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## BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

J. G. VOS, Editor and Manager

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# Passing Away

By Christina G. Rossetti

Passing away, saith the World, passing away;  
Chances, beauty and youth sapp'd day by day;  
Thy life never continueth in one stay.  
Is the eye waxen dim, is the dark hair changing to gray  
That hath won neither laurel nor bay?  
I shall clothe myself in Spring and bud in May;  
Thou, root-stricken, shalt not rebuild thy decay  
On my bosom for aye.  
Then I answer'd: Yea.

Passing away, saith my Soul, passing away:  
With its burden of fear and hope, of labor and play,  
Hearken what the past doth witness and say:  
Rust in thy gold, a moth is in thine array,  
A canker is in thy bud, thy leaf must decay.  
At midnight, at cockcrow, at morning, one certain day,  
Lo, the Bridegroom shall come and shall not delay:  
Watch thou and pray.  
Then I answer'd: Yea.

Passing away, saith my God, passing away:  
Winter passeth after the long delay:  
New grapes on the vine, new figs on the tender spray,  
Turtle calleth turtle in Heaven's May.  
Though I tarry, wait for me, trust me, watch and pray.  
Arise, come away; night is past, and lo, it is day;  
My love, my sister, my spouse, thou shalt hear me say—  
Then I answer'd: Yea.

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## A Pure River of Water of Life

By Christina G. Rossetti

We know not a voice of that River,  
If vocal or silent it be,  
Where for ever and ever and ever  
It flows to no sea.

More deep than the seas is that River,  
More full than their manifold tides,  
Where for ever and ever and ever  
It flows and abides.

Pure gold is the bed of that River  
(The gold of that land is the best),  
Where for ever and ever and ever  
It flows on at rest.

Oh goodly the banks of that River,  
Oh goodly the fruits that they bear,  
Where for ever and ever and ever  
It flows and is fair.

For lo on each bank of that River  
The Tree of Life life-giving grows,  
Where for ever and ever and ever  
The Pure River flows.

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NUMBER 1

## *Evolution—God's Method of Creation?*

By J. G. Vos

The view commonly called "Theistic Evolution" seems to be commonly accepted in some Christian circles today. Briefly, this view holds that evolution was God's "method" of creation. This implies, of course, that creation was a process, not an act.

We are being asked, "Could not God have used a long evolutionary process as His 'method' of creating living organisms, including man?" But of course the real question is not whether God could have done this, but whether He actually did do this. God is almighty and we cannot set limits on what He could do. But in discussing the question of human origin, we are not concerned with abstract possibility, but with what the Word teaches as to what God actually did.

Scriptures especially involved in this matter are Genesis 1:26,27; 2:7; 2:18-23 (creation of Eve); and 3:19 (the return to dust).

### **What the Common View of Theistic Evolution Implies**

1. According to theistic evolution, Adam and Eve had sub-human parents. While Adam and Eve would be regarded as the first human beings, they had parents which were less than human. The implications of such a supposition are disturbing to accepted Christian truth.

2. "The dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7) from which Adam was formed is taken by theistic evolutionists as a metaphor meaning the bodies of previously living sub-human animals. Biblical Christianity teaches, rather, that "the dust of the ground" means lifeless inorganic matter.

3. After forming the body of Adam, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7b). But if "dust of the ground" means the living bodies of sub-human animals, we are here faced with difficulty. For the animals (anthropoid apes or whatever) *already* had the breath of life in their nostrils. So if Adam had a pre-human father and mother, these parents were living, breathing organisms, and there remains no point

to the statement that God breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of Adam.

4. If theistic evolution, an age-long process of development, was really God's "method" of creation, then the Genesis account of the creation of Eve from a part of Adam's body cannot be true (Gen. 2:21-23). Eve, too, would have had a sub-human father and mother. She would be the product of an age-long process, not of a definite act of God as described in Genesis two.

5. If "the dust of the ground" in Genesis 2:7 is a metaphor for the living bodies of sub-human animals, we encounter difficulty in Genesis 3:19, "... till thou return unto the ground, for out of it ~~wast~~ thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." This verse is obviously a description of human bodily death and the return of the dead body to its lifeless components. It will not do to take "dust of the ground" as a metaphor for the living bodies of sub-human animals in 2:7, and a description of human death and decay in 3:19. We would have to hold that 3:19 means that on account of human sin, humanity would return to an animal or ape-like condition. But this obviously is not what happened. Man sinned, he became evil, but he did not cease to be human; he did not return to the condition of the anthropoid apes or other animals.

6. Conclusion. Theistic evolution raises more problems than it solves. In the end we must choose between these two alternatives: (1) The creation account of Genesis is literally true; or (2) the Bible is basically false and untrustworthy.

### **Modern Theology's Escape Hatch**

Modern liberal and neo-orthodox theology dispose of Genesis chapters 1-11 by denying their historical character and calling this section "myth." But this brings modern theology into head-on collision with the New Testament. Note especially Paul's statements in Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:22,45. Obviously the inspired writers of the New Testament took Genesis literally, not as metaphor or myth.

# Understanding the Trinity

By J. G. Vos

The subject of this article may perhaps seem dry and abstract, or of little practical importance for the Christian life. But really there is no truth of the Christian Faith that is more important for the way of salvation and the Christian life. Christianity stands or falls with the doctrine of the Trinity; where this truth has been abandoned, Christianity soon disappears. It is the landmark of the Christian Faith.

The divine Trinity (or the Tri-unity of God) is a mystery in two senses. It is a mystery in the Biblical sense; that is, it is a truth that we never could have known if God had not revealed it to us in the Bible. And it is also a mystery in the ordinary sense, for it is a truth which baffles our understanding and transcends our power to comprehend. "The Lord hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness" (2 Chronicles 6:1). God is clothed with impenetrable mystery; He can never be comprehended by finite beings. We should not expect to be able to rationalize the truth of the Trinity.

For the present discussion we shall assume that there is a personal God, that this God has revealed Himself in the Bible, and that God can be known from His revelation in the Bible. We shall consider, first, what the doctrine of the Trinity means; second, the Bible proof for the doctrine of the Trinity; and third, the practical value of the doctrine of the Trinity.

## What the Doctrine of the Trinity Means

First of all, we should realize that the background of the doctrine of the Trinity is the truth that **there is only one God**. If we define God as the Supreme Being, it follows necessarily that there can be only one God. Also the Bible teaches this truth from cover to cover. We should always remember that any idea of God which loses sight of His **unity** must be false.

In the divine Being there exist three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When we say "three persons," we do not mean exactly the same thing by the term "Persons" as we do when speaking of human beings. The word **person** is just the nearest approach, in our common speech, to what the Bible teaches about the distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the one God there exist side by side three centers of self-consciousness, each different from the other two. Each can call the others "Thou" or "He" and can speak of Himself as "I" or "Me." Thus there is a true distinction of Persons in the divine Being.

Philip Schaff, in his *History of the Christian Church*, in discussing the doctrine of the Trinity, says: ". . . the term *person* must not be taken here in the sense current among men, as if the three persons were three separate individuals, or three self-conscious and separately acting beings. The word *person* is in reality only a make-shift in the absence of a more adequate term."

Schaff also says: "There is only *one* divine *essence* or *substance*. Father, Son and Spirit are one in essence, or consubstantial. They are in one another, inseparable, and cannot be conceived without each other." "The three persons are related to the divine substance not as three individuals to their species, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or Peter, John and Paul, to human nature; they are only one God. The divine substance is absolutely indivisible by reason of its simplicity. . . . the whole fulness of the one undivided essence of God, with all its attributes, is in all the persons of the Trinity. . . . The church teaches not *one* divine essence *and* three persons, but *one* essence *in* three persons. Father, Son, and Spirit cannot be conceived as three separate individuals, but are in one another, and form a solidaric unity."

We should not suppose that each of the three Persons possesses *a part* of the divine nature and attributes. That would seem the natural and logical explanation to us, but it is not true to the Biblical data. On the contrary, each of the three Persons is truly God and possesses *all* of the divine nature and attributes. Just how each of the three Persons can possess all there is of God is something we cannot hope to understand; it baffles our human intellect. But the Bible teaches just that. As John Gray wrote in his poem "On the Holy Trinity":

"Equal, and none  
Can make but one;  
One are the three;  
Yet what it be  
That triple spirit only knows."

Though this truth is indeed a mystery, still it does not involve a contradiction as has often been alleged against it. It would be a contradiction if we were to say that God is one and God is three *in the same sense*. If that were the doctrine of the Trinity, no reasonable person could believe it. But the doctrine of the Trinity affirms that God is one and three in *different* senses; He is one *in substance* and three *in personality*. We admit the mystery, but we deny the alleged contradiction.

The three Persons of the Trinity are equal in power and glory. So far as their nature is concerned, no one of them is subordinate to any of the others. If there were any personal subordination, they could not all three be truly God. There is a certain kind of *functional subordination* in connection with the working out of the plan of salvation for the human race. Because of His state of humiliation on earth, the eternal Son could say, "My Father is greater than I." But *in their nature* none of the three persons can be subordinate; all are equal in power and glory, just because they are the same in substance.

All three Persons co-operate in every work, yet certain works are attributed more particularly to each. Thus we think of God the Father as most prominent in the work of creation, yet the Gospel of John tells us concerning God the Son that "without him was not anything made that was made." The purchase of our redemption was particularly the work of God the Son, and the application of redemption is more particularly the work of God the Holy Spirit. Yet it is all part of one great plan in which all three Persons co-operate at all times.

All comparisons fail to do justice to the doctrine of the Trinity. Many people have sought to find illustrations of this truth in the realm of nature or in human life. Some of these illustrations may help us a little, but none of them is really adequate. Really even the reciprocal terms *Father* and *Son* used in the Bible itself do not mean the same as "Father" and "Son" in the ordinary sphere. They are just the nearest conceptions in human speech and human thought to suggest the relations between the first and second Persons of the Trinity.

One illustration that has been suggested is that of water, which exists in the three forms of liquid, vapor, and ice, yet always has the same chemical composition of two atoms of hydrogen to one of oxygen. This illustration is faulty because water is not liquid, vapor and ice all at the same time; when it becomes one of these it ceases to be another. But God exists as one substance in three Persons at the same time and continuously.

Another suggested illustration is that of the sun; the matter of the sun is said to represent God the Father, the light of the sun to represent God the Son, and the heat of the sun to represent God the Holy Spirit. This is a better illustration than that of water, for heat and light are distinct from the matter of the sun, yet inseparable from it. The sun is the sun, light is light, and heat is heat, yet the sun is continually radiating light and heat through the universe. But the illustration breaks down, because matter, light and heat are not *the same in substance* as the persons of the Trinity are. It may be that modern physics has shown that matter, light, and heat are basically similar in substance because they are all based,

ultimately, upon energy in the atomic nucleus; but the three Persons of the Trinity are not merely similar or related in substance; they are *identical* in substance, each of them possessing *all* of the one divine essence or substance.

While such illustrations may help us a little in grasping this baffling concept, none of them is really adequate, because material things and forces cannot really represent relationships between persons, and especially not relationships between the Persons of the divine Trinity. For the divine Trinity is really unique and has no parallel in the created universe; it is truly a mystery.

### **Bible Proof of the Doctrine of the Trinity**

The Trinity has not been revealed in nature. Nature does indeed tell us of the existence, power, glory and moral law of God, but it is silent concerning His existence in three distinct Persons. Our knowledge of this truth is derived entirely from the pages of the Bible.

The doctrine of the Trinity is revealed gradually in the Bible. The Old Testament has only dim suggestions of it. It was not until the Second Person of the Trinity came to earth, when our Saviour was born in Bethlehem, that the full doctrine began to be revealed. Consequently it is in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament that we find the fullest presentation of this doctrine. In the Old Testament we find certain foreshadowings of it; for example, the plural pronoun in the first chapter of Genesis, as in Gen. 1:26, "And God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness . . ." Again, in Psalm 110 we read: "The Lord said unto my Lord . . .," a verse which presents two divine Persons. But these are rather suggestions than clear proofs. For the full proof, we must turn to the New Testament. The formal proof may be summarized as follows:

1. The Bible teaches that there is only one God. Many texts might be cited; for example, 1 Cor. 8:4, "There is none other God but one."
2. The Bible speaks of each of three Persons as God. (a) The Father. 2 Cor. 11:3, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore . . ." (b) The Son. Rom. 9:5, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." (c) The Holy Spirit. Acts 5:3,4, "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? . . . thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."
3. Since the Bible teaches that there is only one God, and yet speaks of three Persons as God, we conclude that this one God exists in three Persons,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is the only inference we can draw from the Biblical data without making the Bible contradict itself.

4. By teaching that there is only one God and that each of the three Persons is God, the Bible teaches that the three Persons are identical in substance; each of them possesses the one, undivided substance called "God."

5. The Bible teaches that the three persons are truly distinct, by the way in which each of them speaks to or of the others. (a) The Father speaks of the Son. Matt. 3:17, "This is my beloved Son." (b) The Father speaks of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:17, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." (c) The Son speaks of the Father. Matt. 11:27, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son . . ." (d) The Son speaks of the Holy Spirit. John 14:26, "the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name . . ." (e) The Holy Spirit speaks of the Father. Heb. 3:7, "as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if you will hear his voice . . ." (f) The Holy Spirit speaks of the Son. John 15:26, "the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."

6. "It is proper to the Father to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son from all eternity" (*Westminster Larger Catechism*, 10). Heb. 1:5,6,8. John 1:14,18. John 15:26. Gal. 4:6.

#### **The Practical Value of the Doctrine of the Trinity**

The Trinity is exclusively a Christian conception of God. Christians, Jews and Mohammedans are monotheists, but only Christians believe in the Trinity of one God in three Persons. To reject the Trinity is to reject Christianity and to renounce the God of the Bible.

The doctrine of the Trinity is intertwined with the doctrine of salvation by grace. The plan of salvation is based on the concept of the Trinity. Salvation is ordained by God the Father, purchased by God the Son, and applied by God the Holy Spirit. The Bible presents the plan of salvation in the form of a cove-

nant between these three divine Persons. If we give up the doctrine of the Trinity, the plan of salvation falls to the ground. If we hold a false belief about the Trinity, we are certain to hold erroneous views about the plan of salvation.

The doctrine of the Trinity is a safeguard against wrong ideas about God. It shows why God is sufficient in Himself, complete in Himself, always self-sufficient, having no need of any created being, because each of the divine Persons has the other two as objects to know and to love.

The doctrine of the Trinity also emphasizes the fact that the God of the Bible is a *personal* God, not a mere power, force or influence.

Jesus commanded to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in (or rather, into) the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We should note that it was into the *name*, not the *names*, showing the unity of God along with the distinction of the Persons. Baptism is a "sign and seal" of a covenant relationship with the Triune God in the plan of salvation.

At the baptism of Jesus we see the Trinity disclosed. Jesus Christ is the second Person, God the Son. The third Person, God the Holy Spirit, descended in visible form as a dove and abode on Him. At the same time God the Father spoke from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Many people today talk about belief in God in a very vague, general sort of way; but is the God they believe in the God of the Bible? Not unless He is the Triune God; and they do not really come to Him unless they come through the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, for He is the only way by which sinful man can approach God the Father. "Who-soever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2:23). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The person who really comes to God by Jesus Christ will know God as the Triune God of the Scriptures.

—The Covenanter Witness

# Studies in the Epistle to the Romans

## LESSON 40

### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued

#### **B. The Jews Rejected Because of Their Unbelief, as Predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures. 9:25-33**

In 9:1-24, Paul has shown that God's rejection of the Jews and His calling of the Gentiles is not inconsistent with His promises, and he has set forth with emphasis the truth that God is absolutely sovereign in bestowing His gracious favor upon men. God is accountable to no one but Himself, and He has always acted in absolute consistency with Himself—with His own nature, Word and promises.

Next, the apostle undertakes to show that the Jews were rejected for their unbelief, as predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures. First, he quotes from the prophet Hosea (2:23; 1:10), "I will call them my people, which were not my people, and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." The name "Osee" in Romans 9:25 is of course merely a Greek form of the Old Testament "Hosea." It will be noted that Paul's quotation of Hosea differs somewhat from the wording in the Authorized Version of the Old Testament. This is not a serious difficulty, for Paul's version is a legitimate translation of the Hebrew original, as in the Hebrew the same word can mean both "have mercy on" and "love." Moreover, the Holy Spirit is the real author of both the prophecy of Hosea and the Epistle to the Romans, and when an author is quoting from his own earlier writings, absolute literal identity is not required; an author has some liberty in quoting his own words, that would be improper in quoting the words of another.

A more serious problem concerns the fact that in Hosea the promise concerns the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel, whereas Paul (and also Peter in 1 Peter 2:10) applies it to the Gentiles. Because Hosea was writing of the ten tribes, some scholars have supposed that Paul in Romans 9:25 had a restoration of the Jews in mind. This interpretation is untenable, however, because it cannot be made to fit the context in Romans 9, where the subject is very plainly the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles. The most probable solution of the difficulty is that in Hosea's time the ten tribes were in a heathenish condition, being deeply involved in idolatry, and therefore from the religious point of view they were practically on a par with the Gentile nations. Hence what Hosea said of the Gentile-like ten tribes, Paul could properly apply to the Gentiles

in general—the time would come when those who were not God's people would be called His people, and when she who was not beloved would be called beloved.

