience will be required.

4. Are not pictures of Jesus legitimate provided they are not worshipped nor used as "aids to worship"?

As interpreted by the Westminster Assembly, the second commandment certainly forbids all representations of any of the persons of the Trinity, and this coupled with the truth taught in the Westminster Standards that Christ is a divine Person with a human nature taken into union with himself, and **not a human person**, would imply that it is wrong to make pictures of Jesus Christ for any purpose whatever. Of course there is a difference between using pictures of Jesus to illustrate children's Bible story books or lessons, and using pictures of Jesus in worship as Roman Catholics use them. Admittedly the former is not an evil in the same class with the latter. In spite of this distinction, however, there are good reasons for holding that our forefathers of the Reformation were right in opposing all pictorial representation of the Saviour. We should realize that the popularity—even the almost unchallenged prevalence—of a particular practice does not prove that it is **right**. To prove that a practice is right we must show that it is in harmony with the commands and principles revealed in the Word of God. **Merely showing that a practice is common, is useful, or seems to have good results, does not prove it is right.**

Lesson 98

For Week Beginning November 16, 1947

Q. 109 (Continued). What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the second

commandment are . . . the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to

them; all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever; simony; sacrilege; all neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed.

Scripture References:

Ex. 32:8. The sin of making a representation of false gods.

I Kings 18:26-28. Isa. 65:11. The sin of worshipping false gods.

Acts 17:22. Col. 2:21-23. Superstitious practices forbidden by God.

Mal. 1:7, 8, 14. The sin of corrupting God's worship.

Deut. 4:2. We may not add to, or take anything from, the worship that God has appointed in his Word.

Psalms 106:39. Changes in divine worship introduced by the worshippers themselves are wrong.

Matt. 15:9. Changes in divine worship received by tradition from others are wrong.

1 Pet. 1:18. Jer. 44:17. Isa. 65:3-5. Gal. 1:13, 14. I Sam. 13:11, 12. I Sam. 15:21. Neither antiquity, custom, devotion nor good intentions can serve as an excuse for corruptions in divine worship.

Acts 8:18. The sin of simony.

Rom. 2:22. Mal. 3:8. The sin of sacrilege.

Ex. 4:24, 25. God is offended by careless neglect of the ordinances of worship which he has appointed.

Matt. 22:5. Mal. 1:7, 13. The sin of regarding ordinances of divine worship with contempt.

Matt. 23:13. Acts 13:44, 45. I Thess. 2:15, 16. The sin of hindering and opposing the ordinances of divine worship.

Questions:

1. What is the sin of idolatry?

The sin of idolatry, which in its crude or gross form is prevalent in the heathen world, consists in making images or pictures of false divinities, and worshipping these images or pictures, or using them as "aids to worship" in the service of the false gods.

2. How did the sin of idolatry originate in human history?

The sin of idolatry originated as a consequence of the Fall and resultant depravity of the human race. The apostle Paul gives the explanation of the origin of idolatry in Romans 1:21-23, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, **and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.**"

3. How does this explanation of the origin of idolatry differ from the evolutionary view that is popular today?

According to the Bible, mankind originally worshipped the true God, and only after the Fall into sin began to worship idols. Thus worship of the true God is more ancient than idolatry. But according to the theory of the development of religion which is popular today, idolatry is more ancient than worship of the true God. According to this theory religion started from a very primitive **animism** (worship of spirits), gradually rose to **polytheism** (belief in many gods, accompanied by idol worship), and finally reached its highest development in **monotheism** (worship of one God, without idols). This theory of development represents religion as **man's search for God**. The Bible, on the contrary, describes **God's redemption of man**, and represents idolatry as a corruption of the original pure worship of the one true God.

4. What is meant by "superstitious devices"?

This expression means such things as charms, amulets, "good-luck" symbols, and the like. These vary from such popular superstitions as a horseshoe nailed over a barn door to bring "good luck", to a gold cross worn about a person's neck because of supposed benefits to be derived from it. Also included are all religious figures and medals held to have beneficial powers or effects. "holy water", relics of the saints and martyrs, and so forth. All of these are really superstitious, that is, devoid of such powers as are attributed to them, and therefore to believe in and use them is sinful.

5. Give some examples of "corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it."

(a) Corrupting the worship of God: ad-

ministering Baptism to infants whose parents are not Church members in good standing, that is, are not living as professing Christians before the world. (b) Adding to the worship of God: the five sacraments which the Church of Rome has added to the two appointed in Scripture; the use of salt and oil in addition to water in Baptism. (c) Taking from the worship of God: the Romanist practice of denying the cup to lay members in the Communion service; administering Baptism or the Lord's Supper apart from the preaching of God's Word.

6. What special corruptions of the worship of God have become common, during the past 100 years, in churches of the Reformed or Calvinistic branch of Protestantism?

(a) The virtual supplanting of the inspired Psalter by hymns of merely human composition as the matter of praise. (b) The general introduction of instrumental music in divine worship. We should realize that at the Reformation the inspired Psalter formed the praise-book of the Reformed or Calvinistic branch of Protestantism, and that instrumental music was generally rejected as an unscriptural corruption of the worship of God. This position was taken by John Calvin, John Knox and many other Reformation leaders. Among Presbyterian and Congregational churches of Scottish, English and Irish origin this pure, simple Scriptural worship persisted for about two hundred years. After that uninspired hymns and instrumental music began to come in, but these innovations in worship invariably had to contend against strong opposition on the part of multitudes of conscientious Christians. Today the supplanting of the Psalter has become so nearly complete that there are many church members who have never even heard of singing the Psalms exclusively, and without piano or organ music, in the worship of God. Those who still adhere to this "Puritan" principle of worship are regarded as "queer" and "behind the times", but in reality they are only adhering to a principle that was generally accepted by the Calvinistic Reformers and Puritan divines, a principle grounded in the truths of the Reformation as they apply to the worship of God.

Note: For further discussion of this subject, the reader is referred to questions answered in previous issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life," as follows: Vol. 1 No. 3 (March, 1946) pp. 49-51; Vol. 1 No. 5 (May, 1946) p. 80; Vol. 1 No. 7 (July-September, 1946) p. 138; Vol. II No. 2 (April-June, 1947) pp. 91-93.

7. What is the difference between **principles** and **customs**?

A **principle**, in the sphere of religion, is an established law or practice which has been deliberately adopted and is adhered to because of conviction that it is right, that is, in accordance with the revealed will of God. A **custom**, on the other hand, is merely a long-established usage which is adhered to because it is old and common. A particular practice may be both **an application of a principle** and at the same time **the observance of a custom**; thus we read of our Lord that "as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day" (Luke 4:16); such was Jesus' custom, but it was also a matter of principle. The repeated observance of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in a Christian congregation is a matter of **principle**; the use of communion tokens is merely a matter of custom. That Christian people shall assemble on the sabbath day to worship God is a matter of principle; that the morning service shall be held at eleven o'clock rather than at some other hour is merely a matter of custom.

It is a bad sign of deterioration in any church when **principles** come to be regarded as if they were mere **customs**, and when mere **customs** come to be treated as if they were real **principles**. We must always distinguish sharply between customs and principles, and **we must continually criticize our customs on the basis of our principles**. If we find disharmony between the two, loyalty to God's truth requires that our **customs**, not our **principles**, be sacrificed for the sake of consistency.

8. Why cannot antiquity or custom justify changes in the worship of God?

Because the fact that a practice is old and widespread, does not prove that it is **right**. A particular matter may have been a customary practice for a thousand years, and still be wrong. The real question is not whether a practice is old, nor whether it is popular, but **whether it is right**, that is, in accordance with a sound understanding of the revealed will of God.

9. Why cannot devotion or good intent justify changes in divine worship?

Because what God requires of us is not merely devotion, nor merely good intentions, but **obedience to his revealed will**. It is common today to hear people say that any form of worship is legitimate if only the worshipper is sincere. In 1 Sam. 15 we read how King Saul, in disobedience to the express command of God, allowed the peo-

ple to keep the sheep and oxen of the Amalekites "to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal" (verse 21). Thus Saul urged "devotion" and "good intent" as excuses for direct disobedience to God's revealed will. The prophet Samuel, however, rebuked this hypocrisy by saying: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (verses 22, 23).

10. What is Simony, and why is it wrong?

Simony is **ecclesiastical bribery**. The term is derived from the name of Simon the sorcerer, who offered the apostles money for the power to bestow the Holy Spirit on others (Acts 8:9-24). In the history of the Church simony came to mean secretly paying money to a bishop or other dignitary, in order to receive in return an appointment to a desirable and profitable "benefice" or position in the Church. Simony is wrong because it is a form of bribery, and therefore dishonest; and because it degrades the Church of the living God to the level of a corrupt political machine. In choosing men to fill positions in the Church, the only legitimate considerations are (a) the qualifications of the candidates for the offices; (b) the lawful call of the people of God. Money, personal prejudices, family relationships should have no influence in determining

who shall receive what official position in the Church of God.