In considering verses 25 and 26 we should realize how utterly contrary these verses are to the common popular notion of the "universal brotherhood of man." There are in the world two classes of people, those who are God's people, and those who are not God's people; those who are beloved with God's redemptive love and those who are not so beloved. The one class are in a covenant relationship with God; they know God as their own God; God is their God, and they are God's people. The other class are strangers and foreigners, aliens from God, at enmity with God, far away from any religious communion or covenant bond with God. By the gracious calling of God, those who were not His people may become His people. But what we should note is, that this comes to pass only by the gracious calling of God. It is not true that all mankind are God's children (in the religious and ethical sense) by nature. By nature they are the children of wrath. By the special, saving grace of God alone do they become children of God, His people, beloved. We should keep this truth clearly in mind in a day when the liberal dogma of "the universal brotherhood of man" seems to be regarded as an unquestionable truth by many of the leading religious leaders of our day.

The Old Testament, then, predicted the calling and salvation of Gentiles. While this seems quite obvious to us today, we must remember that it was a strange and difficult teaching to those who had been brought up in the tenets of Pharisaic Judaism, as many of Paul's original readers had been. If the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles had not been regarded as an extremely difficult doctrine, certainly the apostle would not have labored so long and elaborately to prove the point.

Next, the apostle quotes from the prophecy of Isaiah (10:22,23; 1:9), to prove from the Old Testament Scriptures that the Jews as a nation were not to be saved, but only a remnant or inner core of the external nation of Israel. It will be observed that Paul's quotation varies somewhat from Isaiah 10:22,23 as it appears in the Authorized Version. The apostle's version is more like the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) than like the Hebrew original, although the general meaning is identical. Here again it must be borne in mind that this is a case of the

divine Author, the Holy Spirit, quoting His own previous writings. It is not, therefore, inconsistent with the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Scripture.

The point is evidently that, according to Isaiah's prophecy, it is not the whole body of Israel, in number as the sand of the sea, that is to receive salvation, but only a small fraction of this whole body, namely, "remnant." This plainly implies, then, the divine purpose of rejection of the Jews as a nation. Verse 28, quoting from Isaiah, predicts the divine work of **judgment** which is threatened against the apostate mass of the Jews.

Verse 29 is from Isaiah 1:9. Where Paul has "a seed," Isaiah has "a very small remnant." The word "seed" is taken by Paul from the Greek version of the Old Testament, and its meaning in this context is precisely the same as that of "a very small remnant"—the seed reserved for sowing the future crop, which is a very small fraction of the total harvest of the previous year. It was only the grace of God that prevented Israel from becoming completely like Sodom and Gomorrah. The great majority became thus apostate and heathenish. But God preserved a "seed," a "very small remnant" of saved, spiritual persons, to maintain the continuity of the covenant people. How mistaken it is, then, to hold that the gracious promises of God were given to Israel after the flesh, to the Jews as Jews, as those physically descended from Abraham!

#### Questions:

1. What does Paul undertake to show in 9:25-33?

2. From what Old Testament prophet does the apostle first quote?

3. How can we explain the fact that Romans 9:25 differs from Hosea 2:23 as found in the Authorized Version?

4. Who is the real author of both Old Testament and New Testament?

5. What liberty may an author properly take in quoting from his own previous writings?

6. Concerning whom was Hosea speaking in Hosea 2:23?

7. How can it be explained that Paul applies Hosea 2:23 to the calling of the Gentiles?

8. What is the bearing of Romans 9:25,26 on the liberal notion of "the universal brotherhood of man"?

9. Why does Paul argue at such length to prove the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles?

10. What Old Testament prophet is next quoted by Paul?

11. What does Isaiah 10:22,23 show concerning the salvation of the Jews?

12. Why is the meaning of "seed" the same as that of "a very small remnant"?

13. How was the continuity of God's covenant people maintained in the face of general apostasy?

### LESSON 41.

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

##### B. The Jews Rejected Because of Their Unbelief, as Predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures. 9:25-33, Continued.

From the human point of view it would have seemed very improbable to the Jews that the Gentiles would receive salvation. But that which was contrary to human probability actually took place. The Gentiles, who were deeply sunk in sin and very far from God, received righteousness and salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ, while the Jews, who considered themselves specialists in achieving righteousness, failed to attain it. This is Paul's argument in 9:30,31. The Gentiles "followed not after righteousness"—it was not a serious concern to them as it was to the Pharisaic Jews. Yet, through the saving grace of God, they actually attained to "the righteousness

which is of faith"; that is to say, they came to believe on Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and were justified, or pronounced righteous before God, by the perfect righteousness of Christ being imputed to them.

It was the paradox and tragedy of Israel that those who were intensely concerned about righteousness and who prided themselves on the attainment and possession of righteousness, failed of the righteousness which can meet the requirements of God's holy law. They "followed after the law of righteousness"—they made a business of seeking righteousness. There is some difficulty as to precisely what is meant by "the law of righteousness." Calvin interprets the expression as meaning the law which they thought would result in their attaining righteousness, or being justified.

The reason why the Jews failed to attain righteousness is stated in verse 32. It was "Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." That is, they refused to accept the only way of justification that meets the need of sinners; and they attempted to attain righteousness on the basis of works, as Adam and Eve might have done before the fall. Just as Cain attempted to stand before God on the basis of his own works or character, so the Jews of Paul's day attempted to stand before God on the basis of their own works or character. Just as Cain was unwilling to approach God by faith, confessing himself a sinner and placing his trust simply in the slain lamb of the sacrifice (as Abel did), so the Jews of Paul's day were unwilling—perversely and stubbornly unwilling—to approach God by faith, confessing themselves sinners and placing their trust simply in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Thus their rejection by God was their own fault; no one but themselves was to blame for it. Those who are saved, are saved solely because of the sovereign grace of God. But those who are rejected and condemned, are rejected and condemned because of their own sin.

". . . as it were by the works of the law." The phrase "as it were" here means that THEY SUPPOSED that righteousness could be attained by the works of the law. Actually, it is impossible for sinners to obtain righteousness by their own personal works of law observance (3:20); but the Jews were self-deceived and so went on with their vain quest for righteousness with zeal and earnestness.

"For they stumbled at that stumbling stone" (9:32). "That stumblingstone," of course, is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. The Jews stumbled at accepting Jesus Christ as the Messiah; they were not willing to confess themselves sinners and accept salvation according to God's plan and on God's terms.

That Christ would be "a stumblingstone" was revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul here refers to Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14. The apostle has evidently combined parts of these two texts of Isaiah into a single statement in Romans 9:33. Being inspired by the same Holy Spirit who was the real author of the Prophecy of Isaiah, it was of course entirely proper for Paul to do this. As already explained in the previous lesson, in every case where the New Testament quotes the Old, we really have a case of the Author (God the Holy Spirit) quoting from His own previous writings; consequently a freedom is proper which would be out of place in one human author quoting the writings of another, apart from divine inspiration.

Isaiah 28 is a prophecy directed against those who trusted in others than God, seeking an alliance with Egypt as protection against the danger of Assyrian

aggression. In other words, those who placed their confidence in man and in human methods and power rather than in the power of God. To such persons, the message of God was that he would "lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isa. 28:16). This is a prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Israel could not be destroyed by enemies until the promised Messiah had come. Therefore they need not fear the power of Assyria; they should place their trust in the promises of God, in the coming Messiah and His work of redemption, rather than in worldly alliances and methods.

Isaiah 8:14 urges the people of Judah not to fear the alliance between Syria and Ephraim. "Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a share to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Isa. 8:12-14). God thus announced that He would be a sanctuary or refuge to one class of persons, but a rock of offense to another class of persons. Some would put their trust in Him, while others would stubbornly refuse to put their trust in Him. The apostle Paul properly uses this text as applying to people's attitude toward Jesus Christ. He, as the Son of God, would be accepted by some, but proudly rejected by others. "The whole spirit, opinions, and expectations of the Jews were adverse to the person, character, and doctrines of the Redeemer. He was, therefore, to them a stumbling-block, as he was to others foolishness. They could not recognize him as their fondly anticipated Messiah, nor consent to enter the kingdom of heaven on the terms which He prescribed. In them, therefore, were fulfilled the ancient prophecies, which spoke of their rejection of Christ, and consequent excision from the people of God" (Charles Hodge).

#### Questions:

1. What seemed very improbable to the Jews, from their human point of view?
2. What is meant by the statement that the Gentiles "followed not after righteousness"?
3. How did the Gentiles attain to righteousness?
4. What was the great paradox and tragedy of Israel?
5. Why did the Jews fail to attain righteousness?
6. How did Cain attempt to approach God?

7. How was Abel's approach to God different from Cain's?

8. In what way were the Jews of Paul's day similar to Cain?

9. On what ground are some people rejected and condemned by God?

10. What is the stumblingstone at which the Jews stumbled?

11. How does Isaiah 28:16 apply to Paul's argument?

12. What is the bearing of Isaiah 8:14 on Paul's argument?

## LESSON 42.

### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

#### C. The Simplicity and Adequacy of the Gospel Way of Salvation. 10:1-10.

In the closing verses of chapter 9 Paul has explained how Israel came to miss salvation, and how the Gentiles came to receive it. The Jews attempted to substitute a wrong, counterfeit, impossible way of obtaining righteousness. They were sincere and intensely earnest, but completely wrong. Paul himself had been of their persuasion, before his conversion to Jesus Christ. Sincerity and zeal are not enough to save us. We must also be in the pathway of truth. Why do so many sincere and earnest people reject the Gospel of Christ today? They reject it because, like the Jews of old, their minds are already prejudiced in favor of false notions of their own.

In the opening verses of chapter 10 Paul expresses his affectionate desire for the salvation of the people of Israel. It was his heart's desire and prayer to God that they might be saved (10:1). As the truth which the apostle was teaching was most distasteful to Jewish readers, he takes special pains to assure them of his affection and real desire for their welfare. "We see here, with what great solicitude a holy man will avoid offenses" (John Calvin). We, too, should seek to avoid giving offense as far as possible without sacrificing loyalty to the truth. Bearing witness to divine truth does not imply that we must make the truth seem as distasteful as possible; on the contrary, we should make every right effort to remove difficulties and occasions of offense. If people insist on contradicting the truth of God, that is their responsibility; but we should see to it that we present the truth in as acceptable and winsome a manner as possible, lest our spirit of anger or impatience or hostility turn men away from the truth we proclaim.

"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (10:2). Having a zeal of God was good; it was commendable as far as it went. However, the Jews' zeal of God was really worthless because it was "not according to knowledge." Their zeal was directed to a wrong object, and therefore it was a sinful and ineffective zeal. The word for "knowledge" here is the very strong Greek term EPIGNOSIS, meaning "moral

knowledge," "correct knowledge and appreciation" (Charles Hodge). The ordinary Greek term for "knowledge" is GNOSIS, which means simply "knowledge," "information"; whereas EPIGNOSIS means right knowledge, a morally discerning knowledge. "Their knowledge was neither enlightened nor wise; neither right as to its objects, nor correct in its character" (Charles Hodge). The Jews were very zealous for their inherited traditions and for the establishment of their own legal righteousness, and at the same time, naturally, they were very proud and censorious. Their zeal, as far as it was a zeal for God, was better than indifference, which explains why the apostle could commend it with reservations.

"For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (10:3). In spite of all their earnest zeal, the Jews were completely wrong about the most important question, namely, how can a sinful man be justified by the holy God? To this vitally important question they gave the wrong answer that man can be justified by God on the basis of his own personal observation of the law of God. This error was not a mere innocent mistake; it was an error that involved deep moral guilt on their part. For their notion of justification implied wrong views of God, of the requirements of God's law, and of their own moral and spiritual condition. They had much too low an idea of the character of God, they had much too low an idea of the requirements of God's law, and they had much too high an idea of themselves, their own powers and attainments. To be wrong about such matters as these is not only the result of sin, it is itself great sin. Those who were wrong at these crucial points were spiritually blind men, and it was no advantage to them that they were perhaps right on many other matters—minor matters.

Here "their own righteousness" is contrasted with "the righteousness of God." The former expression clearly means the righteousness which they attempted to establish by their own actions. There is some difficulty as to the exact meaning of the phrase "the righteousness of God" in this passage. As it is contrasted with "their own righteousness," the meaning

is probably “the righteousness of which God is the source,” “the righteousness which is received from God.”

Not realizing that there is a “righteousness of God” available to sinners by faith in the Redeemer, the Jews went busily about attempting to establish their own righteousness by a careful, laborious life of obedience to all the precepts of the law of God. Knowing nothing of the availability of salvation as a gift of grace, they went right on in their vain, impossible effort to attain righteousness by their own good life.

We should realize that this error was not peculiar to the Jews of Paul’s time. It is characteristic of sinners of every time and place. The human heart, in its sinful pride and stubbornness, naturally tends to attempt to establish its own righteousness by good works. This is the explanation of the tremendous popularity of what is today called “the religion of the Golden Rule.” Prominent men are quoted as saying “the Golden Rule is all the religion I need,” and similar statements. As there is no Gospel, no Christ, and no salvation in the Golden Rule, such men are saying that they need no Gospel, no Christ and no salvation. Their religion, though differing greatly in outward form, is essentially the same as that of the Pharisees of old. They regard religion as a matter of human works and character, no more and no less. It is the old theology of Cain, still alive in the world today. Though it is still the same old error, it goes by different names today. Some of the common ones are “salvation by character,” “high ideals,” “spiritual values,” “service,” “the Jesus way of life,” “the Christian way of life,” “character building,” “character education,” “being true to one’s own better nature,” “seeking the higher things of life,” “brotherhood,” “religious emphasis,” “social service.” All of these, if not founded upon the shed blood of Jesus Christ and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the sinner (and they usually are not) are only forms of the false religion of human works or merit, and are essentially identical with the efforts of the Pharisaic Jews to establish “their own righteousness” while they remained ignorant of the righteousness of God.

“. . . have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” This expression (“have not

submitted themselves”) indicates a sinful stubbornness, a guilty unbelief. It implies an unwillingness to know, accept and yield to the plan of salvation revealed by God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So also at the present day, those who reject or by-pass the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and seek to substitute for it their own miserable make-shifts such as “character building,” are not only unfortunately mistaken, but they are involved in guilty unbelief. This is not mitigated by the fact that they may seem to be very earnest, very pious, very religious, and to be doing a lot of good in human society.

#### Questions:

1. Why do sincere and earnest people reject the Gospel of Christ today?
2. What desire does Paul express in 10:1?
3. What lesson can we learn from Paul’s statement in 10:1?
4. Why was the Jews’ zeal for God really worthless?
5. What is the meaning of the Greek word translated “knowledge” in 10:2?
6. Concerning what vitally important question were the Jews completely wrong?
7. What was wrong with their idea of God’s character and of the requirements of God’s law?
8. What was wrong with their idea of their own powers and attainments?
9. What is meant by the expression “the righteousness of God”?
10. What error is characteristic of sinners of every time and place?
11. What are some of the popular terms used today to designate the religion of salvation by human works?
12. What is implied by the expression “have not submitted themselves” in 10:3?

### LESSON 43.

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

##### C. The Simplicity and Adequacy of the Gospel Way of Salvation. 10:1-10, Continued.

“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (10:4). The heart of the

Gospel is the Person and work of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Salvation comes not by our own keeping of the law, but by Christ’s work for us. He contains within Himself all that the law demands for our justification.

Though the general meaning of this verse is perfectly clear, there is some difficulty concerning the precise meaning of the expression, "end of the law." There are three possible meanings. (1) "Christ is the end of the law" may mean "Christ is the One toward whom the law, in all its parts and elements, pointed and to whom it leads the sinner" (compare Gal. 3:24). (2) Or the meaning may be: "Christ is the One who fulfills and completes all the requirements, types, etc., of the law, and who satisfies all the demands of the law." (3) Or it may mean: "Christ is the One who terminates the law, who puts an end to the law, abolishes the law, transfers the believer from the Covenant of Works to the Covenant of Grace." Charles Hodge states that the first meaning is adopted by Calvin and most of the commentators; that the second is Scriptural in doctrine, but is not consistent with the meaning of the Greek word for "end" (TELOS, which does not properly mean "completion" or "fulfillment," for which the Greek word would be not TELOS but PLEROMA); and that the third meaning is the correct one. "The doctrine is clearly taught in Scripture, that those who are out of Christ are under the law, subject to its demands and exposed to its penalty. His coming and work have put an end to its authority, we are no longer under the law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14); we are no longer under the system which says, Do this, and live; but under that which says, Believe, and thou shalt be saved. This abrogation of the law, however, is not by setting it aside, but by fulfilling its demands. It is because Christ is the fulfiller of the law, that he is the end of it. It is the latter truth that the apostle here asserts" (Charles Hodge).

The meaning, then, we take to be: "Christ has put an end to the law as a requirement for righteousness before God, by fulfilling its demands and satisfying its penalty." So far as being counted righteous before God is concerned, the believer is FINISHED with the law. He has been transferred from the Covenant of Works to the Covenant of Grace. No longer is he under the penalty of the broken Covenant of Works; no longer need he continue the desperate and futile attempt to attain righteousness by obedience to the law of God. Just as a person who is naturalized as a citizen of the United States of America is finished with the claims of his former country, so the Christian, so far as obtaining righteousness is concerned, is finished with the requirements of the law.

This may be illustrated as follows: a person who is burdened with a heavy load of debt finds himself unable to pay it off. He would like to get free, and he tries hard to do so, but finds that it is all he can do just to pay the interest on the debt, let alone paying anything on the principal. It takes all his efforts to pay the interest from time to time; in fact, he cannot even do that, so that, instead of getting out of debt, he gets deeper and deeper in debt all the time. Then a wealthy friend steps in and magnanimously pays off

the entire debt for him, all in one lump sum. Then he is FINISHED with trying to wipe out his obligations by paying small installments that do not even take care of the interest on his debt. He is finished with that, because the principal has been paid off for him by another. Just so the Christian is finished with the law, so far as being justified before God is concerned; Christ has paid off the obligation for him, once for all.