11. What is the meaning of Sacrilege?

Sacrilege is the sin of treating what is sacred as if it were profane. To make a parody of the 23rd Psalm or any other part of Scripture is sacrilege. To make divine things the butt of a joke is sacrilege. To mimic or parody Baptism, the Lord's Supper or any other ordinance of divine worship, is sacrilege, and therefore sinful.

12. What other sins does the second commandment forbid?

"All neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed." These sinful practices have a wide scope and many illustrations of them could be adduced. A law forbidding free assembly for evangelism and Christian worship, and requiring government permits for these God-ordained activities, such as the "Religious Bodies Law" of Japan before that country's defeat, is a violation of the second commandment. Interrupting a Christian religious service; disorderly and irreverent conduct during divine worship; chewing gum during divine worship; talking, whispering, passing notes unnecessarily, reading books and papers that have no connection with the service;—all these practices come under the category of "neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed." Many church members are guilty of careless and irreverent conduct during divine worship, who probably do not realize that their conduct is sinful and a violation of the Ten Commandments.

Lesson 99

For Week Beginning November 23, 1947

Q. 110. What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment, the more to enforce it?

A. The reasons annexed to the second commandment, the more to enforce it, contained in these words, **For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments;** are, besides God's sovereignty over us, and propriety in us, his fervent zeal for his own worship, and his revengeful indignation against all false worship, as being a spiritual whoredom; accounting the breakers of this commandment such as hate him, and threatening to punish them unto divers generations; and esteeming the observers of it such as love him and

keep his commandments, and promising mercy to them unto many generations.

Scripture References:

Psalm 45:11. Rev. 15:3, 4. God's sovereignty over us, and his propriety in us.

Ex. 34:13, 14. God's fervent zeal for his own worship.

1 Cor. 10:20-22. Jer. 7:18-20. Ezek. 16:26, 27. Deut. 32:16-20. God's revengeful indignation against all false worship.

Hosea 2:2-4. God's threat of punishment to divers generations of those who break the second commandment.

Deut. 5:29. God's promise of mercy to many generations to those who observe the second commandment.

Questions:

1. What is meant by "God's sovereignty over us, and propriety in us"?

God's **sovereignty** over us means his absolute, unchallengeable authority over our lives. God's **propriety** in us means that we are God's property, or his possession. Both of these truths form a part of the reason annexed to the second commandment; they are implied in God's describing himself as "the Lord thy God".

2. What is meant by God's "fervent zeal for his own worship"?

This expression, which is based on God's revelation of himself as a **Jealous God**, means that God is greatly concerned and desirous, not only that he be worshipped by his rational creatures, but that he be worshipped by them in the particular manner which he has revealed as **his will** concerning how he is to be worshipped. People often speak as if it made no special difference to God whether people worship him or not, or how they worship him. But God is jealous concerning his own worship; he cannot be indifferent to whether, or how, he is worshipped.

3. What is God's attitude toward all false worship?

God's attitude toward all false worship is an attitude of **vengeful indignation**. This expression of the Catechism is abundantly warranted by many passages of Scripture that might be quoted. Large sections of such Old Testament prophets as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel teach precisely this truth of God's vengeful indignation against false worship, and especially against the worship of idols. Nor is this truth limited to the Old Testament, for it is clearly taught in the New. Perhaps the most emphatic statement of God's wrath against false worship anywhere in the Bible is found in Rev. 14:9-11, where we read that those guilty of worshipping the Beast and his image, etc., "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation" and that "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." If we would be true to the Bible, we must resolutely resist the modern tendency to tone down and soft-pedal the Scripture teaching of **the wrath of God against sin**.

4. What figure of speech is often used in the Bible to bring out the hateful wickedness of false worship?

The figure of a wife who is unfaithful to her marriage vows. God is represented as the husband of his people, the Old Testament nation of Israel, and also the spiritual Israel which is the Christian Church. In this spiritual "marriage" relationship, loyalty required that Israel worship the true God, with whom she was in covenant, alone. But Israel proved unfaithful to God's covenant, and turned to worship the divinities of all the neighboring heathen nations. Time and again in Scripture this involvement in false worship is denounced as **spiritual adultery**. Hos. 2:2-4 is only one of many passages of the same nature in the Old Testament prophets. By this figure of speech, so often and emphatically repeated, God showed how hateful and displeasing his people's compromise with false worship was to him.

5. Is it unjust for God to visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generations?

We must keep in mind that what God here threatens is not merely to visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation, but to do so to the third and fourth generation of **them that hate him**. The comment of John Calvin on this phrase (**Institutes**, Book II, Chap. VIII, Sec. 20, 21) is most illuminating. Calvin points out that it is not at all a matter of God visiting the iniquity of a wicked man upon **righteous** children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren; on the contrary, it is a case of the children to the third and fourth generation being **themselves also** guilty of wickedness before God. "For if the visitation, of which we are treating, be fulfilled, when God removes from the family of the impious his grace, the light of his truth, and the other means of salvation, the very circumstance of children blinded and abandoned by him being found treading in the footsteps of their fathers, is an instance of their bearing the curse in consequence of the crimes of their parents. But their being the subjects of temporal miseries, and at length of eternal perdition, are punishments from the righteous judgment of God, not for the sins of others, but on account of their own iniquity."

6. What is the meaning of the promise of God's "showing mercy unto thousands" of those that love him, and keep his commandments?

Here the words "thousands" does not mean thousands of **people**, but **many generations**. "God gives a promise to extend his mercy to a thousand generations; which also frequently occurs in the Scripture, and

is inserted in the solemn covenant with the Church: 'I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee' (Gen. 17:7) . . . He also gives us a cursory intimation of the greatness of his mercy, which extends to a thousand generations, while he has assigned only four generations to his vengeance" (Calvin, *Institutes*, as cited above).

7. What should be our attitude to the worship of God, in view of the reasons an-

Lesson 100

For Week Beginning November 30, 1947

Q. 111. Which is the third commandment?

A. The third commandment is, **Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.**

Q. 112. What is required in the third commandment?

A. The third commandment requires, That the name of God, his titles, attributes, ordinances, the word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, his works, and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word and writing; by a holy profession, and answerable conversation, to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves, and others.

Scripture References:

Ex. 20:7. The third commandment.

Matt. 6:9. Deut. 28:58. Psalm 29:2; 68:4. Rev. 15:3-4. The name of God is to be treated with reverence.

Mal. 1:14. Eccl. 5:1. God's ordinances to be regarded with reverence.

Psalm 138:2. God's Word to be reverently used.

1 Cor. 11:24-29. The sacraments to be carefully observed.

1 Tim. 2:8. Jer. 4:2. Eccl. 5:2-6. Acts 1:24, 26. Prayer, oaths, vows and lots all being ways in which God makes himself known, they are to be used with reverent care.

Job 36:24. God's self-revelation in his works to be regarded with reverence.

Mal. 3:16. Psalm 8:1, 3, 4, 9. Col. 3:17. Psalm 15:2, 5; 102:18. God's "Name" or self-revelation to be used reverently in thought, meditation, speech and writing.

1 Pet. 3:15. Micah. 4:5. God's name to be honored by a holy profession.

Phil. 1:27. God's name to be honored by a consistent life.

nexed to the second commandment?

Taking to heart the reasons annexed to the second commandment, we should have an attitude of **serious concern** and of **conscientious carefulness** with respect to the worship of God and all matters connected with it. We should take great care to participate in the worship of God faithfully, and to avoid all compromise with whatever is contrary to God's revealed will.

1 Cor. 10:31. God's name to be honored to the glory of God.

Jer. 32:39. 1 Pet. 2:12. God's name to be honored to the good of ourselves and others.

Questions:

1. What does the third commandment mean by the "name" of God?

By the "name" of God, the third commandment means not only the actual word "God", and other divine names such as "Lord", "Jehovah", etc., but **God's self-revelation in its manifold fulness**. "Name is often used in Hebrew in the sense of revealed character and essence. God swears by his great name to carry out his purpose (Jer. 44:26), that is, he swears by his attested power to accomplish his word. The name of God which is excellent in all the earth (Psalm 8:1), is that expression of his being which is exhibited in creation and redemption. . . . To know the name of God is to witness the manifestation of those attributes and apprehend that character which the name denotes (Ex. 6:3, with 7; 1 Kings 8:43; Psalm 91:14; Isa. 52:6; 64:2; Jer. 16:21)." (John D. Davis, *A Dictionary of the Bible*).

2. What does the "name" of God include?

The "name" of God includes all forms of God's self-revelation, whether his general revelation in nature, or his special revelation which exists today in the form of Holy Scripture (including all ordinances of divine worship appointed in Scripture, such as sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, etc.).

3. What attitude are we to have toward God's name?

A holy and reverent attitude, as we learn also from the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be thy name."

4. What do we mean by a holy and reverent attitude toward God's name?

By a holy and reverent attitude toward God's name we mean, first of all, a sober, serious, respectful attitude, that keeps us

from treating God's self-revelation lightly or flippantly; secondly, we mean a worshipful attitude, as we are impressed with the infinite majesty and greatness of God, and filled with awe and wonder as we stand in the presence of the One who is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being and attributes.

5. How far should this reverent attitude toward God's name control our consciousness and self-expression?

This reverent attitude toward God's self-revelation should completely control our consciousness and self-expression; God requires that his name "be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word and writing". That is to say, both in our inner consciousness and in our self-expression in speech and writing, we are to be permeated by an attitude of reverence toward God's name.

6. How is our daily life to be affected by our attitude toward God's name?

Our attitude of reverence toward God's self-revelation is to find expression in "a holy profession, and answerable conversation"; that is, in a public profession of faith in the true religion which forms the content of God's "name" or self-revelation, and in a daily walk which is consistent with our profession of faith. Real reverence for God's

name requires a true profession of faith and a consistent, godly walk.

7. What should be our aim or purpose in honoring God's name?

As the Catechism states, the first (and highest) aim in honoring God's name is **the glory of God** (which is also our chief end in life). Subordinately to this, we should honor God's name for "the good of ourselves, and others". Thus love to God, to ourself and to our neighbor, all require that God's name be honored and regarded with reverence.

8. Who can really honor and revere God's name?

Only true Christians can really honor and revere God's name, for only true Christians really know God, and only they really see God's self-revelation, in its true meaning, in nature and in Scripture. A person who is not a Christian may of course be free from the habit of "profane swearing" in the literal sense; he may abstain from "profanity" simply because of his general culture and good taste, and yet, not being a Christian, he can have no real reverence for God in the positive and spiritual sense. To honor God's name, in the true sense, we must be born again and believe on Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

Lesson 101

For Week Beginning December 7, 1947

Q. 113. What are the sins forbidden in the third commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the third commandment are, the not using of God's name as is required; and the abuse of it in an ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane, superstitious, or wicked mentioning or otherwise using his titles, attributes, ordinances, or works, by blasphemy, perjury; . . .

Scripture References:

Mal. 2:2. The sin of neglecting to use God's name aright.

Acts 17:23. Ignorant abuse of God's name.

Prov. 30:9. Mal. 1:6, 7, 12; 3:14. Vain, irreverent and profane abuse of God's name.

1 Sam. 4:3-5. Jer. 7:4-10, 14, 31. Col. 2:20-22. The sin of superstitious misuse of God's name.

2 Kings 18:30, 35. Ex. 5:2. Psalm 139:20. Psalm 50:16, 17. Isa. 5:12. Sinful misuse of God's titles, attributes, ordinances or works.

2 Kings 19:22. Lev. 24:11. The sin of blasphemy.

Zech. 5:4; 8:17. The sin of perjury.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the words "vain" and "vanity" in the Bible?

Various words in the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament are translated by "vain" or "vanity" in the English Bible. These do not all have exactly the same meaning. The word for "vain" in the third commandment means primarily **falsehood**. It occurs 53 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, of which 44 are translated by "vain" or "vanity". In forbidding us to take God's name in vain, the commandment forbids the use of God's name for anything that is false or wrong.

2. What special kinds of misuse of God's name does the Catechism specify as forbidden by the third commandment?

Ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane, superstitious or wicked misuse of God's name, or his self-revelation. Ignorant mis-

use of God's name means that which arises from the sin-darkened mind of fallen man, apart from the Holy Spirit's work of illumination; because modern man is **ignorant** of God's self-revelation, he says that God is nothing but love, too kind to punish sinners in hell, etc. This is abuse of God's name. Vain misuse of God's name is that which uses God's name in connection with trivial matters, as when a person takes God's name in vain in connection with a statement that the weather is hot or cool, etc. Irreverent and profane misuse of God's name are similar to this, but even worse, as for example using God's name for an oath in connection with something that is sinful or unlawful, such as a conspiracy to commit a crime. Superstitious misuse of God's name is that which uses God's name in connection with superstitious practices of any kind, such as fortune telling, the attempt to control events by magic, and the like. Wicked misuse of God's name is all use of it which proceeds from a wrong motive, or from a wrong attitude toward God, as when a person who has suffered some calamity curses God. All these forms of abuse of God's self-revelation are more or less common. Even Christian people are tempted to fall into these sins, and must be on guard against them.

3. In addition to the actual names of God, what forms of his self-revelation are we forbidden to misuse or take in vain?

His titles, attributes, ordinances and works; that is, all forms in which God has revealed his nature and character. Many people who do not dare to take the actual name "God" in vain, commit virtually the same sin by abusing God's titles and attributes, as by such expressions as "Lord," "goodness!," "gracious!," "mercy!," and the like. Similarly God's self-revelation in his ordinances and works is misused by such profane expressions as "Holy smoke!" (originally, it would seem, a flippant reference to the smoke of incense burned in the Temple services). "Jerusalem!" (a profane use of the name of the city where God's presence among his covenant people was especially revealed), "Good grief!" (apparently a careless and irreverent reference to Christ's sufferings in Gethsemane and on the cross). Some of these abuses are so common that even Christian people use them without realizing what they are doing. We should realize that all these are similar expressions are violations of the third commandment, and displeasing to God.

4. What is blasphemy?

Blasphemy is name-calling or any kind of wicked language directed against God.

For example, to accuse God of wickedness, injustice or untruth of any kind, is blasphemy against God. Under the Old Testament law the sin of blasphemy was punished by death by stoning (Lev. 24:16). This shows how wicked this sin is, and how offensive it is to God.

5. How do people blaspheme God today?

God is blasphemed today in many ways. Often severe sufferings or calamities provoke people to blaspheme God. For example, some say that if God is good, he should have prevented the recent world war; that a good God would have prevented the war if he could; and since the war was not prevented, God must be either **not good** or else **limited in power**. Thus to challenge either the goodness or the power of God is **blasphemy**.

6. What is perjury?

Perjury is the sin of making false statements under oath, that is, taking God as a witness that we are speaking the truth, when as a matter of fact we are speaking falsehood. "It is no trifling insult to him, when perjury is committed in his name; and therefore the law calls it a profanation (Lev. 19:12). But what remains to the Lord, when he is despoiled of his truth? He will then cease to be God. But he is certainly despoiled of it, when he is made an abettor and approver of a falsehood . . . We cannot invoke God to be a witness to our declarations, without imprecating his vengeance upon us if we be guilty of perjury (John Calvin, *Institutes*, Book II, Chapter VIII, Sec. 24). Perjury is not only a sin against God, but punished by the laws of most countries of the world as a **crime**.

7. Is perjury a common sin at the present day?

Although in the nature of the case it is impossible to obtain any accurate statistics concerning this matter, and although perjury is often a very difficult matter to prove, there is reason to believe that perjury is far from uncommon in present-day law courts, and that it is possible to hire people to swear that the defendant was in a different city at the time the crime was committed, etc. People who go to certain states to obtain divorces will swear in court that they intend to reside permanently in that state, and after obtaining their divorce will go from the court house to the railroad station, board a train and return to their original residence in another state. This light-hearted perjury seems to be regarded as a trifling matter by the public in general.

From the Christian viewpoint such a practice is no trifle, but a flagrant and wicked violation of God's law, for which God will hold the violators guilty. A few years ago in one state every applicant for an automobile driver's license was required by law to swear an oath promising, among other

things, never to drive faster than thirty miles per hour on the highways of the state. Such a requirement almost amounts to the government itself inviting its citizens to commit perjury. Christian people should oppose all such abuse of the divine ordinance of swearing by the name of God.

Lesson 102

For Week Beginning December 14, 1947

Q. 113 (Continued). What are the sins forbidden in the third commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the third commandment are . . . all sinful cursings, oaths, vows, and lots; violating of our oaths and vows, if lawful; and fulfilling them, if of things unlawful; murmuring and quarrelling at, curious prying into, and misapplying of God's decrees and providences; . . .
Scripture References:

1 Sam. 17:43. 2 Sam. 16:5. Jer. 5:7; 22:10. Sinful cursings and oaths.

Deut. 23:18. Acts 23:12-14. Sinful misuse of vows.