In considering the interpretation of this verse, Romans 10:4, two errors must be carefully avoided. The first of these errors is the idea that the people of Israel from Moses to Christ lived under a system of justification by works of the law. Such is not the meaning of the apostle, nor of Charles Hodge in his comments upon this verse. Some modern dispensationalists, however, have held (though usually inconsistently) that Israel from Moses to Christ lived under a system of justification by works; that from Abraham to Moses salvation was by "promise," from Moses to Christ by "law," and after Christ by "grace." This doctrine involves a serious misunderstanding of the Old Testament. The Pharisaic system of Judaism, of course, taught salvation by works, as Judaism still does today. But this is nowhere taught in the Old Testament. Judaism is one thing; the religion revealed in the Old Testament is another. The former is legalistic; the latter is gracious.

The Covenant of Works as an actual way of obtaining eternal life began and ended in the Garden of Eden. When Adam sinned, the Covenant of Works came to an end as an actual way by which human beings could obtain eternal life. But all sinners who have not come under the provisions of the Covenant of Grace are still under the curse and penalty of the broken Covenant of Works. Such persons try to gain eternal life by their own works—a vain and futile attempt, to be sure, but still the attempt is continually being made. Paul in Galatians 5:3 informs all who attempt to gain eternal life that way that they are debtors to keep the whole law of God. That is, God's law requires perfect obedience and absolute moral perfection, and those who attempt to gain eternal life by law observance are in the position of undertaking to render this—a manifest impossibility.

Actually, the religion of the Old Testament is gracious through and through. It is not "a covenant of works," but the Old Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace. Through the sacrifices, provision was made for salvation by grace through faith in the promised Redeemer. When Paul says that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, he does not mean that before the time of Christ, the Jews obtained or could have obtained righteousness by the law. He only means that they **attempted** to obtain righteousness by the law, and that for every one that believeth, Christ puts a stop to the futile attempt. What the sinner could never really do, Christ

has done for him, once and for all. The law always says "Do!" but the Gospel of Christ says "Done!"

The second error that must be avoided is the teaching that the Christian believer is no longer under the law in any sense whatever. There are those who teach that since Christ is the end of the law to every one that believeth, the Christian is no longer under any obligation to obey the law of God. Those who teach thus include both the ceremonial law and the moral law. Even the Ten Commandments, they claim, are no longer binding upon the Christian, because he is not under law, but under grace. The writer of these studies has noted the sad results of this kind of teaching on the foreign mission field. "We are not under law but under grace" becomes the ready excuse for serious lapses from moral rectitude.

It must be pointed out that while the believer is delivered from the law as a supposed way of obtaining righteousness, and has been delivered from the penalty and curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), this does not mean that the Christian is no longer under the moral law of God as the rule of his life. The moral law is an expression of the character of God and hence is eternal and unchangeable. It cannot be repealed; no rational creature can ever, to all eternity, be exempted from the duty of obeying it. Paul himself specifically disclaimed being exempt from the law in this sense (1 Cor. 9:21). The Christian is saved unto a life of righteousness (1 Peter 2:24). But what is a life of righteousness? How is the Christian to know what is righteous and what is not, what is right and what is wrong, in his daily life? By the moral law of God, which is summarized in the Ten Commandments and expanded in the whole Bible. Day by day, the Christian is to strive after a life that is in harmony with the moral law of God, not in order to obtain eternal life, but because he has already obtained eternal life and now desires to thank and please God. The moral law tells the Christian what is right (pleasing to God) and what is wrong (displeasing to God). In this sense the Christian remains under the law.

#### Questions:

1. What three possible meanings have been suggested for the phrase "the end of the law"?
2. Which of these possible meanings is probably the correct one?
3. How has Christ put an end to the law for the believer?
4. How may the truth that Christ has put an end to the law for the believer be illustrated?
5. What error concerning the period from Moses to Christ is held by some modern Dispensationalists?
6. What is the difference between Judaism and the religion of the Old Testament?
7. When did the Covenant of Works end as an actual way of obtaining eternal life?
8. In what respect are unsaved sinners still under the Covenant of Works?
9. How can it be shown that the religion of the Old Testament was gracious?
10. In what respect is the Christian believer still under the moral law?
11. What did Paul state in 1 Cor. 9:21 concerning his own relation to the law?
12. Why should a Christian try to obey the law of God?
13. Why can the moral law never be canceled or repealed?
14. What text in Peter's first Epistle teaches that the Christian is saved unto a life of righteousness?

#### LESSON 44.

##### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

##### C. The Simplicity and Adequacy of the Gospel Way of Salvation. 10:1-10, Continued.

"For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them" (10:5). This verse quotes from Leviticus 18:5. The meaning is that the law requires perfect obedience, and only by rendering such perfect obedience could anyone obtain righteousness by the law. Neither Paul nor Moses meant that it was ever, since the Fall, actually possible for men to render perfect obedience and so obtain righteousness and

eternal life. Paul (and Moses) merely set forth the principle of righteousness by works; there had been a time (in Eden, before the Fall) when men could actually obtain righteousness and life in accordance with that principle; but in the time of Paul (as in the time of Moses) that was no longer an actual possibility, because man had fallen into sin and had become corrupt in heart and life. Though righteousness by works was no longer an actual possibility, the principle of it could still be cited, for the purpose of contrast with the principle of righteousness by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

The life mentioned in verse 5 “is a life which includes the whole man, soul and body, and the whole course of his existence, in this world and in that which is to come” (Charles Hodge). This is the life which was symbolized by the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, of which man was deprived after his fall into sin (Gen. 3:22-24). Since that sad day, man’s only way of obtaining righteousness and eternal life has been through the Mediator, The Lord Jesus Christ.

“But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead)” (10:6,7). Paul has just been implying (10:5) that it is impossible for man to attain righteousness by rendering a perfect obedience to the law of God. The law as set forth by Moses calls for performance which sinful man cannot render. Hence the attainment of righteousness by that method is impossible.

Paul next proceeds to show that the Gospel way of salvation does not involve any such impossibilities. It does not make righteousness and life depend upon conditions which are utterly beyond the power of sinful man to meet. We do not have to climb to heaven to obtain righteousness, nor do we have to descend to the abyss to get it—both of which are utterly beyond human power. Paul is alluding here to the language used by Moses in Deuteronomy 30:10-14. In that passage, to bring something down from heaven, or to go over the sea to bring something from beyond the sea, are represented as impossible tasks, beyond human power of accomplishment. In contrast to these impossible tasks, what God set before the people of Israel was within the capacity of those enabled by divine grace: “But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it” (Deut. 30:14). What is spoken of is, of course, not merely the moral law (which no sinner can perfectly fulfil), but the whole system given to Israel through Moses, including its sacrifices, types, symbols, ordinances, priesthood and prophecies, by which the way of salvation through a Redeemer was placed before the minds of the people. This was the system of salvation by grace, and by accepting and living in this system, the Israelite professed his faith, and was a recipient of salvation.

Clearly “to ascend into heaven,” “to go beyond the sea,” “to descend into the deep (or the abyss, the bottomless deep)” were proverbial expressions used to designate something regarded as utterly impossible. Various parallels from other parts of the Scriptures can be cited (Psalm 139:6. Prov. 24:7. Amos 9:2. Psalm 139:8,9). Paul changes Moses’s expression, “Who shall go over the sea for us?,” to “Who shall descend into the deep?” The Greek word for “deep” is the word from which our English word

“abyss” is derived. Its proper meaning is “bottomless.” In the New Testament, except for Romans 10:7, this word always means the place of lost souls and fallen angels (Luke 8:31. Rev. 17:8; 20:1). Probably Paul changed Moses’s expression about going over the sea to one about descending into the abyss because the latter is more suitable for referring to Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

Paul’s purpose in the present passage is to show the simplicity and adequacy of God’s way of salvation. Accordingly, he first refutes the notion that it requires impossible achievements of men. It does not require men to render absolute perfect obedience to God’s law as the condition of righteousness and life—something which is, in reality, as impossible as to climb to heaven or to descend to the abyss. We do not have to try to save ourselves; we have a Saviour. We do not have to attempt to provide a Saviour for ourselves, by bringing Him down from heaven to earth, or by bringing him up from the realm of death; all this has already been done for us by God, and salvation is now offered to men in the Gospel of Christ.

#### Questions:

1. What is the meaning of Leviticus 18:5, “The man which doeth those things shall live by them”?
2. Why does Leviticus 18:5 not mean that sinful man can actually obtain righteousness by his own works?
3. When did the principle of righteousness by works operate as an actual way by which man could obtain eternal life?
4. What is the meaning of the life referred to in 10:5?
5. What was represented by the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden?
6. Why were Adam and Eve barred from access to the Tree of Life?
7. What expressions does Paul use to serve as examples of something impossible for man to accomplish?
8. What is the meaning of Deuteronomy 30:10-14?
9. What is the meaning of the word “deep” in the Greek of 10:7?
10. What place does this word almost always designate in the New Testament?
11. What has God done for sinners, which they could never do for themselves?

## LESSON 45.

**THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.****C. The Simplicity and Adequacy of the Gospel Way of Salvation. 10:1-10, Continued.**

“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach, . . .” (10:8). The Gospel way of salvation is not something inaccessible, beyond human reach, too far, too high, or too low to be taken hold of; it does not require us to perform impossible feats before we can be saved; on the contrary, what the Gospel way of salvation asks of a person is something near at hand, within reach, easy to take hold of. “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.” The person who really wants salvation is not baffled and frustrated by impossible demands; the person who really hungers and thirsts for righteousness is not mocked by being told to do some great thing. As Naaman the Syrian finally learned, what is required is not grand achievements, but a simple, childlike, obedient faith in the Word of God.

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (10:9,10). Here we have presented to us what the Gospel way of salvation requires of men: confession and faith. With the mouth we are to confess the Lord Jesus (or, more precisely, “that Jesus is Lord”); with the heart we are to believe that God has raised Him from the dead.

Faith comes before confession (or profession) in a person’s experience, but confession is here mentioned first because it is the outward evidence of faith. “The thing to be confessed is that Jesus is Lord. That is, we must openly recognize his authority to the full extent in which he is Lord; acknowledge that he is exalted above all principality and powers, that angels are made subject to him, that all power in heaven and earth is committed unto him, of course that he is our Lord. This confession, therefore, includes in it an acknowledgement of Christ’s sovereignty, and a sincere recognition of his authority over us. To confess Christ as Lord is to acknowledge him as the Messiah, recognized as such of God, and invested with all the power and prerogatives of the Mediatorial throne. This acknowledgement is consequently often put for a recognition of Christ in all his offices” (Charles Hodge) (Compare 1 Cor. 12:13; Phil. 2:11; Rom. 14:9; Acts 11:20; Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8; 1 John 4:15).

Besides confession, faith is required by the Gospel: “and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead.” We are not merely to have faith in Christ as a Person, nor even merely in Him as crucified for our sins; but specifically, we are to have faith that God has raised Him from the dead. Faith in His bodily resurrection really includes all the rest. It involves believing that He was and is all that He claims to be, all that He is represented in the Scriptures as being. By raising Him from the dead, God the Father has placed His seal of endorsement and approval on the whole finished work of Christ. The person who does not believe in Christ’s resurrection cannot really believe on Him as Saviour.

At the present day some religious leaders and teachers very perversely set up an antithesis between “faith in a person” and “faith in a doctrine.” They claim that “faith in a person” (that is, in Christ as a person) is much better and more important than faith in a doctrine (such as Christ’s atonement, or His resurrection). This perverse teaching has a pious sound, on the surface of it, and many are deceived by such smooth language. As a matter of fact, this distinction is just a subtle way of denying or evading the doctrines, such as the atonement and resurrection of Christ. The man who says, “Faith in Christ as a person is more important than belief of doctrines about Christ,” really means: “The doctrines are not true and cannot be accepted, but we intend to keep on calling ourselves Christians, and claiming to have the person without the doctrines.” This manner of denial or evasion is just one of the sophistical subtleties of present-day unbelief.

Actually, it is not possible to have faith in Christ as a Person apart from faith in doctrine about Christ. Jesus Christ is separated from us by more than nineteen centuries of time. We cannot come into direct contact with Him in the way His contemporaries did, by meeting Him on the roads of Galilee or Judea and seeing Him face to face. That is impossible for us. How, then, can we come in contact with Christ? Only by the truth concerning Him which is given to us in the Bible. Truth about Christ is our means of contact with Christ. No one can really believe in Christ without believing certain definite statements (truths or doctrines) about Christ, including especially the statement “that God hath raised him from the dead.” Christianity is not a form of vague, hazy mysticism; it involves contact with the Christ of history through belief of the Scriptural doctrines concerning Him.

Faith in Christ, to be real, must not only involve acceptance of the true doctrines concerning Him; it

must also be **IN THE HEART**. Not only in the mind, or intellect, but in the **HEART**. The term “heart” here means not merely the affections or emotions, but the whole inner man. Real faith in Christ is much more than a mere mental assent to doctrines. Even the devils have that kind of faith (James 2:19). Saving faith involves two elements. Both of these elements must be present, or it is not true saving faith. The first element is **KNOWLEDGE**, that is, knowledge of the **TRUTH**. This is absolutely necessary, but it is not enough of itself. The second element is **TRUST**, that is, personal trust or commitment to Christ for salvation and eternal life. Trust cannot exist without some knowledge; we cannot trust Christ unless we know Him to be trustworthy. The person who really believes **IN HIS HEART** will have not merely true knowledge, but also personal trust in Christ as Saviour.

How different this concept of faith is from the cheap, diluted “believism” of the present day! Many raise their hands in an evangelistic meeting, or sign a “decision card” stating that they accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour, who show not the slightest evidence of real heart faith in Him, and who certainly do not in any adequate way confess Him as **LORD** before the world. Thousands feel sure of their eternal salvation because they have “accepted Christ” in some meeting, who have not the slightest desire or intention whatever of separating from their sinful lusts and habits, of taking up the cross and suffering the reproach of Christ before the world. They just claim they are saved because they have “accepted Christ,” period. What the apostle Paul places before us here in Romans 10 is very different. It is very simple, indeed; it involves no gigantic tasks, no impossible achievements; but it calls for a **CONFESSION OF THE TOTAL LORDSHIP OF CHRIST OVER THE UNIVERSE AND OVER MY OWN LIFE, AND A HEART FAITH WHICH INVOLVES A PERSONAL COMMITMENT OF MY ALL TO HIM**. Anything short of this is not genuine.

Verse 10 again stresses the importance of both heart faith and public confession. A public confession (profession) is the proper evidence of faith. The person who because of fear, embarrassment, shame or any other reason refrains from confessing Christ publicly before men, is not a Christian, though he

may secretly be a believer. If his faith is real, he will overcome his reluctance and will confess Christ before men, as commanded in Scripture.

#### Questions:

1. What does the person who really wants salvation find in the Gospel?
2. What did Naaman the Syrian finally learn?
3. What two requirements are involved in the Gospel way of salvation?
4. What is involved in confessing Jesus Christ as Lord?
5. Why is faith in Christ’s resurrection required for salvation?
6. Why do some teachers set up an antithesis between “faith in a person” and “faith in a doctrine”?
7. What do those who make this distinction really mean?
8. Why is it not possible to have faith in Christ as a Person apart from doctrines about Him?
9. What is meant by the word “heart” in 10:9,10?
10. What is meant by believing in the heart?
11. What two elements are involved in true saving faith?
12. Why can we not trust in Christ apart from knowledge about Christ?
13. What is wrong with the “believism” of the present day?
14. What is the relation between confession and faith?
15. What should we think of a person who claims to be a Christian but is unwilling to confess Christ publicly before men?

#### LESSON 46.

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

D. The Gospel is Suited to the Needs of all Men, and to be Preached to All. 10:11-21.

“For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (10:11, quoted from Isaiah 28:16). Paul confirms what he has been saying

by this quotation from Isaiah, which sets forth two truths. First, the Gospel way of salvation is suited to all mankind: “Whosoever.” It is therefore not limited to the nation of Israel, but adapted equally to both Jews and Gentiles; it is universal. It is suited to the needs of sinners regardless of race, nationality, or

other distinctions.

In the second place, the verse from Isaiah teaches that faith is the means by which salvation is secured: "Whosoever believeth." Moreover it is not mere general faith by which salvation is secured, but specifically FAITH IN CHRIST: "Whosoever believeth ON HIM"—on the precious corner stone and sure foundation laid by God in Zion. Many people talk about faith today in a very vague and general way. It is not faith as a psychological attitude, nor religious faith in general ("faith in religion," as some people say) that saves us, but specifically FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. The Bible never regards faith as a psychological attitude, and it never regards faith as a force. Many people today speak of faith as a force, and say such things as, "Faith has more power than dynamite." Actually, faith has no power whatsoever. Faith is not a power, it is not a force, it is a channel of connection. Christ has the power, and faith is our channel or link of connection with Christ. The modern notion of faith as a psychological attitude that has value or power of its own is destructive of Christianity. Faith is not our Saviour; Christ is our Saviour.

Saving faith terminates and rests upon Christ as its object: "Believeth ON HIM." These two words, "on him," indicate that faith involves the element of personal trust or committal. This means receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel.

"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (10:12). This verse explains the meaning of the "whosoever" of verse 11: there is no difference, in the matter of salvation, between Jews and Gentiles. There were indeed many differences between Jews and Gentiles, but as to their being sinners needing salvation, and as to the way by which they could be saved, there were no differences—all were upon the same footing, guilty and needy before God; and all could receive salvation in exactly the same way, by the free grace of Him who is Lord over all.

It is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to decide whether the word "Lord" in verse 12 refers to God or to Christ. Arguments can be given on both sides. However, this is not really a question of any great importance. "Doctrinally, it matters little which view be preferred. Faith in God is faith in Christ, for Christ is God. This is the great truth to be acknowledged. The condition of salvation, under the gospel, is the invocation of Christ as God" (Charles Hodge).

To "call upon" the Lord is an expression frequently found in the Bible (Gen. 4:26; 12:8. Isa. 64:7. Acts 2:21; 9:14; 22:16. 1 Cor. 1:2. 2 Tim. 2:22). To call

upon the Lord, in the religious sense, implies a true faith in Him. "Whosoever believes" and "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord" are really just two ways of saying the same thing.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (10:13, quoted from Joel 2:32). This quotation from the prophet Joel is really identical in meaning with the verse quoted from Isaiah in Romans 10:11. Joel's prophecy which is here cited, deals with the coming of the Messiah and the period of blessing which He would bring. In that period, whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved—regardless of whether Jewish or Gentile, irrespective of all national or racial distinctions. Note that this same text of Joel was quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:21. The apostle has thus shown that the salvation of all believers in Christ, regardless of whether they be Jew or Gentile, was not only his own doctrine, but also that of the Old Testament, as evidenced by the words of the prophets Isaiah and Joel.

Though this truth was so plainly taught in the Old Testament, the Jews of Paul's day were quite blind to it. Even the apostle Peter learned it with difficulty (Acts 10; Galatians 2:11-16). The notion of the special position of Israel had become so deeply impressed upon the Jews that they failed to realize that this special position as the people of God was not an end in itself, but a means to an end—that through Abraham's seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. And they failed to realize that the special position of Israel was not intended by God to be permanent, but only temporary, during the preparatory stage of redemption, until the coming of the Messiah. So, thinking of their special position as permanent and as an end in itself, they were blind to the Old Testament prophecies of the salvation of the Gentiles; they failed to take account of these prophecies and to take them seriously.

#### Questions:

1. What two truths are taught by Isaiah 28:16, which Paul quotes in Romans 10:11?
2. What is the difference between faith in Jesus Christ, and faith as a mere psychological attitude?
3. Why is it wrong to speak of faith as a force?
4. What is the object of saving faith?
5. What truth is indicated by the words "on him" in 10:11?
6. In what respect was there no difference between Jews and Gentiles?
7. What is implied by calling upon the name of the

Lord?

8. What text from the prophet Joel does Paul quote?

9. What is the meaning of Joel's prophecy?

10. How can we explain the fact that the Jews of Paul's day were blind to the Old Testament pro-

phesies of the salvation of the Gentiles?

11. What error did the Jews hold concerning the purpose of their special position as the people of God?

12. What error did the Jews hold concerning the God-intended duration of their special position as the people of God?

#### LESSON 47.

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

##### D. The Gospel is Suited to the Needs of all Men, and to be Preached to All. 10:11-21, Continued.

Paul has shown that the Gospel way of salvation is suited to the needs of all men, both Jews and Gentiles; he has shown that the Old Testament prophesied the calling and salvation of the Gentiles. These truths imply that the Gospel must be made known to all mankind. Accordingly, the apostle next proceeds to discuss the propagation of the Gospel by the method of preaching.

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (10:14,15). This is an argument to prove the necessity and obligation of missionary work, of sending the Gospel message forth to all mankind.

It is a recognized Biblical truth that when God wills an end, He also wills the means thereto. When He willed that Noah and his family should be saved from perishing in the flood, He also willed that Noah should build the ark and that he and his family should enter into it. When He willed that Jonah should be saved from perishing in the sea, He also prepared a great fish to swallow the prophet. When He willed that Cornelius and his family should be saved, He also willed that Peter should go and preach the Gospel to them. This principle holds true, regardless of whether we are speaking of God's will in the sense of His decree or foreordination, or in the sense of His commands addressed to men. Except in the special case of miracles, God's way of attaining the end is through the use of appropriate means.

This is eminently true in the case of the salvation of the Gentiles. Since God has from of old planned and predicted their calling and salvation, as we have seen by the statements from Isaiah and Joel, then it must also be God's intention that the MEANS of their calling and salvation shall exist. As Paul points out, to

call upon the name of the Lord (Jesus Christ); to have faith in the Lord implies possession of knowledge about the Lord; to have knowledge about the Lord implies someone who can impart this knowledge, a preacher; to go as a preacher (missionary) implies being sent as one. The proper inference from this is that it is the God-given task and duty of the Church to send out missionaries to preach the Gospel to all mankind.

Many Christians of the present day are comparatively indifferent to the missionary obligation. What they contribute toward this task is small indeed compared to what they spend upon themselves, and upon the ordinances of religion at home. Some have the curious idea that missionary work is a form of "charity" or philanthropy comparable to the work of the Red Cross, to which they are willing to contribute from time to time. Such is not a proper idea of the missionary task. It is a God-given commission, binding upon the Church by divine authority, which it is the business of every Christian to be concerned about and to support liberally. When we support true missionary work we are not "giving" money to "charity"; we are rather paying an obligation. We are debtors, as Paul said he was (Rom. 1:14), "both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians, both to the wise, and to the unwise"—that is, to all the world.

Much that is called missionary work today is not truly the preaching of the Gospel in the sense of the apostle Paul. In the large, "liberal" denominations much "missionary work" is carried on which is in reality merely a form of humanitarianism or social service, rather than a real preaching of Christ crucified to sinners. What God has laid upon His Church is the obligation to carry on, and liberally to support, real missionary work which carries the saving truth of the Gospel of Christ to sinners at home and abroad. Needless to say, no person who is not a believing, saved Christian can be a real missionary to others. A few years ago, much attention was called in the secular and religious press to Dr. Albert Schweitzer of Africa. He was not only called "a great missionary," but by some he was even called "the greatest Christian in the world." That Dr. Schweitzer

was a great man no one can deny. He was truly a many-sided genius, with outstanding achievements in the three fields of theology, medicine and music. But Dr. Schweitzer was not a Christian at all according to the Bible and the orthodox Christian faith. The enthusiastic articles about him failed to call any attention to his theological views, which are wellknown in theological circles from his voluminous writings. For example, his famous book **The Quest of the Historical Jesus** sets forth the theory that Jesus expected to return to this earth on the clouds of heaven within the lifetime of His disciples, but that He was mistaken and the victim of a delusion. Needless to say, such a Jesus cannot be the Saviour of the world, and such a Jesus is not the Christ presented in the Scriptures, nor the Christ whom Paul preached. The present writer has heard real Christians speak in the highest and most enthusiastic terms about Dr. Schweitzer. They should know better, but have been misled by articles in the secular and liberal religious press. Dr. Schweitzer's work, remarkable as it was, was in reality humanitarian service rather than a preaching of the Biblical Gospel to the people of Africa. The same statement may be made with truth concerning the work of the great Japanese author and social worker Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa. He was a great man, but what he promoted was not the Gospel of God's Word.

Romans 10:15 is a quotation from Isaiah 52:7. This verse gives us the real meaning of the word "Gospel": it means "glad tidings," "good news." What is this "good news"? According to the Bible, it is the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified as the Saviour of sinners. "How beautiful are the feet" means, of course, what a wonderful, delightful, attractive errand it is that the missionary goes on. This is a joyful, beneficent task, to bring the light of the Gospel to those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. How willingly, how eagerly, we should support it. How sinful it must be to be grudging, reluctant and stingy in our support of the Church's missionary task. The church which neglects or refuses to carry on missionary work will tend to wither and die of its own self-centeredness. In this matter as in others, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

#### Questions:

1. What is Paul trying to prove in 10:14,15?
2. When God wills an end, what does He also will?
3. Give some examples from the Bible to show that when God wills an end He also wills the appropriate means thereto.
4. What is the bearing of this truth (that God wills the means as well as the end) on the subject of the salvation of the Gentiles?
5. What is implied in calling upon the name of the Lord?
6. What is implied in believing in the Lord?
7. What is implied in having knowledge about the Lord?
8. What is implied in going out as a missionary?
9. What is the proper inference to be drawn from Paul's argument in 10:14,15?
10. Why is it not correct to regard missionary work as a form of "charity"?
11. What is the real character of much so-called missionary work in some of the large denominations at the present day?
12. Why cannot a person who is himself not a saved, believing Christian be a true missionary of Christ?
13. Why was it not correct to speak of Dr. Albert Schweitzer as "a great missionary" and "the greatest Christian in the world"?
14. What is the true meaning of the word "Gospel"?
15. Of what great sin are Christian people sometimes guilty in connection with the support of missionary work?

#### LESSON 48.

##### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

##### D. The Gospel is Suited to the Needs of all Men, and to be Preached to All. 10:11-21, Continued.

"But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" (10:16). It is no argument against the duty of

preaching the Gospel to all mankind to say that many who hear the Gospel do not accept it. God has commanded that the Gospel be preached to all mankind, but He has not elected all human beings to eternal life, nor is it to be expected that all who hear the Gospel will accept it and be saved. This rejection of

the Gospel by many is not merely a fact of present-day experience; it is also stated and predicted in the Bible. Paul quotes from the prophet Isaiah to show that it was predicted by him (Isa. 53:1). Isaiah's statement concerns the general rejection of the Gospel. This is taught also elsewhere in the Bible. Jesus Christ came unto His own, and His own received Him not (John 1:11). Jesus carefully instructed His disciples as to how they were to conduct themselves in the face of a refusal to hear and receive their message (Matt. 10:4. Mark 6:11. Luke 9:5). Later Paul and Barnabas carried out this instruction at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:50,51).

It is sometimes urged as an objection against missionary work today that the work is not successful. Those who urge this objection mean "not successful" if measured by worldly standards such as might be applicable to a business enterprise—an oil company or an automobile factory, for example. The unconscious assumption back of this objection is that missionary work is expected to bring about the immediate or early conversion to Christianity of all or most of those who are reached with the Gospel. But this assumption is unwarranted. The command to preach the Gospel to all mankind is not based upon the expected results of the work. It proceeds from the will and command of God. The work will be successful, if faithfully performed, in the sense that it will have the result which God intends it to have, namely, the salvation of those persons throughout the world whom He has foreordained unto eternal life. That multitudes of people show no interest whatever in the Gospel, and even wilfully reject it, is no more than what the Bible has predicted. It does not constitute a valid objection to the missionary obligation which rests upon the Church.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (10:17). In this verse the word "hearing" is used in reference to the word "report" in verse 16 (Isa. 53:1). The Greek word used for "report" means literally the act of hearing, and so it is used to designate that which is heard. Isaiah's question, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" implies that BELIEVING depends upon REPORT, that is, on something HEARD, on HEARING. Before men can believe the Gospel, they must first hear it, they must first come in contact with it. Faith consists in accepting the heard message as true, and putting one's trust in the One of whom the message speaks. "So then faith cometh by hearing."

The apostle adds, "and hearing by the Word of God." The expression "the Word of God" in this verse of course does not mean simply the Bible or written Word of God. It means the word or command of God which is the real basis of the missionary task. The missionary enterprise is no mere voluntary effort of Christian people; it is a divinely appointed task; it brings an authoritative message; it proceeds

from the word or command of God.

Two truths which Paul has already stated are confirmed in this verse, namely: (1) that knowledge is necessary to faith; and (2) that it is God's purpose that this knowledge shall be sent to the Gentiles.

"But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (10:18). Here Paul's argument is rather condensed and abrupt, making it difficult to understand. Just what is the apostle speaking about in this verse? Some scholars hold that he has the Jews in mind. But this would not be in harmony with the subject under discussion, which is not now the rejection of the Jews, but rather the calling of the Gentiles. If verse 16 refers to the Gentiles, the presumption is that verse 18 must still be speaking of the Gentiles, for there is no indication of a change of subject. Moreover in verse 19 where Paul certainly intends to speak of Israel he uses the name.

Taking verse 18 as referring to the Gentiles, then, what is Paul's purpose in this verse? Paul's language is taken from Psalm 19:4, but in the Psalm the subject dealt with is God's revelation in the realm of nature, whereas Paul is speaking of the Gospel of Christ. The apostle is merely using language borrowed from the Psalm to express a different idea. It is true, of course, that the universal revelation of God in nature was in a sense a providential prediction of the universal proclamation of the Gospel; both were intended by God to be universal. Paul's meaning, however, is that the Gospel had already, in his time, broken out from the narrow channel of the ancient covenant nation of Israel and had become a universal message sent to all the world. This of course must not be pressed to mean that in Paul's day the Gospel had already reached every continent and nation and tribe, for this was manifestly not the case. It was true, however, that the Gospel had been widely preached through the then-known world.

#### Questions:

1. Is it an argument against missionary work to say that many who hear the Gospel do not accept it?
2. What text from Isaiah does Paul quote to show that the rejection of the Gospel by many was foreseen and predicted by the Old Testament?
3. What do many people mean when they assert that missionary work is not successful?
4. What assumption is back of the charge that missionary work is not successful?
5. In what sense is Christian missionary work truly successful?

6. What is the literal meaning of the word "report" in 10:16?

7. What is meant by the statement "Faith cometh by hearing"?

8. What does the apostle mean by saying that hearing comes by the word of God?

9. What two truths are confirmed by verse 17?

10. In verse 18, is Paul speaking of the Jews or of the Gentiles?

11. From what place in the Old Testament is the language of verse 18 derived?

12. What is the meaning of the statement in the Old Testament which is quoted here?

13. What is Paul's meaning in the words quoted in verse 18?

14. In what sense were the words of verse 18 true in Paul's time?

#### LESSON 49.

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

##### D. The Gospel is Suited to the Needs of all Men, and to be Preached to All. 10:11-21, Continued.

"But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation will I anger you" (10:19). Here again Paul's extreme brevity and condensation of his argument raises problems of interpretation. "Did not Israel know?" But what was it that Israel knew or did not know? One answer is, that it was the Gospel. Another view holds that it was the truth of their own rejection and God's purpose to call and save the Gentiles. Of these two possible interpretations, the second is probably the correct one, for two reasons: (1) Paul has been discussing the rejection of the Jews and calling of the Gentiles; and (2) the quotations from the Old Testament in verses 19-21 fit the second view best.

We may take the meaning, then, to be: "Did not Israel know the announced purpose of God to reject them and to save the Gentiles?" Paul next quotes from Moses (Deut. 32:21). He says "First Moses" because he intends to quote from Isaiah immediately afterwards. The passage in Deuteronomy deals with the great mercies of God received by Israel, and the people's stubborn rebellion and lack of thankfulness to God. In Deut. 32:21 Moses warns the children of Israel that as they had provoked God to jealousy by that which is not God (that is, by idolatry) God would provoke them to jealousy by those that are not a people. The meaning is clearly that God would eventually reject Israel and choose in their stead Gentiles who formerly were not His people. Certainly this statement of Moses is very plain, and if the Jews of Paul's day had not been entirely blind to this truth, they would have known it from Moses.

"But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith,

All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (10:20,21). The statement of Moses in Deut. 32:21 was plain enough, but here is one from Isaiah that is even plainer, one that is unmistakable and cannot be evaded, a "very bold" statement. The words are quoted from Isa. 65:1,2. It will be noted that the wording in Rom. 10:20,21 differs somewhat from that found in the Authorized Version of Isaiah 65:1,2. The reason for this is that Paul is here following not the Hebrew but the Septuagint (ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament), and he transposes the clauses. The King James or Authorized Version of the Old Testament was of course made directly from the original Hebrew. Paul often quotes from the Septuagint or Greek version, which was natural inasmuch as he was writing his Epistle in the Greek language and to Greek-speaking readers. The sense of the original Hebrew is accurately given by Paul's quotation; the differences are merely in form. "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." This statement of course describes the Gentiles. They were not God's covenant people, they did not know God, they were not specially interested in or concerned about the true God. Each nation had its own religion, its own philosophers, its own myths, legends, customs, laws, ethical standards, and so forth. All were turned aside to their own way in dense spiritual darkness. They were not looking for the true God, but they found Him through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Isaiah, then, predicted the inclusion of the Gentiles in the kingdom of God. This, of course, implies that the day would come when Israel would no longer be exclusively and uniquely the people of God, a time would come when Jews and Gentiles would be in the kingdom on the same terms and on an equal footing.

"But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (verse 21). To stretch forth the

hands, in the Bible, signifies invitation, entreaty. In this verse we see the tender love of the Father for his erring and rebellious children. How often this was true of them through their long history! How many times they rebelled against God and turned to their own stubborn, sinful way! And yet the Father's heart yearned for their return to Himself. "All day long" means continuously. The rejection of Israel was not caused by any unwillingness of God to love and save them. It was caused by their own stubborn, stiff-necked unbelief, sinking finally into complete apostasy. It was their own fault.

#### Questions:

1. What is the meaning of Paul's question in 10:19, "Did not Israel know?"
2. Why does Paul say "First Moses . . ." in 10:19?
3. What passage from Moses' writings does Paul quote in verse 19?
4. What subject is dealt with in the passage quoted from Moses?
5. What sin is described by the expression "provoking God to jealousy by that which is not God?"

6. What is meant by the statement: "I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people"?

7. Why does Paul say that Isaiah was "very bold"?

8. How can we explain the fact that Paul's quotation from Isaiah 65:1,2 differs from the form found in the book of Isaiah in the Authorized Version?