Esther 3:7; 9:24. Psalm 22:18. Sinful misuse of the lot.

Psalm 24:4. Ezek. 17:16-19. The sin of violating lawful oaths and vows.

Mark 6:26. 1 Sam. 25:22, 32-34. The sin of fulfilling unlawful oaths and vows.

Rom. 9:14, 19, 20. The sin of murmuring and quarrelling at God's decrees and providences.

Deut. 29:29. The sin of curious prying into God's decrees and providences.

Rom. 3:5-7; 6:1. Eccl. 8:11; 9:3. Psalm 39. The sin of misapplying God's decrees and providences.

Questions:

1. What does the Catechism mean by "sinful cursings"?

By "sinful cursings" the Catechism means sinful cursing **directed at some person**, as when Goliath cursed David by his gods. Such cursing consists in a wish for calamity or destruction to come upon the person cursed, and the wish is supported by an appeal to God, or to some false divinity. We should realize that a wish for calamity or destruction to come upon some person is not always sinful; it is right to wish for judgment to be visited upon the incorrigible enemies of God, as we learn from the so-called "imprecatory" Psalms as well as from other parts of the Bible. What is sinful is cursing those whom God has not cursed, as king Balak wished Balaam to do (Num. 22:6; 23:8).

2. What is meant by sinful oaths?

By sinful oaths, the Catechism means what is commonly called "profanity", that is, taking God's name in vain by oaths or "swear words" in our speech, or swearing by the name of false divinities. Obviously this is a terribly common sin, so common that it is little thought of by most people of the present day. Many people are so habituated to profanity in speech that they can hardly speak for two or three minutes without violating the third commandment more than once. Our popular books and magazines abound in profanity today, and those who are represented as "the best people" do not hesitate to "fortify" their speech with a continuous flow of such words as "hell" and "damn", not to mention their use of the names of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such profanity of speech can be partly explained psychologically, no doubt; but still more basic is the theological explanation, namely, that profanity in speech proceeds from a personality alienated from God and a heart deeply depraved and corrupted by original sin. Christian people should always be on guard against the temptation to compromise with the sinful world's habits of speech.

3. What are **minced oaths**?

A **minced oath** is a profane oath uttered by a person who hesitates to go quite the whole way in imitating the profane speech of the sinful world. The use of minced oaths is peculiarly a sin of Christian people, who often deceive their own conscience into thinking that they are not doing wrong because they do not exactly duplicate the world's brand of profanity. Some examples of common forms of minced oaths are: "Gosh" (instead of "God"); "darn" (instead of "damn"); "heck" instead of "hell"); "Gee" (instead of "Jesus"); "Cripes" (instead of "Christ"); "the dickens" (instead of "the devil"); "the deuce" (from the Latin **Deus**, meaning "God", used instead of "the devil"). The use of all forms of minced oaths is forbidden, not only by a right understanding of the third commandment, but also by our Lord's command in Matt. 5:34-37, "Swear not at all . . . but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for

whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

4. When are vows sinful?

Vows are sinful when the thing vowed is forbidden in God's Word, or something that would hinder any duty commanded in his Word, or something not in the person's power to perform, and for which God has not promised any ability. Vows are also sinful if made to any creature, instead of to God; or if made to any false divinity. (See the **Confession of Faith**, Chap. XXII, Sec. 7).

5. Give some Bible examples of sinful vows.

- (a) Jephthah's vow, Judges 11:30, 31.
 (b) The vow of the Jews who conspired to murder Paul, Acts 23:12-14.

6. When is the use of the lot sinful?

"The Lot is a mutual agreement to determine an uncertain event, **no other way determinable**, by an appeal to the providence of God, on casting or throwing something" (Buck's Theological Dictionary). The use of the lot is sinful (a) when it is used for a trivial matter; (b) when used for a matter which could and should be determined in some other way; (c) when used in a light or flippant spirit, without due reverence and faith in God. For a fuller discussion of this matter see "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Vol. I No. 5 (May, 1946), p. 80.

7. What is our duty with respect to lawful oaths and vows?

It is our duty to fulfil them conscientiously, in the fear of God, in spite of difficulty or personal loss. To fail to do so is to commit a great sin against God.

8. What is our duty with respect to unlawful oaths and vows?

If an oath or vow is **unlawful**, that is, contrary to the moral law of God, then of course it cannot be binding on a person's conscience. God's law does not bind us to break God's law. When a person realizes that he has entangled himself in an unlawful oath or vow, it is not only his right but his God-given duty to repudiate it immediately. A well-known example of a faithful Christian who rightly repudiated unlawful vows is that of the Reformer Martin Luther, who came to realize the unlawful character of the vows he had taken as a Roman Catholic monk, including the vow of perpetual celibacy, and repudiated these unlawful "obligations."

9. What Bible character failed to break an unlawful oath?

King Herod, who ordered John the Baptist beheaded (Mark 6:14-29). Herod's oath was an unlawful one; he had no right to promise Herodias' daughter whatever she might ask, to the half of his kingdom. His authority in the kingdom was a sacred trust, a stewardship to be exercised according to law and justice, not given away according to senseless caprice. Having played the fool in swearing such a wicked oath, Herod should have confessed his sin and broken the oath; but this, of course, he was unwilling to do because of the tremendous "loss of face" that would be involved.

10. Why is it wrong to murmur and quarrel at God's decrees and providences?

It is always wrong to murmur and quarrel at God's decrees and providences (a) because such conduct involves a **spirit of rebellion against the sovereignty of God**; the complainer assumes that he is competent to sit in judgment on God's decrees and acts, and call God to account; (b) because such conduct involves a **lack of faith in God's goodness and love**; the complainer is not willing to wait patiently for God to deliver him from hardships, trouble or poverty; he feels that if God is really a God of goodness and love, he owes his people **immediate** deliverance. This implied demand for immediate help from God is entirely contrary to the attitude of faith, which is willing to wait patiently for God to provide deliverance in his own time and way.

11. What is meant by "curious prying into, and misapplying of God's decrees and providences"?

Curious prying into God's decrees and providences is a searching into God's secrets which is motivated by **curiosity** rather than by a reverent attitude. The curious pryer into God's secrets refuses to recognize the essential **mystery** of God and God's works; he wishes to satisfy his sinful curiosity by **comprehending God** and gaining an **exhaustive understanding** of God's works. This is sinful for it implies a denial of the transcendent mystery and infinitude of God, and seeks to place God on the same level with humanity.

Misapplying of God's decrees and providences consists in drawing wrong inferences from them, or using them as excuses for wickedness of any kind. The person who says: "If God has predestinated me to eternal life I am sure to receive eternal life, so I need not accept Christ nor live a Christian life", is guilty of misapplying God's

decrees. The person who says: "I know people who work seven days a week, and have become rich; God has prospered them; this shows that God does not expect people to keep the Sabbath in our day and age", is guilty of misapplying God's providences.

Lesson 103

For Week Beginning December 21, 1947

Q. 113 (Continued). What are the sins forbidden in the third commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the third commandment are . . . misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the word, or any part of it, to profane jests, curious or unprofitable questions, vain janglings, or the maintaining of false doctrines; abusing it, the creatures, or any thing contained under the name of God, to charms, or sinful lusts and practices; . . .

Scripture References:

Matt. 5:21-28. It is sinful to misinterpret any part of God's Word.

Ezek. 13:22. 2 Pet. 3:16. Matt. 22:24-31. Isa. 22:13. Jer. 23:34-38. It is wrong to misapply or pervert God's Word to profane jests, absurdities or false doctrines.

1 Tim. 1:4-7; 6:4, 5, 20. 2 Tim. 2:14. Tit. 3:9. All misuse of God's Word in support of false doctrines, "strifes of words", "vain babblings", etc., is wicked.

Deut. 18:10-14. Acts 19:13. All misuse of any form of God's self-revelation in connection with superstitious practices is wrong.

2 Tim. 4:3, 4. Rom. 13:13, 14. 1 Kings 21:9, 10. Jude 4. It is wicked to abuse any form of God's self-revelation for sinful lusts and practices.

Questions:

1. Why is it sinful to misinterpret the Bible?

Misinterpretation of the Bible is sinful because it proceeds not merely from our limitations as finite human beings, but especially from the corruption of our hearts and darkening of our minds that have resulted from the Fall of the human race into sin. We should realize that error, being the opposite of truth, is sinful in itself. It is because of people's sinful hearts and darkened minds that they misinterpret God's Word.