9. What people are described in the statement: "I was found of them that sought me not"?

10. How did it come to pass that God was found of them that sought Him not?

11. What is implied by Isaiah 65:1,2 concerning the position of Israel?

12. What is signified, in the Bible, by stretching forth the hands?

13. What attitude of God toward Israel is revealed by the statement that all day long He had stretched forth His hands to them?

14. Whose fault was it that Israel was finally rejected by God?

### LESSON 50.

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

##### **E. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Total, for a Remnant shall be Saved. 11:1-10.**

Paul has plainly proved that the Old Testament predicted both the calling of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews. In the first ten verses of chapter 11 he proceeds to teach that although God has rejected the Jews as a nation, this rejection is not total, for a remnant of the nation shall receive salvation.

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (11:1). The question asked here, "Hath God cast away his people," is obviously raised because many might infer from chapters 9 and 10 that God HAS cast off His people; that is, that God has been unfaithful to His own declared purposes and promises. Paul says in effect, "Does the argument I have presented in chapters 9 and 10 mean that God has cast off His people, thus going back on His own word and promises?" This question, he answers in his habitual way of making a strong negative assertion: "God forbid"—meaning, "Far from it; certainly not."

He then cites himself as an example to prove that God has not cast off His people. Paul himself was an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin, but he has not been cast off. Although an Israelite, he had been saved by the grace of God and was now a member of the true people of God, the Christian Church. And if Paul the Israelite was not cast off, certainly there were many others like himself, Jews who had become Christians; they were not cast off, but wonderfully saved. The rejection of Israel, therefore, could not be a total rejection. There would be some Israelites, at least, that would receive salvation and would be true children of God, true citizens of God's Kingdom.

"God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew" (11:2a). In interpreting this sentence, much depends upon where the emphasis is placed. If the emphasis is placed upon "his people," the sentence means one thing; if it is placed upon "which he foreknew," it means something else. In the first case, if we place the emphasis on "his people," then "his people" would mean the nation of Israel, and the meaning of the sentence would be: "God has not

cast off the nation of Israel; he would not cast off those whom he foreknew." But if the emphasis is placed upon "which he foreknew," then "his people" means, not the nation of Israel, but the ELECT within the nation of Israel, the true Israelites, the spiritual Israel, the Israel within Israel, that part of Israel which God had foreknown (regarded from eternity with special love and favor).

The second of these two possible interpretations is to be chosen in preference to the first. On the first interpretation, verse 2a is merely a repetition of the implication of verse 1. But on the second interpretation, verse 2 has a definite meaning of its own. Moreover, in Romans 9:6-8, Paul has already laid down the distinction between the external nation of Israel and the inner spiritual core of true Israelites, so that this is not a new idea in this Epistle. Also, the second interpretation best fits what follows in chapter 11, where Paul speaks (verse 5) of "a remnant according to the election of grace." For these reasons, the second interpretation of 11:2a is definitely the better one. According to this interpretation, then, 11:2a means: "God has not cast away His elect people, those members of the nation of Israel whom He specially foreknew." This is not only in harmony with the context in Romans; it is also in harmony with the doctrine of the whole Bible, which teaches that an external, visible society and its members may be cast off and perish in sin, but the elect of God can never be cast off nor perish.

The word "foreknew" is used in the Bible in more than one sense. As used in 11:2a, it certainly means more than mere "knowing beforehand." In the sense of "knowing beforehand" or "knowing from eternity," God's foreknowledge includes all creatures and all events without distinction; in this sense, therefore, He "foreknew" the Gentiles equally with the Jews; consequently it would involve no uniqueness or distinction for the Jews to say that God "foreknew" them, if "foreknew" in 11:2a meant

nothing more than "knew beforehand." But it is obvious that in the expression "His people, which he foreknew," the word "foreknew" is intended to set Israel apart as the recipients of some special attention or favor of God, in distinction from the other peoples of the world. Accordingly, we take "foreknew" in this verse as meaning "regarded as objects of God's special favor from eternity." Those whom God foreknew as His own can never be cast off; they shall live in communion with Him to all eternity.

#### Questions:

1. What is the subject dealt with in 11:1-10?
2. Why does Paul mention the fact that he himself was an Israelite?
3. In the statement of 11:2a, on which phrase should the emphasis be placed?
4. What is the meaning of the expression "his people" in 11:2a?
5. How can it be shown that "his people" in 11:2a does not mean the nation of Israel as such?
6. In what two senses is the word "foreknow" used in the Bible?
7. What is included in God's foreknowledge, in the sense of knowing beforehand?
8. Why does "foreknew" in 11:2a not mean merely "knew beforehand"?
9. What is the meaning of "foreknew" in 11:2a?
10. What can never happen to those whom God has foreknown in the special sense of "known from eternity as His own"?

### LESSON 51.

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

##### E. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Total, for a Remnant shall be Saved. 11:1-10, Continued.

"Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life" (11:2,3). Paul now seeks to bring out the truth that a remnant of Israel shall be saved, and in order to do this, he speaks of the situation in the time of the prophet Elijah. The reference is to 1 Kings 19:10. It was under the reign of the wicked king Ahab, when the great majority of the nation had

followed their rulers in turning from Jehovah to the worship of Baal. In Elijah's day, as in Paul's, it seemed that the apostasy of Israel was complete. But in each case it was only partial. For in Elijah's day there remained a faithful minority: there was Obadiah, and the hundred prophets he had concealed in caves; and there were the seven thousand whom God had reserved unto Himself, who had not bowed the knee to Baal, nor kissed his image. Doubtless the faithful in Elijah's day were but a small fraction of the total population of the nation, a "remnant," yet they constituted the real Israel, the Israel within Israel, God's people, whom He foreknew. Similarly

in Paul's day, the rejection of Israel was not total. God still had His remnant, whom He had reserved for Himself, who were true believers. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (11:5).

"According to the election of grace." What is meant by this expression? "Grace" means more than "kindness" or "favor"; it means **God's favor bestowed on the undeserving**; thus the reason why a particular person receives grace is not anything in that person himself, but merely the sovereign love and mercy of God, the sheer good pleasure of God, for which creatures cannot assign any reason other than that "it pleased God" to act as He did. Therefore "remnant according to the election of grace" means "remnant according to God's sovereign, unmerited choice" (compare 9:11 and 11:21,24). -

In the days of Elijah, the number of the faithful was much greater than Elijah supposed. He thought that he alone was left to serve God, but God informed him that there were seven thousand others. Similarly in the time of the apostles, the number must have been much greater than was outwardly apparent to a casual observer. James in Acts 21:20 speaks of "many thousands" (Greek, "many myriads") of Jews which believe, that is, of course, which believe on Jesus Christ. So it was not as if all or nearly all of the Jews had been rejected.

"And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (11:6). This is Paul's explanation of the meaning of the word "grace" in verse 5. He points out that the two principles, grace and works, are incompatible. Their election cannot be based on both grace and works, for the two ideas are mutually exclusive. To speak of election being both of grace and also of works is like speaking of an honest thief, or a truthful liar; it is a contradiction in terms. Election is either of grace, or it is of works, one or the other, but not both. Grace would not be grace if it were of works; the very idea of grace means "not of works." It is clear, too, that FORESEEN works are excluded from the ground of election, just as much as any other kind of works. The common Arminian view of election is that it is based on foreseen works; that is, that God has elected those whom He foresaw or foreknew (from eternity) would repent and believe on Christ. If this Arminian theology is correct, then election is not of grace but of works, for Arminianism represents God as electing men to salvation because He knows beforehand that they will repent

and believe. Repentance and faith, in this system, are the works on which election is based. Such an election is not an election of grace.

It is apparent that Paul considered it of very great importance to exclude rigidly every element of personal works or merit from the doctrine of election. He stops in the middle of his argument about the Jews and Gentiles to make this emphatic statement about grace and works in 11:6. Many today who claim to believe in the doctrine of election as taught in the Bible yet pay very little attention to this truth. They seldom mention it, and perhaps are a little embarrassed by it, and so try to avoid speaking about it, as if it were something to be just a little ashamed of. Evidently Paul did not feel that way about the doctrine of God's sovereign election. He considered it a main point of the Gospel and he taught it both consistently and insistently. We should go and do likewise. If it is a doctrine of God's Word it is nothing to be afraid of, ashamed of, or embarrassed about.

#### Questions:

1. Why does Paul mention the prophet Elijah and his time?
2. What was the religious situation of Israel in Elijah's day?
3. What mistaken idea did Elijah himself have about the religious situation?
4. What is the meaning of the word "grace"?
5. What is the reason why a particular person receives God's grace?
6. How many Jews were believers in Christ in the time of the apostles?
7. Why can election not be both of grace and of works?
8. What is the common Arminian view of the ground of election?
9. Why can foreseen repentance and faith not be the ground of election?
10. What was Paul's attitude toward the doctrine of sovereign election?
11. Why should we not be ashamed of or embarrassed about the doctrine of election?

## LESSON 52.

**THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.****E. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Total, for a Remnant shall be Saved. 11:1-10, Continued.**

“What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day” (11:7,8).

The word here translated “seeketh” means an earnest, intense, persistent search. The Jews sought earnestly for righteousness, but they failed to obtain it, because they sought it not by faith but by works. This verse is a summary of Paul's argument to this point. Israel as a nation—the majority of the people—did not obtain righteousness, but those whom God had foreknown and elected obtained it. Since the rejection of Israel is not total, but only partial, the promises of God made to Israel in the Old Testament have not been abrogated or canceled. The believing, saved remnant are the real Israel, the real continuity of the Israel of old, the real inheritors of the promises. This truth may be illustrated as follows. Suppose that at some future time all of the United States except the states west of the Rocky Mountains were to sink beneath the waters of the sea. Although the greater part of the land area and population of the nation would be lost by such a calamity, the part of the country remaining would still constitute the nation. It would still be the United States of America, and would be recognized as the legitimate continuation of our national life, throughout the world. Similarly, the remnant of Israel that receives salvation through Christ is the real Israel; it (along with all Gentile Christians) is the true inheritor of the Old Testament promises. The promises have not been broken or canceled. They are fulfilled to the election of grace, to whom they were really made.

“And the rest were blinded” (11:7b). The Greek word here translated “blinded” means basically, “to harden.” Therefore Paul's statement could be translated: “And the rest were hardened.” It is a recognized principle in Scripture that God may and often does punish sin by hardening the sinner; that is, by abandoning him to his sinful tendencies, so that as a result he becomes worse and worse. “They were hardened by God, i.e., abandoned by him to the hardness of their own hearts” (Charles Hodge).

Verse 8 is taken from several places in the Old Testament (as Isa. 6:9,10; Deut. 29:4; Isa. 29:10). These Old Testament passages apply partly to conditions in the times when they were first written, and partly they predict what would be in the future. They

are thus properly applicable to the Jews of Paul's time. (Compare Matt. 13:14). Many such prophecies have progressive fulfillments, being first fulfilled on a smaller scale, and later fulfilled on a larger scale, or in a more complete manner. What had occurred time and again in the Old Testament period, namely, people having eyes that could not (spiritually) see and ears that could not (spiritually) hear, happened much more completely among the Jews of apostolic times. In their blindness they could not see Jesus as the Messiah, and so they went on in their unbelief until dire disaster and destruction overtook them at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

“This blindness and hardness were not mere calamities, nor were they simply the natural effects of the sins of the people. They were punitive inflictions. They are so denounced. God says, I will give you eyes that see not. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The strokes of his justice blind, bewilder, and harden the soul” (Charles Hodge). Since this is true, how important it is that we beware of offending God, of presuming upon His mercy! “Our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29).

**Questions:**

1. What is the meaning of the word “seeketh” in 11:7?
2. What did Israel seek but fail to obtain?
3. What is implied concerning the promises of God by the truth that the rejection of the Jews is not total but only partial?
4. Who are the real inheritors of the Old Testament promises?
5. What is the basic meaning of the word translated “blinded” in 11:7?
6. In what way does God sometimes harden sinners?
7. What did their blindness prevent the Jews of Paul's day from seeing?
8. What was the result of the Jews' unbelief?
9. Why should all people beware of offending God by presumptuous sinning against Him?

(Note: This series of lessons on the Epistle to the Romans will be continued, D.V., in the next issue.—Ed.)

## Blue Banner Question Box

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

### Question:

A pastor of another denomination said that Calvinism and Arminianism are both true. He held that each of them is half of the truth and you have to take them together to get the whole truth. What should be thought of this idea?

### Answer:

The type of thinking suggested in the above query is often met with. Those who hold such an idea are obviously unfamiliar with the history of the controversy between Calvinism and Arminianism, and do not have a clear understanding of what the teachings of Calvinism are.

The differences between these two systems were sharply defined at the Synod of Dort in 1618-19. At the points of difference between them, each of these systems is a flat contradiction of the other. It is therefore very foolish and misleading to say that they are BOTH true and must be taken together to get the whole truth. The famous "Five Points of Calvinism" are contradictions of the five Arminian doctrines against which they were framed. When two propositions are mutually contradictory, one or the other must be true, but they cannot both be true. Columbus discovered America in 1492, or he did not discover America in 1492. Who could be so foolish as to hold that these contradictory statements must be combined to get the real truth about Columbus? Similarly, God either is or is not absolutely sovereign over His creatures, man either is or is not totally depraved, Christ's atonement either is or is not intended by God to save every human being that ever lived, the saving grace of God either is or is not irresistible, and those who are truly in Christ either are or are not sure to persevere unto eternal life. Calvinism holds one side of these alternatives, Arminianism holds the other. But who can hold both at the same time?

The person who says that Calvinism and Arminianism are both true—that they are mutually complementary aspects of truth—is always a person who does not have a clear and correct understanding of what the teachings of Calvinism are. The argument is put up in some such form as the following: Calvinism teaches the sovereignty of God, and Arminianism teaches the responsibility (or freedom) of man. We should follow Calvin in his emphasis on God's sovereignty, and Arminius in his stress on man's responsibility.

This type of statement, however, overlooks the fact that Calvinism stresses the responsibility of man just as strongly as Arminianism does—indeed, more strongly. The Arminian stresses the responsibility of man alone; the Calvinist stresses the sovereignty of God AND the responsibility of man. Everything that is true in Arminianism is also taught by Calvinism. What really distinguishes the Arminian is not his stress on the responsibility of man but his denial of the sovereignty of God.

Arminians can be Christians and be saved only because they are inconsistent and do not really believe in Arminianism all the way. If they followed Arminian principles consistently to the end of the road they would have to believe that man is his own saviour. But by a happy inconsistency they are kept from this. An Arminian will say insistently that everything depends on the sinner. A famous evangelist is quoted as having said, "God's hands are tied. He can only wait for you to make the decision." If consistently believed, this would be faith in autonomous man and a limited God. But the Arminian evangelist does not really believe it. Immediately after finishing his sermon he will pray fervently for the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of the people that they may be saved. We approve of such prayer but we should realize that it is inconsistent with Arminian principles. If "God's hands are tied" and if everything depends on a decision of man which God does not control, what can be the use of praying to God for the salvation of sinners? It would seem that the prayer should be addressed to the sinners, or whose free will everything is said to depend.

What we are trying to show is that the Arminian does not really believe his Arminian principles. He does not believe them consistently, for however much he may say that everything depends on man's free will, if he is a Christian, he still realizes in the bottom of his heart that after all everything depends on the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Calvinism is simply Biblical Christianity. It accepts the whole teaching of God's Word. It is not guilty of the denial of man's moral responsibility, which is often charged against it.

—J. G. Vos

### Question:

In the magazine you have written with approval of

Textual Criticism of the New Testament. Is it not presumptuous for sinful men to dare to criticize the holy Word of God?

**Answer:**

Our correspondent is evidently under the impression that “criticism,” in the term “Textual Criticism,” means **faultfinding**. The word “criticism” is indeed often used with this kind of meaning. If this were the real meaning of the phrase “Textual Criticism,” we would reply without hesitation that it is certainly presumptuous for sinful man to criticize (or find fault with) the Word of God.

However, “faultfinding” is not the primary or basic meaning of the term “criticism.” It comes from the Greek word for **judging**, and as used in the term “Textual Criticism,” it means a very exact, careful study of the existing manuscripts of a book—say, the Gospel of Mark—to form a **judgment** as to which manuscript, where they differ from each other, is closest to the book as originally written by the evangelist Mark. There are many manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek, and no two are exactly alike. Where they differ, a decision or judgment must

be made between them. This should be done devoutly and also intelligently, with full consideration of the many factors involved. Thus carried on, Textual Criticism is not presumptuous—rather, it is unavoidable, it is absolutely necessary. Every English version of the Bible, including the King James Version, presents to its readers the product of many hundreds of **judgments** (critical decisions) between variant readings in the ancient manuscripts.

The idea that we can start with the King James Version as an absolute standard, and then measure all other versions and all Hebrew and Greek manuscripts by comparing them with the King James Version, is certainly wrong. The true starting point should be the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. By critical study of these the genuine text should be determined so far as it is possible to do so. Then from the text thus determined, the best possible translations into modern languages should be made. Scholarly study of the text of the Bible neither began nor ended with the publication of the King James Version in the year 1611.

—J. G. Vos

## *Religious Terms Defined*

**ABILITY.** In theology, the term “ability” means the power of man, in his fallen, sinful condition, to do what God requires of him; especially the power to repent and believe the Gospel. Scripture teaches that sinful man does not possess this ability, and that only by experiencing the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit does he become able to repent and believe unto salvation.

**ACCOMMODATION OF SCRIPTURE.** An improper use of Scripture, by which a text or passage is applied to some matter to which, in its true meaning, it is not relevant. For example, the use of the last clause of 1 Samuel 21:8 (“the king’s business required haste”) as a plea for diligence in Christian service, is an accommodation of Scripture.

**ACTUAL TRANSGRESSIONS.** Sins which a person commits himself personally, in distinction from **original sin** which is his sinful nature, the condition in which the sinner comes into the world, and which is the root of all actual transgressions.

**ADIAPHORA.** This is a Greek word which means literally “things indifferent.” (The singular is **adiaphoron**). It is used in theology and ethical studies to designate that class of actions which in themselves are morally indifferent, that is, neither commanded

nor forbidden by God. When Paul in Romans 14:14 says that “there is nothing unclean of itself,” he is dealing with **adiaphora** or “things indifferent.” The Christian is free under God to use or abstain from “things indifferent,” but is under obligation to avoid injury to others by his use of this freedom.

**ADOPTION.** “Adoption is an act of God’s free grace, whereby we are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.” (Shorter Catechism, 34).

**ADORATION.** That element in prayer which ascribes honor to God for His perfections and attributes, and which reverently contemplates the divine majesty and glory, rendering loving worship to God for His own sake.

**AGNOSTICISM.** The denial of the possibility of knowledge concerning God, absolute religious truth, eternal life, etc. This is practically the same as atheism, although technically it does not go quite so far. The atheist says that there is no God, while the agnostic says that we can never know whether God exists. The term **agnosticism** was coined by Thomas Huxley in 1869.

**ALPHA AND OMEGA.** The first and last letters

of the Greek alphabet, used symbolically in the Book of Revelation to assert the eternity of God and of Christ.

**ALTAR.** A table or raised structure upon which sacrifices were offered. In the ritual of the Old Testament, a raised platform or structure on which sacrifices were offered to Jehovah. Sacrifices having been fulfilled and abolished forever by the true and effective sacrifice of Christ on the cross, there remains no need for altars. The communion table in a Christian congregation's place of worship should not be called an altar, for no sacrifice is offered on it. It is loose and incorrect usage to speak of the practice of family worship as "a family altar," for it includes no sacrifice to expiate the guilt of sin.

**AMILLENNIALISM.** That view of the Last Things which holds that the Bible does not predict a "millennium" or long period of world-wide peace and righteousness on this earth before the end of the world. Amillennialism emphasizes the idea that time (or history) is the realm of that which is relative, incomplete, and imperfect, whereas eternity (or what is beyond history) is the realm of that which is absolute, complete, and perfect. Amillennialism teaches that there will continue to be a parallel and contemporaneous development of good and evil—God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom—in the world, until the consummation or second coming of Christ, at which time the resurrection and judgment will take place, followed by the eternal order of things—the absolute, perfect kingdom of God, in which there can be no sin, suffering, nor death.

## Reviews of Religious Books

*The favorable reviewing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Purchase books from your book dealer or from the publishers. Please do not send orders for books to the manager of this magazine.*

**UP, UP AND AWAY**, by Robert Yerby. 1977, paperback, pp. 118. \$2.50. Reiner Publications, Swengel, Pa. 17880.

If you are a believer who has become confused by the fantasies spun concerning the reign of Christ, the rapture, and the resurrection of the dead, then this book is a must. If you are a new convert to the Christian faith, this little volume will be an invaluable guide in the sea of confusion concerning the present and the future. For the believer who has no problem, **Up, Up and Away** will serve as a choice opportunity to review and be strengthened in the historic position of the Christian Church.

I did question the choice of title. Except for this minor restriction, this volume is highly recommended for all categories of believers. It is well written and can be understood by any who put forth effort to learn.

—John J. Byker

**THE CREEDS OF CHRISTENDOM.** Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids, Baker Book House: 1977 (reprint of the 6th Edition, 1932). Vol. 1—947 pp.; Vol. 2—634 pp.; Vol. 3—966 pp. \$34.95 the set. (p).

The reprint of this classic work, first published a century ago, is a notable event. Here, in one set of volumes, is both the history of creeds and confessions down to the present century and also the texts

of all the major confessional statements in Christendom before 1932.

Volume 1 is the historical survey and in it, in his own masterly, now legendary, way, that greatest of American church historians, Philip Schaff, traces the progress of the spiritual ferment from which confessions, catechisms and covenants almost innumerable were distilled. Schaff's own comments occasionally leave something to be desired—he represented the "broadening" trend in the German Reformed Church—but the treatment as a whole is incomparable—indeed, it is unique. We concur wholeheartedly with his views on creeds in general, both in the way he gently explodes the myth that any church or fellowship can be creedless (compare R. L. Dabney's article on "The System of Alexander Campbell" in his **Discussions: Evangelical and Theological** for the ultimate answer to the "no creed but Christ" notion) and also in his cautions against "Symbololatry" which he says, rightly,

"is a species of idolatry, and substitutes the tyranny of a printed book for that of a living pope."

Volumes 2 and 3 contain respectively the Roman/Greek Creeds and the Protestant Confessions. Many are given in the language of the original text together with a translation either into English or Latin. Only a very few are not rendered somewhere in English, e.g., The 67 Articles of Zwingli and the First Helvetic Confession which are in German, and a couple of Eastern Confessions that are in Greek.

These volumes are fascinating and rewarding reading and for pastors and all serious students of the Scriptures, they shed light upon the why's and wherefore's of our modern ecclesiastical situation. This is a

basic reference work which should find a place in every pastor's study.

The binding is serviceable if relatively flimsy when compared to a cloth binding and the print is clear and large. Highly recommended.

—Gordon J. Keddie

**PSYCHOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY: THE VIEW BOTH WAYS**, by Malcolm A. Jeeves. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. \$3.95.

This volume was written to "assist students worried by what they have learned in one or other of the behavioral sciences." The author hopes that his work may serve the non-specialist as well as the specialist in this field.

This book is both necessary and beneficial. Helpful features of the book are the discussion of the Christian View of Man, a brief evaluation of some of the more dominant streams of thought in psychology, some of the research being carried on in this area, plus setting a positive conclusion over against disturbing elements and conclusions of secular behavioral scientists.

What this reviewer found lacking was a Christian Psychology. The approach of the author was to "supplement psychology" with Christianity, hence no answer to the question "What Is Man?" Also, the work fails to demonstrate the devastating effect of sin in the life of man, patient, scientist and his research.

Very helpful, but not the final word.

—John J. Byker

**YOUR JOB: SURVIVAL OR SATISFACTION?** by J. and M. White. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. 1977, hardbound. \$4.65.

This book is well organized. The authors are a former U.S. Air Force engineer and his wife. They examine the nuts and bolts of Christian discipleship under a secular employer. They discuss the cultural mandate, a Christian's reasons for wanting money, and "the grass is greener" syndrome when a job causes turmoil or does not bring satisfaction. The authors wrestle the reader into writing down goals for himself and his job. They devote one chapter each to vocational Christian work, the hourly employee, the salaried employee, the homemaker, the working woman, the military and government employee, the salesman and the self-employed.

For anyone who, like Cornelius, desires to be a godly man within a Roman cohort, this book is significant reading. The authors only address the individual Christian, however. The book cannot be called Reformed. The relationship of the task of the Church Militant to the individual's job in the secular world is hardly discussed.

—Thomas Muldoon

**THE BEST OF C. H. SPURGEON**, ed. by Wilbur M. Smith. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1977, paperback, pp. 255. \$2.95.

An interesting anthology for introducing a person to Spurgeon. Not too interesting to those who have read Spurgeon widely, but a good sampling of his writings.

—J. Ed. Hindman

**THE LIFE OF JOHN BUNYAN**. Anonymous. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. Paperback, pp. 160. \$1.65.

Interesting reading taken mostly from Bunyan's own writings or those of his contemporaries. Reads easily and relates his coming to faith in Jesus Christ and then his later ministry. Worth the price and will increase your appreciation for all Bunyan's works.

—J. Ed. Hindman

**THE HOLY WAR**, by John Bunyan. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1977, paperback, pp. 314. \$2.95.

One of Bunyan's fine works, less widely known than *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Those who have enjoyed the latter will appreciate this one too.

—J. Ed. Hindman

**CHRIST THE HEALER**, by Horatius Bonar. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1977, reprint, paperback, pp. 131. \$1.45.

Seventeen sermons from the larger collection of Bonar's sermons. They provide helpful meditations on the life and mission of Jesus Christ. The title is taken from one of the chapters. For those familiar with Bonar's hymns, this book will be readily received and appreciated.

—J. Ed. Hindman

**HOW SHALL I GO TO GOD?** by Horatius Bonar. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1977, reprint, paperback, pp. 145. \$1.45.

A collection of nine sermons by Bonar, all worth reading. The title is taken from one of the sermons, and the question "How shall I go to God?" is very clearly answered: "Go to God with all your sins and at the Cross receive the righteousness of Jesus."

—J. Ed. Hindman

**INTER-LINEAR HEBREW/GREEK ENGLISH BIBLE, BOOK OF JUDGES**, by Jay Green. Associated Publishers and Authors, Wilmington, Delaware, 1980, 1976, paperback, 69 pp. \$1.00.

The publishers offer this interlinear of Judges as an exemplar of the entire Bible which they have produced after the interlinear format.

The English translation is often confusing for there are really two translations—one in a column parallel to the column of Hebrew and another consisting of an approximate word for word rendition under each Hebrew word. These two translations although generally agreeing often disagree on the precise meaning of particular Hebrew words and grammar. We offer the following observations: sometimes 1) both translations are in error grammatically (e.g., the rendering of the singular Hebrew word "field" as "fields," 5:4), 2) one is correct and the other incorrect (e.g., in 5:4 the parallel translation renders the rather curious "from before" and the translation beneath the Hebrew "before"), 3) the two merely present equally acceptable but different grammatical translations (e.g., 5:8), 4) they are both in error or awkward lexicographically (e.g., "rustics," instead of "peasants," 5:7), 5) one is lexicographically in error and the other correct (e.g., "lawgivers" and "commanders," 5:9), and 6) the two present two different but equally acceptable translations lexicographically (e.g., "byways"—"crooked ways," 5:6). These variations would be most confusing to the careful student and misleading to the careless. One might respond that the differences are slight, but what appears to be a slight difference is not always so slight when carefully considered. Finally, it seems to this reviewer that an "interlinear" in parallel columns with no translation below the Hebrew/Greek would be more helpful. Such a "parallel" would force the student to do considerably more work, would provide him with some help and more likely allow him better to resist the temptation of reading a particular translation into the text rather than actually translating on his own.

The Hebrew reproduction generally is acceptable. A minimum of accents is reproduced. There is no help anywhere in the manuscript at our disposal ex-

plaining the importance and function of the Hebrew accenting system. Also, it might be well to give the student some suggestion as to the location of passages considered to be grammatically and lexicographically difficult. This could be done by reproducing the textual critical apparatus of the Kitzel Bible.

This reviewer must express his disapproval, in general, of the interlinear idea because it seems to interfere with learning a language more than assist. The publishers, however, are to be commended highly on their concern to promote, if not restore, knowledge and use of the original text among pastors, et. al., but unfortunately this particular attempt suffers the shortcomings listed above.

—Leonard J. Coppes

**THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**, by Hazel Offner. Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515. 1977, pp. 60, paper, \$1.95.

Nine Bible studies on the fruit of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22,23, based on various Old and New Testament passages illustrative of these virtues. Eight to 12 questions are set forth in each study, with spaces for written answers, but primarily designed for discussion. These questions are designed to promote investigation of the assigned passages and to generate application to the participants' faith and life. Pointedly personal questions, such as, "What steps will you take in the next week to . . .," are typical and recommend this guide for small groups where a high degree of honest intimacy can be handled properly.

—J. P. Duggan

**THEONOMY IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS**, by Greg L. Bahnsen. Craig Press, Nutley, N.J. 07110. 1977. Paperback, pp. 619. \$14.95.

This somewhat esoteric title sets forth the thesis of this book, namely, that the basis and specifications of Christian ethics should be the revelation recorded in Scripture (God's law) rather than man's ideas. This is a clear attempt to correct the antinomianism so current in all quarters of the church. Too many contemporary believers virtually ignore the Old Testament law as a formative and normative standard in ethics. Although his thesis in general should be welcomed by those of us who are aware of the covenantal structure of biblical revelation, Bahnsen's specific point might cause us considerable problems. He attempts to show us that the ethic of the New Testament is merely a reassertion of the Old Testament ethic and represents at no point any advancement over its precursor. This reviewer does not think

his point is established. Our conclusion is especially clear when one studies Bahnsen's exposition of Jesus's ethic as recorded in Matthew 5-7. First, Bahnsen argues that Jesus's discourse is no more than a corrective of the then current Pharisaical ethic. There are several points, however, where Bahnsen does not appear to do justice to the Pharisaical ethic. His charges against it usually bear no documentation other than the assertion that whatever Jesus meant it was pointedly against the Pharisees. One who is familiar with the Talmud and current studies on the Pharisees often finds them misrepresented by Bahnsen. Even more important, however, is the fact that Jesus's clear advancement over the Old Testament is ignored. A good example of this is Bahnsen's exposition of Matthew 5:32. Deuteronomy 24:1ff stipulates that a man may marry a woman married once before without committing adultery. Jesus, however, says that to marry a woman once divorced is an abomination, that is, adultery. Bahnsen's exegesis of Matthew 5:32 and his understanding of the ethics of divorce represent an alarming laxity in such matters, for he defines "fornication" as a "generic indication for misbehavior of a shameful or abhorrent nature" (p. 108), as "denoting unclear behavior of an inordinately immoral nature" (p. 109). This is quite contrary to such passages as 1 Peter 2-3 and 1 Corinthians 7 (which Bahnsen says allows desertion as grounds for divorce). The church must see more careful evidence of such laxity on divorce matters before abdicating the traditional position (as expressed by John Murray). Similar objection can be made to every particular exegesis of Jesus's ethic offered by Bahnsen.

In spite of the serious inadequacies of this book it is encouraging to see reformed scholars beginning to offer positive approaches to biblical law.

—L. J. Coppes

**THINKING THROUGH THE BIBLE**, by John McNicol. Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501. Orig. pub. 1944. Reprint 1976; pp. 319. \$9.95.

This work summarizes the content of the Bible, proceeding book by book as they appear in the Protestant canon.

Those of the reformed persuasion will be disappointed at several points. McNicol's theological surveys omit any presentation of the covenantal structure and unity of the Scriptures, the cultural mandate and its influence on Biblical piety, Christian world-view, the centrality of the creation, fall, and redemption as that which determines the character of the Old Testament dispensation (he substitutes the Exodus, Law, and tabernacle). His treatment of archaeology is spotty and at times inaccurate—for ex-

ample, he asserts that archaeology raises no problems regarding the biblical account of the Exodus. He also underemphasizes the reformed/biblical soteriology (the so-called five points of Calvinism) in discussing key passages presenting it (for example, Romans 9). Sadly, he gives no clear presentation regarding the cessation of miracles. Indeed, he confuses the whole matter considerably by wrongly identifying "prophecy" as preaching (1 Corinthians 14), tongues as ecstatic utterances (Acts 2), and by being noncommittal on the question of the present-day claims of such phenomena. Much more could be said as to the shortcomings of this book.

In conclusion, this book on the Bible is harmless enough. The problem with it is that it is not helpful enough.

—L. J. Coppes

**THE FARMER FROM TEKOA**, by Herman Veldkamp. Paideia Press, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. 1977. pp. 236. \$6.95.

Reformed readers will welcome this excellent study of the prophecy of Amos. Herman Veldkamp proves to be a pastor of the first rank. The book is full of clear and spiritually meaningful lessons from Amos. Pastors will find this work a very helpful source of sermon and devotional matter. Others will relish its spiritual perception and depth. Veldkamp truly makes Amos speak to the twentieth century.

There are very few negative observations that one can make regarding this book. One will be surprised to read that Amos was a rich farmer (p. 9). There appears to be almost no awareness of the nature of Baalism (as known through the Ugaritic and Phoenician finds) and its appearance in Amos's book. In Veldkamp's defense we note his dependence on the exegesis of Prof. C. Van Gelderen who authored *Het boek Amos* (J. H. Kok; N. V. of Kampen). Finally, Veldkamp's description of conversion as a goal toward which we work is somewhat unusual.

This reviewer heartily recommends this translation of Herman Veldkamp's original Dutch work.

—L. J. Coppes

**OUR SOVEREIGN GOD**, edited by James M. Boice. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1977, pp. 175. Paper, \$4.95.

This volume consists of 15 addresses to the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology given in the years 1974 through 1976. The contributors include theologians of great note and ability, such as John R. W. Stott, Roger R. Nicole, and James I. Packer.

The preface endeavors to emphasize the extreme and absolute importance of the doctrine of God's sovereignty. In part it does this by perpetrating the following atrocity against the truth derived from the teaching of D. G. Barnhouse: "What is the most important doctrine?" he asked. He answered that the most important doctrine is the sovereignty of God and that it is so important that it may properly be said to be followed by nothing—because there is nothing which can rightly be put next to it—followed by nothing, followed by the other attributes of God and the work of God. Then, after several more blank spaces, there are the doctrines about which the Church is divided: how the churches should be governed, what should be the form of the sacraments, and other such matters." In point of fact there are other doctrines, such as the attribute of God's holiness and the attribute of God's righteousness and the attribute of God's love—to name but a few—which stand on a par with God's sovereignty and which operate in God's sovereignty and in which God's sovereignty operates. This attempt to emphasize the need for the exaltation of and belief in God's sovereignty is simply inaccurate and shallow. It constitutes a needless affront not only to Arminians and their fellow spirits but also to Calvinists.