2. What is meant by "misapplying" and "perverting" God's Word?

"Misapplying" God's Word includes all use of it apart from its true meaning and proper purpose as the revelation of God's

Both in the case of God's decrees, and in the case of his providences, a careful study of the Bible would expose the sin of misapplication, both in the cases cited above, and in all other instances.

will to man. The person who admires and reads the Bible **merely** because it is great literature is guilty of misapplying God's Word. The atheist who studies the Bible in order to try to prove it untrue is guilty of misapplying God's Word. Mary Baker Eddy's notorious book, "Science and Health with the Key to the Scriptures" is an example of misapplying and perverting God's Word in such a way as to make it seem to support the false system of "Christian Science." The person who advocates the teaching of the Bible merely for its moral lessons, apart from its revelation of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ the Mediator, is guilty of misapplying and perverting God's Word; the moral teachings of the Bible are rooted and grounded in the Bible's **religious** message, and must not be divorced from Christ's work of redemption; to teach the Bible in such a way as to make it seem to have an ethical message apart from Christ's redemption is to misapply and pervert the Word of God, by using it in a way and for a purpose which are alien to its true meaning and purpose.

3. Why is it wrong to use the Bible, or any part of it, for "profane jests"?

Because the Bible, as God's Holy Word, is sacred, and must be treated with due reverence. Of course it is true that there is humor in the Bible, and it is not wrong to point it out and appreciate it. But using the Bible for profane jests is something quite different from appreciating the humor in the Bible. What is wrong is to use God's Word **as the object of ridicule**, so that God's revelation is derided, and comes to be regarded with contempt.

4. What is meant by "curious or unprofitable questions" and "vain janglings"?

The Jews and others in the time of Christ and the apostles were guilty of just these practices, as is evident from the apostle Paul's warnings in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. Certain types of such misuse of God's Word are mentioned: "fables"; "endless genealogies"; "vain jangling"; "dotting about questions and strifes of words"; "perverse disputings"; "profane and vain babblings"; "oppositions of science falsely so-called"; "foolish questions"; "strivings about the law".

These various types of misuse of the Scripture may perhaps be summarized as follows: (a) Disputes about questions which in the nature of the case cannot be determined with certainty ("fables"); (b) Disputes about matters which would be of no value even if they could be definitely decided ("endless genealogies"); (c) Merely verbal argumentation, which deals with words alone rather than with the realities that words should stand for ("vain jangling"; "doting about questions and strifes of words"); (d) Controversies having to do merely with the concepts of human philosophy, not with the truths revealed in God's Word ("oppositions of science falsely so-called"); (e) Disputes about Jewish traditional interpretations of, and additions to, the Old Testament law ("strivings about the law"). All of these forms of abuse of God's Word have their counterparts at the present day. The true servant of God will be careful to avoid all these practices, as also to prevent their occurrence in the Church, and to seek to eliminate them if and when they do occur.

5. Why is "the maintaining of false doctrines" sinful?

Because false doctrines are the result of our sin-corrupted hearts and our sin-darkened minds, and our maintaining them involves opposition to the truth of God, and shows a total or partial lack of the Holy Spirit's work of illumination. Many people today hesitate to call the maintaining of false doctrines a **sin**. According to the Bible, however, **adherence to doctrinal error, even though sincere, is nevertheless sinful**. 1 Tim. 6:3-5 gives the Holy Spirit's teaching concerning the sinfulness of doctrinal error. Titus 3:10, 11 presents the same teaching.

6. What does the Catechism mean by "charms"?

By "charms" the Catechism means the whole array of forbidden practices by which men have sought to gain control of superhuman powers or forces for their own purposes or benefit, including such practices as magic, divination (fortune telling), at-

tempted contact with the dead through spirit-mediums, use of devices to bring "good luck", etc.

7. How do such practices violate the third commandment?

Such practices as those described in the preceding question violate the third commandment because they all involve a misuse of God's self-revelation in one or another of its forms (the Word, the creatures, or any thing contained under the name of God). It is wrong to use God's Word or his self-revelation in his works to try to obtain illicit information (as concerning the future, apart from what is revealed in the prophecies of the Bible), or to attempt to gain control over God's providence (as by the practice of magic, use of "good luck" charms, etc.). All of these practices involve a perversion of religion to magic. Instead of recognizing that man's chief end is to glorify God, they attempt to use God, his revelation in Word and works, for man's own selfish, sinful purposes. This is really to take God's name in vain, and forbidden by the third commandment.

8. How has God's self-revelation been misused for sinful lusts and practices?

All victims of the Antinomian heresy (which denies that the Christian is subject to the moral law of God as the rule of his life) inevitably tend toward misusing God's revelation for sinful lusts and practices. Some extreme examples of this could be cited from the history of the Church. In the Bible we find a very emphatic condemnation of the sect of the Nicolaitanes, which was essentially an Antinomian sect (Rev. 2:6, 14-16, 20-23). Similarly in Paul's epistles (2 Tim. 3:1-9; 4:3-4), in 2 Peter 2 and the Epistle of Jude, we find strong warnings against, and condemnations of, Antinomian tendencies and practices. There have always been some such "ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). Such wickedness is of course an extreme form of violation of the third commandment, the sin of taking the name of God in vain.

Lesson 104

For Week Beginning December 28, 1947

Q. 113 (Continued). What are the sins forbidden in the third commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the third commandment are . . . the maligning, scorning, reviling, or any wise opposing of God's truth, grace, and ways; making profession of religion in hypocrisy, or for sinister ends; being ashamed of it, or a shame to it, by un-

conformable, unwise, unfruitful, and offensive walking, or backsliding from it.

Scripture References:

Acts 13:45. 1 John 3:12. The sin of maligning of God's truth, grace, and ways.

Psalms 1:1. 2 Peter 2:3. The sin of scorning or scoffing at God's truth, grace and ways.

1 Pet. 4:4. The sin of reviling God's truth, grace and ways.

Acts 4:18; 13:45, 46, 50; 19:9. 1 Thess. 2:16. Heb. 10:29. The sin of opposing God's truth, grace and ways.

2 Tim. 3:5. Matt. 6:1-5, 16; 23:14. The sin of a hypocritical or insincere profession of religion.

Mark 8:38. The sin of being ashamed of Christ and the gospel.

Psalms 73:14, 15. 1 Cor. 6:5, 6. Eph. 5:15-17. Being a shame to the gospel by unconfessable or unwise walking.

Isa. 5:4. 2 Pet. 1:8, 9. Rom. 2:23, 24. Being a shame to the gospel by unfruitful and offensive walking.

Gal. 3:1-3. Heb. 6:6. The sin of being a shame to the gospel by backsliding from our profession of it.

Questions:

1. What is meant by "maligning" God's truth, grace and ways?

To malign means falsely and maliciously to speak evil of. The person who maligns God's truth, etc., is not a common unbeliever who merely neglects or rejects the gospel; he is a person (a) who actively opposes the gospel by speaking evil of it; and (b) who in the bottom of his heart knows that the gospel really is true. That there are such maligners of the gospel cannot be denied. Their extreme perversity can be explained only by the Scriptural truths of original sin and total depravity. Often persons who for some reason have abandoned the profession of Christianity and have joined some other religion turn out to be very bitter opponents of Christianity. Their very bitterness and the intensity of their opposition may be the result of a desperate struggle to silence a guilty conscience, to silence the voice of God speaking through their conscience and destroying their peace of mind by a haunting conviction that the gospel is true after all.

2. What is "scorning" God's truth, grace and ways?

To scorn is to regard or treat with contempt. Scoffing has much the same meaning except that it includes more of the idea of outward expression of contempt in words of derision. The scorner and the scoffer regard the gospel of Christ not merely as false, but as foolish, ridiculous, unworthy of acceptance by intelligent people, etc. They not merely reject the gospel, but represent it as something mean and unworthy;

they belittle God's truth, grace and ways. Scorners delight to point out what they call the "immoral" portions of the Bible, and to dwell on what they pronounce to be its "incredible" features, such as its miracles. Scorning and scoffing are always signs of a small, single-track, narrow-gauge mind. There are unbelievers who reject Christianity, and yet treat it with respect and dignity; but scorners and scoffers belittle it with contempt and ridicule. At the Judgment Day, of course (if not before) their contempt and ridicule will return upon their own heads.

3. What is "reviling" God's truth, grace and ways?

Reviling means denouncing in abusive, scandalous language. It is an extreme form of "name calling". Reviling is usually directed against the gospel of Christ, not in itself, but in the persons of its adherents, that is, Christian people. This is referred to in the Bible as "the reproach of Christ" (Heb. 11:26). People in heathen countries such as India and China who make a public profession of faith in Christ are called upon to endure reviling for Christ's sake that we in America know but little of. When the devil's kingdom is invaded and some of his victims are translated to the kingdom of God, he becomes angry and stirs up furious and vicious opposition to the gospel. This frequently takes the form of very abusive reviling of Christian people.