Don't judge a book by its preface. The essays and sermons which follow make a substantial and well-balanced contribution to the reader's understanding of the Biblical teaching concerning God's sovereignty as it rules in a wide spectrum of the Christian life and faith. The book as a whole is warmly recommended. It provides insights into and expositions of the truth with great clarity and without the misleading enthusiasm of the preface.

The only major flaw is that one of the contributions takes Jonah 1:16: "Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows" and vehemently stresses that this means "In other words, they all became believers at this point and were saved," and "God said, 'All right, if you're going to disobey, disobey. But it's going to be according to my rules. Moreover, I'm going to save the pagans anyway.' He indicates this by saving the mariners, even though Jonah was not there to see it." (p. 123). Such an interpretation is highly speculative and detracts from the overall tenor of the book, which faithfully and enthusiastically presents the message of God's word.

—Joseph P. Duggan

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**BLUE  
BANNER  
FAITH  
AND  
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**VOLUME 33**

**APRIL-JUNE, 1978**

**NUMBER 2**

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## Practical Christianity

*“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”—James 1:22.*

Christianity is a life based on, and produced by, a certain system of truth. It involves certain facts, plus the meaning of the facts, plus experience based on these.

We must first of all be hearers of the Word. In the Bible, there is no toning down of the importance of doctrine. Our text does not say “Not hearers,” but “Not hearers ONLY”—a very different matter. Modern religion minimizes the importance of knowledge and belief of Christian truth. The prevalent idea is that it does not matter what we believe, that a person’s life is the important thing. Many professing Christians today are grossly ignorant of the Biblical system of truth. This is both wrong and deplorable. To be Christians, we must first of all be hearers of the Word—the Word of God, the Holy Bible, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We must also be doers of the Word. It is the very nature of the Christian message that it demands practical expression in the life—not only impression, but expression. We are to be doers of the Word by diligent use of the means of grace (the Word, the sacraments, prayer). This involves worshipping God privately, in the family circle, and in the congregation of His people. We are also to be doers of the Word by conscientious obedience to the law of God as summarized in the Ten Commandments and interpreted in the entire Bible. Also we are to be doers of the Word by zeal for the extension of God’s Kingdom, by personal and collective efforts directed toward that end. This involves witnessing, evangelism, support of home and foreign missions.

Note that we are not simply to be doers, but doers of the Word. We are not just to have a program, but to have and follow God’s program. Mere activity is worth nothing. It must be activity along the line that God has appointed for us in His Word.

The mere hearer of the Word is a self-deceived person. There exist, of course, downright hypocrites, self-conscious pretenders to piety. But the real hypocrite is not self-deceived; on the contrary, he is trying to deceive others. Our text speaks of the self-deceived, those who think themselves good, faithful Christians, when they really are not. The person who is a hearer of the Word but not a doer is self-deceived. The truth of God goes “in one ear and out the other.” He unconsciously divorces his religion from his life, and accepts the truth as mere information. The person who claims to accept the doctrines and principles of God’s Word, but fails to make any earnest effort to practice them, does not really accept those doctrines and principles; he only thinks he does; he is self-deceived. He “straightway forgetteth”; that kind of formal religion has no real impact on a person’s life. For this very reason it is comfortable and convenient, for it never embarrasses a person. Practical Christianity, on the other hand, makes a real difference in a person’s life. It involves being born again, personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour, an earnest effort to obey God’s law, a constant striving after holiness, a real separation from that “world” system which is contrary to God.

The world, in its selfishness, unbelief and sin, is headed for divine wrath and judgment. “The wicked shall be cast into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” Nominal and formal Christians are being dragged along toward hell by the God-forgetting world. Does your religion make you feel uncomfortable in this sinful world? Does it make you stand up against the trend of the times? Does it make you struggle upstream against the current? Does it ever involve any real sacrifice in your life? What sacrifice have you made for the sake of Christ? How has your relation to the Lord Jesus Christ made you live differently from people who do not know Christ? “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

—J. G. Vos

## Life’s Most Important Question

“What shall I do with Jesus  
Who is called the Christ?”  
Asked Pilate of the shouting mob,  
Whose favor he enticed.  
What will *you* do with Jesus  
Who is called the Christ?

Nothing else than all one’s heart  
Ever has sufficed.  
Our Lord stands in the shadows;  
God’s Spirit pleads His case,  
But how the heart of Jesus yearns  
That all accept His grace!

—Esther Belle Heins

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

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NUMBER 2

## ***Eldership, the Marks of the True Church, and Separation***

by J. Barton Payne

Reformed Presbyterianism is distinguished by its insistence upon purity in the visible church.<sup>1</sup> Negatively, it has demanded separation from any willfully impure organization; witness the American R.P.'s Declaration and Testimony of 1806, which taught that "When any church's . . . administration is corrupt, and attempts at its reformation have proved ineffectual, it is the duty of Christians [not just their option, but their duty] to separate from it."<sup>2</sup> The Reformed doctrine of separation thus assumes a prior understanding of what constitutes a pure church. This, in turn, is based upon certain divinely revealed qualifications for leadership in ecclesiastical administration. The three parts of the discussion that follow therefore take up: the eldership, the marks of the true church, and then the separation that is entailed.

### **I. Biblical Qualifications for the Eldership**

The doctrines of Reformed Presbyterianism find their source in Scripture and derive their ultimate authority from Jesus Christ Himself. Christians, that is, follow Christ; the covenanted church is committed to "the crown rights and royal prerogatives of King Jesus." Separation *to* Christ is the basis for separation *from* evils. This includes the bringing of every thought into obedience to Him (2 Cor. 10:5); and, since He insisted that Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35), believers must follow His pattern of thought in this regard too.<sup>3</sup> Concerning then the doctrine of church administration, the Testimony of 1806 affirms that

Christ, the Head and Lawgiver, has appointed in His word a particular form of government for the New Testament church. . . . The government is presbyterian. . . . With teaching elders are associated . . . other elders who only rule. . . . To these [met in] courts, Christ has given the power of governing the church.<sup>4</sup>

The proof text that is cited is 1 Timothy 5:17, which identifies all the ordained presbyters as "elders that rule," though some "especially . . . labor in the word and doctrine." Whom then does Scripture approve for election as elders? In his pastoral letters, both to Timothy and to Titus, the apostle Paul emphasizes two categories of qualifications: ethical and also doc-

trinal. He informed Timothy that "an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate," etc., but also "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2, NASB); he told Titus that "the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered," etc., but also "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:7,9). Paul's phrase, "the faithful word," doubtless includes Scripture; but it seems to embrace even more. As stated in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, "It is . . . the totality of the revelation given in Christ."<sup>5</sup>

In the standards of the R.P. Church, these qualifications come most clearly to focus in the ordination vows that it requires of its elders. Prior to the 1833 division candidates, on the one hand, promised "to lead a holy and exemplary life" and, on the other, affirmed their belief in "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners." They also affirmed "the doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Catechisms, Larger and Shorter."<sup>6</sup> Subsequent to 1833 both of the R.P. branches have made these obligations even clearer, not simply in ethical applications beyond those required for church membership, but also in doctrinal precision. The "Old Light" (R.P.C. of N.A.), in accord with the Westminster Confession (I:5), has inserted the adjective *infallible*, so that its presbyters accept Scripture as "the only *infallible* rule of faith and practice."<sup>7</sup> The "New Light" (R.P.C., E.S.), in accord with the 1806 Testimony (III, 4th error condemned), has also inserted a phrase on inerrancy, so that its officers accept Scripture as the word of God, "inerrant in the original writings, the only infallible rule of faith and practice."<sup>8</sup> Concerning the Westminster standards, E.S. presbyters reflect their covenanting heritage by further identifying these standards as documents "to the maintenance of which this church is bound before God by solemn obligations."<sup>9</sup>

All thus agree that the Biblical doctrine of the church sets higher qualifications for its eldership than it does for general church membership. Those charged with government must be above reproach in

their conduct and be committed to God's word in their teaching. It may not be for man to decide whether a given minister in some liberal or latitudinarian denomination is in fact a member of the body of Christ, namely whether he will be admitted to heaven at death; but it must be maintained if we are to be true to Scripture, that any minister who, for example, is guilty of having more than one wife, or is unfaithful in respect to God's holy word, is no true elder in the sight of the Lord and cannot be recognized as such in the sight of Biblically minded men.

## II. The Marks of the True Church

In writing to Timothy, Paul assured this young friend of his that "The church of the living God [is] the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). Not that any church is perfect; but some *are* in process of achieving this ideal and do support the truth, while others do not, or are not even trying to.

As the Westminster Confession cautions, "Particular churches are more or less pure according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced [and the] ordinances administered" (XXV:2). Beyond these two marks of purity, a third is generally included as well. As stated in the R.P. *Bicentennial Public Declaration and Testimony* of 1974, "The marks of the true church we believe to be: the true preaching of the word, the right administration of the sacraments, and ecclesiastical discipline uprightly administered."<sup>10</sup> Similarly, but in the Testimony of 1806, Alexander McLeod and his early R.P. colleagues insisted that "Sound doctrine, a legitimate ministry, and the proper use of the sacraments, are the characteristics of the true Christian church."<sup>11</sup> Yet contrariwise, if these marks are missing, no matter how many individual Christians may be present, the church of Jesus Christ is not.<sup>12</sup>

Whether this third mark be defined as "ecclesiastical discipline" or as "legitimate ministry," it still concerns church elders; and furthermore, it can be applied in two directions. Toward those within one's own communion, discipline becomes the responsibility of the faithful presbyters. The Epistle to the Hebrews admonishes its recipients, "Obey your leaders . . . for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account."<sup>13</sup> Let them do this with joy" (Heb. 13:17). Another of the R.P.C., E.S., ordination questions (#6) therefore asks, "Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel and the purity and peace of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?" The last clause suggests the extent to which church discipline can cease to be a joy, should ecclesiastical purity decline. But then all the more must it be carried out, when elements of opposition to it appear and these, in turn, have to be reformed, back to Biblical stan-

dards. Again, even toward those in another communion, elders have a responsibility to evaluate the legitimacy of the ministry within the group in question. For if its ordained leaders fall short of the doctrinal qualifications for the eldership as stated in Titus 1:9, then that group is no true church in the sight of the Lord and cannot be treated as such in the sight of Biblically minded men.

## III. Ecclesiastical Separation

Scripture defines and illustrates the relationship between presbyterial discipline and the doctrine of separation. Two stages appear. (1) As long as faithful elders maintain control over a given organization, they are responsible for its reformation and its purity. In the Old Testament, just before Israel's settlement in Canaan, Moses stated: "The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve the LORD . . . that man shall die; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel. Then all the people will hear and . . . not act presumptuously again" (Deut. 17:12-13; cf. 7:2, 17:2-5). In the New Testament, Paul told the elders at Corinth, who were confronted with a case of incest: "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves" (1 Cor. 5:13; cf. v. 11), they were "not even to eat with such a one." The Testimony of 1806 correspondingly asserts: "It is the duty of a Christian to pray for the reformation of every part of Christ's church" (XXI:4). But (2) should Biblically qualified leaders lose the control and situations arise that demand compromising accommodation, then the only alternative is that of separation. For example, when Sennacherib boasted about carrying away captive 200,000 Old Testament saints to the Tigris Euphrates Valley, Isaiah admonished this Jewish minority group:<sup>14</sup>

Depart, depart, go out from there,  
Touch nothing unclean;  
Go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves,  
You who carry the vessels of the LORD  
(Isa. 52:11; quoted twice to the church, in  
1 Cor. 6:17 and Rev. 18:4).

Or again, to New Testament saints, Paul writes about certain heretics who seem to have gotten beyond church discipline: "Keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them" (Rom. 16:17); and John says, similarly: "If any one comes to you and does not bring this [apostolic] teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds" (2 John 10-11). The 1806 Testimony reflects this situation too, when it rules that "Separation from a corrupt or declining church is . . . a Christian duty."<sup>15</sup>

It is true that instances are sometimes adduced

from Scripture in order to oppose the concept of ecclesiastical separation. One may ask, for example, Did not the Old Testament prophets frequent the temple in Jerusalem, despite its corruption? (Isa. 6:1, 4; Jer. 7:1-2). Or again, Did not Christ and the New Testament apostles minister both in the Jerusalem temple and in local synagogues, despite Jewish apostasy? (Mk. 11:27; Lk. 4:16; Acts 2:46; 13:5). Yet prior to Calvary, Israel's central sanctuary possessed a typical relationship to the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Heb. 8:5).<sup>16</sup> The prophets therefore had no option but to support it: it was the place of God's presence and His revealed way of salvation (Ex. 29:43-45, Heb. 9:23-24)—yet even so they were merciless in their condemnation of temple abuses (Isa. 1:12-13; Jer. 7:4, 8-14). Subsequent to Calvary, the apostles did indeed carry on missionary work within the temple and the synagogues. They knew of course that by His ultimate sacrifice Christ had once and for all rent open the temple veil (Matt. 27:51), had finished the old dispensation, and had emptied its rites of their efficacy (Acts 15:10-11, Heb. 8:13). They kept preaching, however, to Israelites who gathered in the temple and the synagogues, as to people who were yet open to the gospel and to reformation (note Acts 2:36-40; 3:17-19, 26; 13:32, 38-39). They were "confirming the covenant to Israel" for a period which, at least in Jerusalem, seems to correspond to the latter 3½ year half of Daniel's 70th week: it was a period that extended from the midst of the "week," when Christ terminated the Old Testament sacrificial system (Dan. 9:27), up to the stoning of Stephen and the conversion of Paul (Acts 8-9)<sup>17</sup> when "great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered . . . except the apostles" (8:4). Furthermore, there are three conditioning factors that appear throughout these missionary experiences: (1) the apostles would not submit to the authority of the Jews (3:17-20); (2) they minced no words in condemning the Jewish errors (2:23, 3:14-15, 4:11)—Paul, for example, lasted just two weeks in the Pisidian Antioch synagogue before having to "turn to the Gentiles" (13:42-46)—and (3), as soon as the Jewish majority became hardened and disobedient Paul "withdrew from them and took away [KJV, separated] the disciples" (19:9). The apostles didn't wait to be put out; they initiated the separation themselves. Oh, that those who oppose separation today would conform to these same conditioning factors!

Reformed Presbyterianism's historical testimony simply reflects the Bible's position on separation. During the first half of the 17th century, Scottish believers would pluck the sleeves of monarchs, reminding them, in the words of Andrew Melville, that there were two kings in Scotland: "There is Christ Jesus the King, and His kingdom the kirk, whose subject King James VI is, and of Whose kingdom he is not a head but a member."<sup>18</sup> They

enacted the National Covenant of 1638 and led the parliaments of both England and Scotland to adopt the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 and then the Westminster standards, for the achievement of reformation throughout Britain. But in the latter half of that century, after Charles II had perjured himself by repudiating the covenants (1661), the Covenanters repudiated the authority of the Stuart king and of his state church as well. Donald Cargill's Queensferry Paper of 1680 exhibits two doctrines: (1) of discipline, where this could be achieved—"We shall go about this work in time to come . . . with more careful inspection into the conversation and holiness of those men that shall be chosen and ordained"—and (2) of separation where it could not—though he made it clear that the latter course was neither his fault nor his preference, saying:

Separation cannot be attributed to us . . . We are not separating from the communion of the Church and setting up new ordinances and a new ministry, but cleaving to the same ministers, and following the same ordinances, when others have slidden back to new ways and have a new authority superadded.<sup>19</sup>

When the Reformed Presbyterians reached American soil, commencing in 1721 with the organization of the Paxtang, Pa., congregation,

They kept themselves distinct from the other worshipping societies which they found formed or forming in the land in which they were come to sojourn, as judging them no way disposed to enter into the full spirit of the covenanted reformation.<sup>20</sup>

In 1743, on the centennial anniversary of the Solemn League and Covenant, the reformer Alexander Craighead reaffirmed this document at Octorara, Pa., and added:

We look upon it as our Duty to separate ourselves from the corrupt constitutions of both Church and State, and not to touch, taste, nor handle these Abominations, lest by partaking with them in their Sins, we be made Partakers with them in their Plagues.<sup>21</sup>

Little wonder, then, that the Declaration and Testimony of 1806 should speak out as it did on the matter of ecclesiastical separation; and this same course has been pursued by both branches of the R.P. since its division in 1833. Even the "New Light," with its greater tendencies toward ecumenism, has stood firm on church purity. In 1905 the 82nd General Synod voted against merger with the Northern Presbyterians; R.P.'s explained: "The plan of union with the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., was opposed on the ground that the U.S.A. Church was becoming more and more contaminated with

modernistic teachings.”<sup>22</sup> Again in 1931 the 108th Synod addressed itself directly to this modernist controversy, saying,

What is the remedy? Come out from among them and be separate. . . . Conversation from one side to the other is impossible. . . . Ultimately there are only two classes, the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares. . . . Our duty is to continue in the struggle, and . . . they who are faithful to the end shall be saved.<sup>23</sup>

In 1965 came union with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, whose position on separation is summarized in the Harvey Cedars Resolution:

We hold that it is a Christian’s duty to separate himself from all cooperation in religious activities with those who deny the full authority and dependability of the word of God, and that no consideration of expedience could ever warrant such cooperation.<sup>24</sup>

The plan of union itself included this caution:

There is widespread apostasy and unbelief in church organizations today, and we are not to be partakers with unbelievers in their religious activities. . . . We are to take every precaution to preserve an uncompromising stand with the Lord and His infallible Word, yet all the while dealing with others in grace and love.<sup>25</sup>

And the present day denominational Directory of Worship (XVIII:1) asserts:

Every true and faithful follower of our Lord ought [not only] to take a definite stand against apostasy of the day [but also] to admonish and reprove all movements and persons who compromise with those . . . who disregard the teachings of our Confession of Faith.