4. What are some of the ways in which men oppose God's truth, grace and ways?

In addition to maligning, scorning and reviling, which we have been considering, there are various other ways in which opposition is made to God's cause in the world. We should realize that genuine opposition is not merely of human origin, but is stirred up by Satan behind the scenes of human life. Satan has two methods of opposing God's truth, grace and ways, which he has used time and again. The first is persecution. Satan stirs up worldly powers such as kings and governments, or mob violence in some cases, to bring bitter persecution upon the Church and its members. Persecution usually checks the spread of the gospel and the growth of the Church temporarily. Hypocrites no longer dare to be identified with the Church, and so fall away. Missionary work is hindered and blocked by obstacles. But in the end persecution fails. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church emerges from the fires of persecution stronger than ever; it learns to put its trust in God's Spirit and not in worldly methods. Then Satan tries his second method, which

is often much more effective than the first, namely, stirring up heresies and false doctrines within the Church itself. These heresies, if tolerated and not challenged, would destroy Christianity as a saving message in the world. The Holy Spirit raises up witnesses for the truth, who challenge the heresy and seek to eliminate it from the Church. This often requires many years of intense effort, yet it is absolutely necessary when the truth of God is being opposed within the Church itself. Effort which could otherwise be expended on missions, evangelism, etc., must be devoted to preserving the integrity of the Church itself as a body that can witness for the truth of the gospel. This necessarily interferes with the normal expansion and growth of the Church. Yet Satan's second method of opposing Christianity fails in the end, truth is vindicated in the course of time, and God's cause goes forward in spite of the opposition of Satan and of men.

5. What is meant by "making profession of religion in hypocrisy, or for sinister ends"?

"Making profession of religion in hypocrisy" means making profession of it insincerely, with a pretended, not a real, faith. The expression "for sinister ends" describes the motives which actuate the hypocrite. His real motives, which bring him to profess to be a Christian, are not the glory of God nor the salvation of his soul, but such improper motives as financial gain, social respectability, and the like. Not every unregenerate Church member is a hypocrite. A person may be self-deceived; he may sincerely believe himself to be a true Christian, when as a matter of fact he is an unsaved sinner. The hypocrite is not self-deceived; he knows perfectly well that he is not a real Christian; he is trying to deceive others by putting up the outward appearance of being a Christian. When persecution for Christ's sake comes upon the Church, the hypocrites will abandon the profession of Christianity without delay. No real, self-conscious hypocrite will suffer persecution or reproach for the gospel's sake.

6. What makes people ashamed of being known as Christians?

Undoubtedly it is **fear** that makes people ashamed of being known as Christians—fear of reproach, fear of ridicule, fear of contempt, and sometimes fear of suffering

or death. This is a sinful, carnal fear which is linked in the Bible with such sins as murder, sorcery, idolatry, and adultery (Rev. 21:8). It is not the mere **feeling of fear** which is represented as such a terrible sin; rather, it is **yielding to fear** so that a person's conduct is determined by that fear, and he becomes enslaved to fear.

7. How do professing Christians sometimes become a shame to the gospel of Christ?

By "unconformable, unwise, unfruitful and offensive walking, or backsliding from it". It has been well said that Christian people are the only Bible the world will read. The world gets its idea of Christianity largely from observing the lives and conduct of professing Christians. When those who are known as Christians are guilty of scandalous and wicked practices, the gospel appears contemptible in the eyes of the world. Thus professing Christians by their worldly life and conduct may become a shame to the gospel of Christ.

8. What is meant by "backsliding" from the gospel of Christ?

This means giving up even the profession of Christianity. The backslider loses interest in the things of God, ceases to attend Church services, and hardens his heart in indifference and unbelief. He may still have his name on the membership roll of some Church as a member in good standing, not because he shows any interest in the Church, but because of the reluctance of Church officers to discipline unfaithful members. The backslider, even though he may nominally be a Church member, shows no active interest in Christianity; he is complacently indifferent. If he fails to repent before it is too late, he will perish eternally in hell.

Total and permanent backsliding from the gospel of Christ is a sin which is never committed by true believers, who have been born again of the Holy Spirit. Even true believers, though, may be involved in a partial and temporary form of backsliding, losing interest in Christianity and failing to make any active profession of faith for a period of time. For a fuller discussion of these questions, the reader is referred to the Larger Catechism, Q. 79, with its Scripture proofs, and "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Vol. II No. 1 (January-March, 1947), pp. 42-44 (Lesson 65).

Blue Banner Question Box

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

Question:

Please give an evaluation of the booklet entitled "The Fulness of the Holy Spirit" by the Rev. W. Graham Scroggie, published by Moody Press.

Answer:

This booklet of 22 pages is a reprint of an article first published in "The Moody Bible Institute Monthly" in 1925. It is written with a becoming sobriety, and contains many good things, among which the following is worthy of hearty endorsement: "Therefore, where much is made of Christ the Spirit is active; but if, in what claims to be a doctrine or movement of the Spirit, little is made of Christ, then I do not hesitate to say it is a pseudo doctrine and a pseudo movement."

After discussing briefly the "gift", "sealing", "indwelling", "earnest" and "anointing" of the Holy Spirit, the author deals more particularly with the "baptism" and the "filling" of the Spirit. Rightly holding that every true believer is "baptized" with the Holy Spirit, the author distinguishes the "filling" sharply from the "baptism", and on the basis of Eph. 5:18 ("... be filled with the Spirit") asserts that the "filling" is a blessing which awaits us. He holds that a person may have the baptism of the Spirit, and yet "might know nothing of the fulness of the Spirit, or might be filled, and often filled."

In the opinion of the reviewer it is a mistake to say that a true believer "might know nothing of the fulness of the Spirit". Admittedly every believer possesses the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9). Surely there are **degrees of fulness of the Spirit**; it is not a simple alternative of being either entirely empty of the Spirit or else completely filled with the Spirit. If to "be filled with the Spirit" must be interpreted to mean only a **total and absolute** filling with the Spirit, then we must wait until we enter the state of glory to receive it; otherwise we shall have to adopt a **perfectionist** doctrine of sanctification—and there are the best of reasons for not doing that.

The author errs, too, in the reviewer's judgment, in drawing a sharp antithesis between the **Lordship** of Christ and the **Saviourship** of Christ. He asserts that this distinction "is set forth everywhere in the

writings of the Apostle Paul", though he fails to cite any references to show that this is the case. Really, of course, no such distinction can be substantiated from Paul's epistles or any other part of the Bible. The author says: "He is the Saviour of all believers. They are delivered from the guilt of sin and from its ultimate penalty, but, alas, all do not know the blessedness of His lordship." This seems to involve a basic misunderstanding of what it means to accept Christ as Saviour. Christ's work as Saviour involves far more than deliverance "from the guilt of sin and from its ultimate penalty". His name was to be called Jesus because **he shall save his people from their sins** (Matt. 1:21); not just from the "guilt" and "penalty" of their sins, but **from their sins**, a general statement which includes all aspects and consequences of sin. The New Testament knows nothing of accepting Christ as Saviour **without at the same time accepting him as Lord**. "Believe on THE LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31); "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth THE LORD Jesus (ARV, Jesus AS LORD), and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9). To accept Christ as one's **Saviour** means to accept him in **his threefold offices of Prophet, Priest and King**. It involves this, even though the believer may have but an imperfect understanding of it at the time. The person who claims to accept Christ as **Saviour only, and not as Lord**, is not a true Christian believer, but is either self-deceived or a hypocrite.

To accept Christ as **Lord** is really implied in accepting him as Saviour. Then throughout the Christian's life there must be a continuing earnest endeavor that **the implications of Christ's Lordship** may be more fully translated into the fruits of sanctification in daily living. But there is no antithesis between Christ as Saviour and Christ as Lord. The only real Christ is the **whole** Christ presented in the Scriptures as Prophet, Priest and King, and the only saving faith is faith in the **whole** Christ, who, as Lord and King, will eventually, by the work of the Holy Spirit, subdue the believer wholly to himself.

It would seem, too, that the author is too positive in his assertion that the filling with the Holy Spirit "is instantaneous". He bases this on the tense of the Greek verb in Eph. 5:18, and adds: "By meeting the condition any soul may be at once filled with the Holy Spirit." This seems to lift

the words “. . . be filled with the Spirit” quite out of their context in the sentence (verses 18-21), where **being filled with the Spirit** is contrasted with **being drunk with wine** (which is certainly a matter of degrees, and not instantaneous), and is followed by “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

A careful exegesis of Eph. 5:18-21 and comparison with other Scriptures would seem to indicate: (a) that being filled with the Holy Spirit is a Christian duty; (b) that there are degrees of fulness of the Spirit in different Christians, and in the same Christian at different times; (c) that this “filling” is not necessarily an instantaneous experience but rather a more or less continuous condition or state, which some may reach suddenly and others more gradually; and (d) that every believer should constantly seek a greater fulness of the Holy Spirit by a conscientious use of the appointed means of grace, accompanied by sincere repentance and true faith.

Question:

Why is sprinkling the only mode of baptism in use in the Reformed Presbyterian Church?

Answer:

In the history of the Christian Church as a whole there have been three modes of baptism that have been widely used: immersion, pouring and sprinkling. The official teaching of the Reformed Presbyterian Church on this subject is set forth in the **Confession of Faith**, XXVIII. 3, which says: “Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person.” It should be noted that this statement does not assert that immersion is **wrong**; it only asserts that immersion is **unnecessary**. Nor does it claim that sprinkling is the **only** right mode of baptism. Having stated that immersion is not necessary, the Confession adds that “baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person”; that is to say, **either pouring or sprinkling is proper and constitutes a right administration of baptism**. To say that baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling does not mean that those are the only right ways, or that immersion is a wrong way. (See also the **R.P. Testimony XXV**, Error 5).

In view of the statements of the Con-

fession of Faith, as cited above, it must be said that the universal use of sprinkling in the Reformed Presbyterian Church is founded on custom and convenience rather than upon principle. That is to say, while recognizing that there are three legitimate modes of baptism, any one of which constitutes a right administration of the sacrament, we prefer and practice sprinkling because of its convenience and because of long continued custom. Thus our preference for sprinkling involves no reflection upon Churches which practice immersion. We have no quarrel with them because they practice immersion, but only because of their tendency to insist that immersion is the **only** legitimate mode of baptism.

Question:

Why is it wrong to sing hymns when the Lord uses them in bringing souls to himself?

Answer:

It is not necessarily wrong to sing hymns; what is wrong is to sing hymns of merely human composition **in the worship of God**, for which God has appointed the Psalms of the Bible as our praise-book. Since we have no right to add to the worship of God anything which he has not appointed, hymns of merely human composition are to be excluded from divine worship.

If a situation could be arranged in which the nature and purpose of the assembly would be **purely evangelistic**, that is, in which the one and only aim would be to reach unsaved sinners with the Gospel message; and if this could be arranged so **that every element of worshipping God would be strictly excluded**, then perhaps a case might be made out for singing “hymns” as one way, among others, of impressing the Gospel truth on the minds of the hearers. But the trouble is that meetings for evangelism are not conducted in that way. Worship and evangelism are mixed so that it is practically impossible to distinguish the two. Moreover many hymns by their very words **profess to worship God**, in expressing thanks to him, praising him for his goodness and mercy, etc. How can anyone sing such hymns without singing them as an act of worship?

Also against ordinary hymns is the fact that many of them contain serious doctrinal errors. These errors, sung over and over again to the accompaniment of attractive music, become implanted in the mind until they are unconsciously and automatically received as truth. Consider, for example,

the following lines from a well-known hymn:

“What'er I do, where'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.”
What! Is God's hand leading me if I
am robbing a bank, or attending a “movie”
on Sabbath afternoon? Contrast with this
hymn the inspired words of the first Psalm:

“O greatly blessed is the man
Who walketh not astray
In counsel of ungodly men,
Nor stands in sinners' way . . .”

It is possible, of course, by careful editing to compile a collection of hymns that will be comparatively free of doctrinal error. But the Psalter, being part of the inspired Word of God, is entirely free of all error; it is wholly truth and nothing else.

No doubt God has used uninspired hymns to bring souls to himself. The real question is not “Does God sometimes use uninspired hymns to bring souls to Christ?” but “What songs has God appointed for us to sing in worshipping him?” It was reported that in the great Irish revival some persons were converted to Christ through hearing Roman Catholic priests say the “Mass”; this did not prove that the Romish Mass is according to the will of God; it only showed that God in his sovereignty, on that particular occasion, chose to make use of a very corrupted form of worship to convict some souls of sin and bring them out of darkness into light.

Our standard of faith and life is not **the providence of God**; what God does, or permits, in his providence is no guide for our conduct. Our standard of faith and life is **the written Word of God**, the Holy Bible. We are to be guided in our conduct by what God has revealed in his Word as his will. It was wrong for Judas to betray Jesus, and for Pilate to have him crucified. Yet God used these sinful acts in his plan of salvation, in providing an atonement for sinners. God used Judas' and Pilate's acts, yet the acts were wrong, because they were contrary to the revealed will of God.

We should realize that the honor and glory of God are even more important than the salvation of souls. Our highest concern should be to promote the glory of God by a conscientious obedience to his revealed will. When we are ready to do that in dead earnest, we will find that the Holy Spirit will be at work in bringing about the salvation of souls.

Question:

Is inter-marriage between races legitimate?

Answer:

Yes. The question of inter-marriage between persons of different races is not a question of right and wrong, but a question of expediency. That is to say, it is not **a sin** for persons of diverse races to marry, but it may be unwise to do so. Of course it is sinful for a Christian to go ahead and do something if he believes it is an unwise thing to do; but that is quite different from affirming that inter-marriage between races is sinful **in itself**. Such inter-marriage is in itself **morally indifferent**, but under certain circumstances it may be unwise and therefore to be avoided.

Marriages between persons of widely different races often turn out unfortunately, not so much because of any incompatibility between the parties themselves as because of the wide cleavage between their racial backgrounds and cultures. The children of such marriages may also have to face some problems as it may be difficult for them to gain social acceptance by either race. There are exceptions to these considerations of expediency, however, and some inter-racial marriages have no doubt turned out very well.

The fact that a matter is contrary to prevalent public opinion and social custom does not prove that it is a sin. Only that which is contrary to the law of God is sinful. We must get our conceptions of sin and of Christian ethics from the Bible, not from contemporary popular viewpoints. While marriage between persons of diverse races is not a sin, we should remember that the Bible plainly teaches that marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian is prohibited by God's law (1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14).

Question:

How might one explain in a few sentences (for each day) why Christians should not observe special religious days such as Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, etc.?

Answer:

The principles involved in this matter may be briefly stated in the following logical major premise, minor premise and conclusion:

1. It is wrong to practice any element of religious worship not appointed by God in his Word.
2. The observance of Christmas (Easter, Mother's Day, etc.) as a special day in the Church amounts to the practice of an element of religious worship not appointed by God in his Word.

3. Therefore the observance of Christmas (Easter, Mother's Day, etc.) as a special day in the Church is wrong.

For a fuller discussion of this question, and Scripture proofs, the reader is referred to "The Observance of Days" in "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Vol. II No. 1 (January-March 1947), pp. 17-20.

Question:

If Baptism is truly "a sacrament, wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, **and our engagement to be the Lord's**" (Shorter Catechism, Q. 94), then should it not rightfully be administered at the time that we personally, and from the heart, make that engagement?

Answer:

The chief captain obtained Roman citizenship by his own voluntary act in meeting the requirements (Acts 22:28), a noble thing, no doubt; but Paul was born a Roman citizen, a thing still more noble. An alien living in the United States, by meeting certain conditions, can be naturalized as an American; but those born in the United States are citizens by right of birth, and recognized as such even while too young to exercise all the functions of citizenship. It is a wonderful thing for an unbeliever, who has been a member of Satan's kingdom, to become a citizen of the kingdom of God and a child in the family of God, and thereupon to be baptized in connection with his own personal profession of faith; it is an even more wonderful thing, and higher privilege, to be born in the sphere of the Covenant of Grace, and therefore to be recognized as a citizen of God's kingdom and a member of God's household from birth. Infant Baptism is a public recognition of the covenant status and birthright Church membership of the children of Christian parents. If that covenant status and birthright membership are realities — and there is abundant evidence that they are — then the public recognition of these realities by infant Baptism cannot properly be challenged. (See Gen. 17:7, 9-14; Luke 1:15; Acts 2:39; 1 Cor. 7:14).

In an article on "The Polemics of Infant Baptism" Dr. B. B. Warfield wrote: ". . . . that the family is the unit of society . . . is the New Testament basis of the Church of God. God does . . . make the parents act on behalf of their minor children. He does, indeed, require individual faith for salvation; but He organizes His people in families

first; and then into churches, recognizing in their very warp and woof the family constitution. His promises are all the more precious that they are to us and our children. And though this may not fit in with the growing individualism of the day, it is God's ordinance" ("Studies in Theology", pp. 405-6).

The excessive individualism which is of Baptist origin and has greatly influenced practically all Protestant Churches places tremendous emphasis on personal faith and personal profession, but completely neglects the other side of the matter (which in the Bible receives great stress); namely the Covenant of Grace with its corollary of the covenant status of the children of believers from their birth. Baptism is not **only** a sign and seal of "our engagement to be the Lord's." It is **also** a sign and seal of "our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace". The Reformed doctrine and practice of infant Baptism, followed in due time by personal profession of faith and admission to the Lord's Supper, recognizes **both** of these aspects of the sacrament of Baptism. The aspect of "our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace" is recognized by the Baptism of those to whom the covenant promises of these benefits belong; the aspect of a sign and seal of "our engagement to be the Lord's" is recognized by the Baptism being administered upon the profession of faith of the parents, who, according to God's constitution of the family, act as the representatives of the child. This representative principle is not only prominent in the Bible, but runs through the whole structure of human life. The "engagement to be the Lord's" made by the child's parents is just as real, valid and binding as a personal profession of faith could be. Accordingly when a covenant child comes to make a personal profession of faith, that is not to be regarded as a new profession, but simply as a ratification and renewal of the profession originally made by the child's parents.

On the other hand, the practice suggested in this query, of deferring Baptism until personal faith can be professed, would fail to do justice to the covenant status of the children of Christian parents, and would regard these children as virtually on a par with the children of the world, or unbelievers and citizens of Satan's kingdom, until they reach an age when they are capable of making a personal profession of faith and thereupon receiving Baptism.

"The ordinances of the Church belong to the members of it; but each in its own ap-

pointed time. The initiatory ordinance belongs to the members on becoming members, other ordinances become their right as the appointed seasons for enjoying them roll around" (Warfield, as cited, p. 401).

For a good treatment of infant Baptism see the little book entitled "Why We Baptize Infants" by Dr. A. Pieters, published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. Price 40 cents.

Question:

Did not the early Christians believe that Christ was coming back to the earth soon, and did not the apostles writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit teach this, as in 1 Cor. 1:7; Titus 2:13; James 5:7, 8; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 John 2:28 and many other passages?

Answer:

This query really involves two distinct questions, namely (a) Did the early Christians believe that Christ would return soon? and (b) Did the inspired apostles teach that Christ would return soon?

In answer to (a) it may be said that the belief that Christ would return to the earth soon, that is, in the lifetime of people then living, was apparently held by some, at least, among the early Christians. We can see this between the lines in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, where the apostle Paul considers it necessary to warn the Thessalonian Christians against being "troubled" or "shaken in spirit" by the notion "that the day of Christ is at hand" (ARV, "just at hand"). The apostle continues, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition", etc. (Verse 3). Thus the apostle warned them against the idea that Christ might return at any time; certain other events must take place first, before Christ's second coming could occur. The fact that some, or even many, of the early Christians believed that Christ would return during their natural lifetime of course does not prove that this idea was true: it only indicates that it was their belief. They were not infallible any more than we modern Christians are, and the Bible does not endorse as truth every idea or teaching that it records as held by any person. Inasmuch as the second coming of Christ is still future, those of the early Christians who believed he would return in their lifetime were of course simply mistaken.

With respect to (b) it may be said that the passages cited, and others of a similar

character, do not teach that Christ **would** return during the lifetime of people then living, but only that Christ **might** return during the lifetime of people then living. 1 Cor. 1:7 speaks of "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ", which applies to Christians of every period of history, whether or not Christ returns during their lifetime or after their death. Titus 2:13 speaks of the second coming of Christ as "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ", which again implies nothing concerning the **time** of Christ's return. James 5:7, 8 teaches that Christians are to "be patient . . . unto the coming of the Lord", and that they are to establish their hearts "for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh". These verses teach that Christ's return is a certainty, which is getting nearer all the time, a thought which should stabilize the Christian's heart in his troubles; but they neither teach nor imply that Christ would return before the death of the persons to whom James' epistle was first written. 1 Peter 5:4 says: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away". This verse teaches that when Christ comes again, faithful servants of Christ shall receive a glorious reward; but it says nothing whatever about the time of Christ's return. 1 John 2:28 urges Christians to abide in Christ, "that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming". This is an allusion to the truth that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). There is no implication in 1 John 2:28 that Christ's return must take place before the death of the readers of the epistle.

While the apostles were inspired in writing the New Testament books, they were not **omniscient**. What they wrote is true and infallible, but some questions are not answered in what they wrote, for some things were not revealed to them, including the time of Christ's second coming. A careful study of the relevant passages of the New Testament will show that while the apostles evidently believed and taught that Christ **might** return in their lifetime, they nowhere taught or implied that he **must** return in their lifetime.

The signs predicted in the New Testament as to appear before the second coming of Christ are of such a nature that all of them might occur during a period of a few years, or a generation. If the Church had

been faithful to Christ's Great Commission, the world would have been evangelized centuries ago, the other signs might quickly take place and Christ's second coming follow immediately. But the Church was not faithful to Christ's Great Commission, and the age of the Gospel has continued to our own time. For us, as for the early Christians, Christ's second coming is "that blessed hope", to which we should look forward with longing and eager anticipation (1 Peter 1:13; Luke 21:28; Rev. 22:20), while at the same time we recognize that the **time** of Christ's return is a secret which God has not revealed to men (Matt. 24:36, 42, 44), which therefore we cannot know, but for which we should always be prepared.

Question:

Please suggest some good books on the Bible, Christian doctrine, etc., suitable for laymen to read.

Answer:

In addition to the books listed in previous issues, the following are recommended:

Studies in Theology, by Loraine Boettner. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. This is a new book, just off the press, by the well-known author of "The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination". The present volume consists partly of new material and partly of material previously published in magazine articles or in smaller books. The entire contents is marked by the simplicity and clearness which characterizes Dr. Boettner's writing. The contents include "The Inspiration of the Scriptures"; "Christian Supernaturalism"; "The Trinity"; "The Person of Christ"; "The Atonement". These profound truths are handled with unswerving loyalty to the Bible and the Reformed Faith, and in a manner that is not only read-

able but interesting. This volume is particularly timely, as the great truths it discusses are widely doubted or denied today. 351 pages. \$3.50.

The Plan of Salvation, by Benjamin B. Warfield. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. This little book is a masterpiece of clear, straight thinking along Scriptural lines. Although written primarily for ministers and theological students, it is also suitable for laymen with fair education who are not afraid of an occasional technical term. This book differentiates the various views of the Plan of Salvation in a way that will never be forgotten by the reader who has once followed it through. Salvation by human effort is sharply distinguished from salvation by the power of God; sacerdotalism from evangelicalism; Arminianism from Calvinism; and inconsistent from consistent Calvinism. \$1.50.

The Soul of a Priest, by L. H. Lehmann. Agora Publishing Co., 120 Liberty Street, New York 6, N. Y. The fascinating story of a Roman Catholic priest: his early life, education, ordination to the priesthood, struggles of soul, gradual disillusionment, and how he finally left the Church of Rome and became a Protestant. This book affords a view of the inner character of the Roman Catholic Church, presented by a man who has experienced what he writes about. \$1.50.

Note: Additional outstanding religious books will be listed in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life." The listing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Please purchase books through your local bookstore or direct from the publishers; do not send orders to the publisher of "Blue Banner Faith and Life."
Ed.

God strengthen me to bear myself;
That heaviest weight of all to bear,
Inalienable weight of care.

God harden me against myself,
This coward with pathetic voice
Who craves for ease, and rest, and joys:

Myself, arch-traitor to myself;
My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
My clog whatever road I go.

Yet One there is can curb myself,
Can roll the strangling load from me,
Break off the yoke and set me free.

(C. G. Rossetti)

IN IMMANUEL'S LAND
(Continued from inside Front Cover)

Oh! I am my Beloved's,
And my Belov'd is mine!
He brings a poor, vile sinner
Into his "house of wine";
I stand upon his merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's Land.

I shall sleep sound in Jesus,
Fill'd with his likeness rise,
To love and to adore him,
To see him with these eyes;
'Tween me and resurrection
But Paradise doth stand;
Then—then for glory dwelling
In Immanuel's Land.

The Bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace—
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on his pierced hand—
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's Land.

I have borne scorn and hatred,
I have borne wrong and shame;
Earth's proud ones have reproach'd me
For Christ's thrice-blessed Name;
Where God's seals set the fairest
They've stamp't their foulest brand,
But judgment shines like noonday
In Immanuel's Land.

They've summoned me before them,
But there I may not come—
My Lord says, "Come up hither";
My Lord says, "Welcome home!"
My kingly King at his white throne
My presence doth command,
Where glory—glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's Land.

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