A number of practical applications of this doctrine of ecclesiastical separation can then be worked out through reference to those Biblical passages on “legitimate ministry” that have been cited above in Part II, on the Marks of the True Church. From Hebrews 13:17, it seems clear that Reformed Presbyterians cannot tolerate influences within their ranks that would “destroy the good conscience of the ruling elders, to carry out their responsibility to give joyous account to God of the sheep of the flock.”<sup>26</sup> This prohibits such things as joint evangelistic meetings,<sup>27</sup> the distribution of literature, community teacher training schools, or any other programs that would make the R.P. testimony less clear or that would raise problems among the congregations for which our presbyters are responsible. From Titus 1:9, it seems clear that Reformed Presbyterians cannot participate in any outside ecclesiastical organization

whose controlling board or denomination is not attempting to maintain confessional purity by “holding fast the faithful word . . . in sound doctrine.” An invitation to take one’s stand to witness for Christ the King is one thing; fine! But to join in a series of stands, with unbelievers, is another; beware! The covenanting elder

probably could not accept the latter invitation since he would either be giving his hand of blessing to the anti-Biblical position of the denomination (cf. II John 10-11) . . . or be forced to go into the situation with apparent approval of the situation and then be accused of “fifth column” activities if he expressed his conscience clearly.<sup>28</sup>

The fact that the denomination, or council of denominations in question, now has an officially sound constitution (as, for example, in the current North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council) is thus only part of the matter; the primary issue is whether in actual practice the denominations involved are actively striving to keep their elders sound in the faith.<sup>29</sup> This is the element of discipline that marks off the true church. Furthermore, the moment acceptance as a fellow presbyter is granted to a man who fails to meet the Biblical qualifications for the eldership, such acceptance amounts to one’s saying that the Biblical standards are invalid. We *are* to have a deep love for that man, we must pray earnestly for him; but Scripture insists, “Do not be found together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness?” (2 Cor. 6:14)—and lawlessness is just another way of saying lack of discipline.

All this leads into a further question: But should we be found together with believers who, in turn, are found together with unbelievers? That is, what about “second degree” separation? For example, the Dutch Gereformeerde Kerken shares in a sound Calvinistic tradition; but it has taken up membership in the non-Biblical World Council of Churches: so can orthodox Reformed denominations maintain fraternal relations with the Kerken? The Harvey Cedars Resolution states: “We hold that it is a sphere of expedience, that is, one in which no man’s conscience may be bound by other men.” In other words, fraternal relations could be had with the Gereformeerde churches. Yet the Resolution goes on to counsel a very “careful consideration;”<sup>30</sup> and, in this case at least, “Where there’s smoke there’s fire”: that this Dutch body has joined the World Council is merely symptomatic of the sad truth that it is no longer exercising discipline over some of its heterodox ministers and has turned a deaf ear to the true churches that have suggested that it should.<sup>31</sup> It simply no longer has the marks of a pure church. This is why the R.P.C., E.S., has declined membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, of which this Dutch church is a constituent part. For we would, in a

sense, be "baptizing," be recognizing as legitimate, those who are not. Yet the R.P.C., E.S., does not carry its decision into the area of second degree separation: it maintains full fellowship with denominations that have joined the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and even has merger plans with one of them, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church—though the O.P.C. has served notice to the Ecumenical Synod that it must deal with the Dutch situation, or the O.P.C. must consider its participation in the Synod.<sup>32</sup> As the Harvey Cedars Resolution concludes:

Regarding [the Biblically unsound] . . . we should seek by every possible means to win them to Christ; regarding [the unseparated] . . . we urge that they be dealt with in a spirit of brotherly love, seeking by every possible means to win them to the Scriptural position of separation rather than to drive them from us, and yet not violating our conscience.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, there are some equally practical applications that can also be worked out for the doctrine of ecclesiastical union, when the marks of the true church *are* present—we must be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). The present clerk of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Rev. A. Sinclair Horne, has recently called attention to the overall goal of unity in the faith, which was had in view by the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, when it affirmed:

We shall endeavor the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government . . . according to the word of God and the example of the best reformed churches . . . that we and our posterity after us may, as brethren, live in faith and love.

Horne then went on to quote the plea of the covenanting hero, Rev. James Renwick, "When shall those be agreed on earth who are agreed in heaven!"<sup>34</sup> The very statement of our 1806 Testimony, about one's duty to separate from a church whose administration is corrupt, is preceded by this word of positive affirmation:

The Scriptures direct, for the more convenient edification of believers, distinct congregations and distinct judicatories, all connected under [Christ] Himself; but it is both the sin and the loss of professed Christians, to establish distinctions which destroy the unity of the church (XXI:3);

and it is followed by this: "It is sinful to . . . maintain schisms destructive of the unity of the Christian church" (2nd error condemned). God give us the grace to recognize, to warn, and to win the errant and to recognize, to inform, and to unite those who minister as brother-elders in the true church.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For a summary of this and other distinguishing features, such as the doctrines of Biblical inerrancy, theocratic society, regulated worship, and Christ's eschatological kingship, see the writer's booklet, **What is a Reformed Presbyterian?** (Lookout Mountain, Tenn.: Mandate, 1974).

<sup>2</sup>Reformation Principles Exhibited, Chap. XXI, Sect. 5.

<sup>3</sup>See Payne, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-9; cf. **Bulletin of Evangelical Theological Society**, Vol. 10 (1967), pp. 3-14, or **Theology of the Older Testament** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), pp. 505-519.

<sup>4</sup>Reformation Principles Exhibited, XXIII:1, 3.

<sup>5</sup>The Expositor's Greek Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprinted), Vol. IV, p. 188.

<sup>6</sup>Queries #1, 2, and 8, **Extracts from the Minutes of the Synod of the R.P.C.**, Vol. I, 1809-1828, pp. 219-220.

<sup>7</sup>Query #1, **The Constitution of the R.P.C. of N.A.** (Pittsburgh: Synod of the R.P.C., 1970), p. 335.

<sup>8</sup>Question #1, **Form of Government**, V:3. Earlier, however, the New Light (R.P.C. in N.A.) had ended the vow with the words, ". . . to be the word of God," and had deleted the entire phrase, "the only rule of faith and manners," thus bringing the elders' vow into accord with the simpler "Terms of Ecclesiastical Communion," **Reformation Principles Exhibited**, 1871, Declaration and Testimony, pp. 137, 135. The Old Light, interestingly, did just the opposite, adding the "only rule" phrase to the Terms of Communion (**Constitution**, p. 334). The whole matter of terms of communion—the question of the requirements, not for the eldership, but for general church membership—is now under review by the R.P.C. of N.A.; and the 1806 Testimony does exhibit ambiguities at this point: "The qualifications for church-membership necessary in adults, are, that they knowingly profess a belief in the doctrines of Christ" Chap. XXII: Sec. 2). But, more strictly, "Terms of Christian communion should . . . reject nothing for which the Church hath faithfully contended" (Chap. XXII: Sec. 4).

<sup>9</sup>Question #2, **Form of Government**, Chap. V., Sec. 3, cf. **Reformation Principles Exhibited**, 1871 (New Light), Query #2, ". . . is obliged by solemn covenant engagements."

<sup>10</sup>Covenanter Witness, Vol. 90 (May 22, 1974), p. 4.

<sup>11</sup>Reformation Principles Exhibited, Chap. XXI: Sec. 7.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. the previous section (Chap. XXI: Sec. 6) in **Reformation Principles Exhibited**, "There may be associations of men called churches, which are founded upon Antichristian principles. . . . Such are not to be considered as branches of the true Christian church."

<sup>13</sup>Cf. the inclusion within the pre-1833 ordination query #8, the vow "to watch faithfully over the members of this church . . . judging faithfully over the house of God."

<sup>14</sup>Assuming the Isaianic authenticity of Isa. 40-66; cf. the seemingly contemporaneous reference to 8th century Assyrian oppression in 52:4 and the Assyrian deportations that involved Babylon in 2 Kings 17:24, 2 Chron. 33:11. For further discussion, see the writer's "Eighth Century Israelitish Background of Isaiah 40-66," **Westminster Theological Journal**, Vol. 29, No. 2 (May, 1967); Vol. 30, No. 1 (Nov., 1967); Vol. 30, No. 2 (May, 1968).

<sup>15</sup>Chap. XXI: 4th error condemned.

<sup>16</sup>See the discussion in Payne, **What Is a Reformed Presbyterian?**, p. 15, and **Theology of the Old Testament**, pp. 432-433.

<sup>17</sup>Probably to be dated A.D. 30-33—J. B. Payne, **Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy** (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 388-389—and later reflected in the 3½-year period described in Rev. 12:6,14, during which "the woman [Israel] was nourished."

<sup>18</sup>A. Sinclair Horne, **Torchbearers of the Truth** (Edinburgh: The Scottish Reformation Society, 1969), p. 10.

<sup>19</sup>John C. Johnston, **Treasury of the Scottish Covenant** (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliott, 1887), pp. 140-141. Matthew Hutchison explains, "The original purpose was, to stand apart for the time from the corrupt part of the Church from which they still claimed to form a constituent portion, and to wait till in the providence of God, the way should be opened up by the removal of corruption, for a coalescing of the partially sundered sections. They did not dream of forming a separate and independent church in the land—that would have seemed to them destructive of the unity of the Church and liable to the charge of schism." Not until 1743, and the constitution of the Reformed Presbytery did they "take up a more decided position of separation and stand before the world as a regularly constituted ecclesiastical body,"

**The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland: its Origin and History, 1680-1876**, with an Appendix (Paisley, Scotland: J. and R. Parlane, 1893), pp. 187-188.

<sup>22</sup>Robert Waldo Chesnut, **A Historical Sketch of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod** (Duaneburg, N.Y.: S.P. Printing and Publishing 1945), p. 34.

<sup>23</sup>**Minutes**, p. 173.

<sup>24</sup>Incorporated as Part I, B, with most of the other quotations just given, in "The Report of the Study Committee on Biblical Bounds and Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Separation," included in the **Minutes of the 173rd General Synod, R.P.C., E.S., 1975**.

<sup>25</sup>**Ibid.**, Part I, Sec. C.

<sup>26</sup>**Ibid.**, Part IV, Sec. B,4.

<sup>27</sup>**Ibid.**, Part IV, Sec. A,4(c): "The elders might be seriously curtailing their responsibility to guard the sheep from wolves by supporting a program which proposed sending new-born babes in Christ into churches that deny that Jesus is God in the flesh (cf. Acts 20:28 and Acts 20:30)."

<sup>28</sup>**Ibid.**, Part V, Sec. A,7.

<sup>29</sup>Editor John Vander Ploeg, for example, reports in **The Outlook**, Vol. 25:4 (Apr., 1975), p. 2: "This is not a day of stern . . . discipline but rather one of . . . permissiveness. . . . Classis Grand Rapids East, the largest classis in the Christian Reformed Church with a total membership of about 16,000 . . . in 197 . . . [had] not one excommunication. In 1974, again not one."

<sup>30</sup>See the R.P.C., E.S., 1975 **Minutes**, "Separation Report," Part I, Sec. B.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. the 1973 action of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in terminating its "sister-relationship with the G.K. on the ground of serious doctrinal deviations that are tolerated in that church and on the ground that it is not possible to exercise the full ecclesiastical discipline," **Minutes of the 40th General Assembly of the O.P.C.**, pp. 144, 146.

<sup>32</sup>**Of the 41st** (1974), p. 167.

<sup>33</sup>"Separation Report," *loc. cit.*

<sup>34</sup>**The Bulwark**, (March-April, 1975).

## ***Studies in the Epistle to the Romans***

### LESSON 53

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

##### **E. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Total, for a Remnant shall be Saved. 11:1-10, Cont.**

Verses 9 and 10 are quoted from Psalm 69:22, 23, a prophecy of Christ's sufferings and of the judgments which shall be visited upon His enemies. We should note that this is one of the so-called imprecatory Psalms which some people say is savage, vengeful and unfit for Christian devotional use. Yet it is plainly a prophecy of Jesus Christ, and is referred to as such in the New Testament; note Psalm 69:9, "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (compare John 2:13-17), and Psalm 69:21, "they gave me vinegar to drink" (compare John 19:28-30).

Paul cites Psalm 69:22, 23 as an Old Testament statement of the divine judgments that would surely fall on the unbelieving, apostate nation of the Jews. "The Judgments here denounced are expressed in figurative language. The sense is, their blessings shall become a curse; blindness and weakness, hardness of heart and misery shall come upon them. This last idea is forcibly expressed by a reference to the dimness of vision, and decrepitude of old age; as the vigor and activity of youth are the common figure for the expressing the results of God's favor." (Charles Hodge.

What Psalm 69 prays for, actually happened to the Jews in Paul's day and since his day. Thus what Paul has been stating about God's rejection of the Jews is nothing new, for it was already predicted in the Old Testament.

##### **F. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of Them to Christ. 11:11-36.**

We now come to a very difficult problem in the interpretation of the Epistle to the Romans, namely, does 11:11-36 predict a future conversion of the Jews (many, most or all of them) to Christ? On a superficial reading of the chapter this may seem an easy question to answer with "Yes," but the matter is not so simple as that. Some of the most careful, learned and devoted Bible scholars have come to divergent conclusions concerning this question. We shall consider this problem further in the following lessons. At the outset we should realize that we are entering a portion of the Epistle concerning which Bible scholars differ, so that we must recognize the debatable character of the matter, and proceed very cautiously, avoiding positive assertions except where they can be plainly supported by valid proof.

For those who wish to undertake a more thorough study of the questions involved, we shall cite here some publications that are well worth careful reading:

**Israel and the Bible**, by William Hendriksen. Paperback at \$1.50 from Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. Includes careful study of Rom. 11:26. The author holds that "all Israel shall be saved" refers to the salvation of elect Jews throughout the ages, and that "all Israel" is identical with the "remnant" mentioned in 11:5. See the booklet for the author's arguments.

**Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans**, by Charles Hodge. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49502, pp. 458. \$5.50. Hodge concludes that "There is to be a future and general conversion of the Jews to Christ, and thus all Israel shall be saved" (pp. 11, 12 and 360-382).

**Israel Today: Fulfilment of Prophecy?** by Louid DeCaro. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 817, Philipsburg, N.J. 08865. 1976, pp. 241, \$4.50. The author holds that Israel today, being in unbelief, is not a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. He sees promise in Scripture of spiritual revival and salvation of "remnant of Israel." The salvation promised to Israel is not political nor territorial but spiritual, and is the hope of those in Israel who turn to Christ in repentance and faith. This book is highly relevant to the present conflict in the Near East, and gives Scriptural guidelines for considering history in the making there today.

**The Seed of Abraham**, by Albertus Pieters. This book of 161 pages was published in 1950 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., and is now out of print. Its subtitle is "A Biblical study of Israel, the Church, and the Jew." See review in "Blue Banner Faith and Life," 1951, pp. 156, 157. On the problem of Rom. 11:11-36, Dr. Pieters says: "St. Paul knows of no territorial restoration of his people in time to come, and takes no interest in it. He does speak, in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, of a spiritual restoration; but it is not clear in what form he expects it, whether after the Gentiles have been gathered in or parallel to it. He says that 'All Israel shall be saved,' from which it is not unnaturally concluded by some that eventually there will be a conversion, not of scattered individuals only, but of the group as a whole, so that there will no longer be in the world a body of Jews, standing in opposition to the gospel, as there is now and has been ever since his day. This may be the

true interpretation, but a doubt is cast upon it by the frequent insistence of St. Paul on the 'remnant' idea, according to which the promises of God are fulfilled to only a portion of the people, and yet therein are truly and adequately fulfilled. If this conception must apply here, 'all Israel' will mean the elect among Israel, and this agrees with his assurance that God did not cast off his people 'whom he foreknew' " (p. 147).

**The Bible and Things to Come**, by David Freeman. This 139 page book was published in 1939 by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, and is now out of print. A chapter entitled "The Jews, their Conversion and their Land" (pp. 58-77) is very helpful and illuminating. Mr. Freeman says: "There is unmistakable teaching to the effect that God will again visit them (the Jews) with His grace in their racial capacity" (p. 67), and "The Jews as a nation will be saved but only in the way in which they are converted now. Some day, they, with others from all nations and kindreds, shall acknowledge with true faith their Messiah and Saviour" (p. 77). In the judgment of the present writer, Mr. Freeman presents some arguments which have not been fully answered by those who hold the contrary view.

Among those Bible scholars who have held that Rom. 11:11-36 predicts a future conversion to Christ of the Jews collectively are Henry Alford, Charles Hodge, W. G. T. Shedd, Geerhardus Vos. Among those who have held the contrary view are Phillip Mauro, Theodore Graebner, William Hendriksen. Enough has been said to indicate that Rom 11:11-36 is a very difficult passage. Those who claim that it is simple and its meaning obvious only betray their own ignorance of the problems involved and the literature which has been written on the subject.

The present series of lessons will adhere to the view that a future collective conversion of the Jews to Christ is predicted in Rom. 11:11-36. It must always be borne in mind, however, that the subject is debatable and that the last word on it has not been written.

## LESSON 54

### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

**F. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

"I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy" (11:11). We should note that chapter 11 opens with the same form of expression: "I say then . . . God forbid." In verses 1-10 Paul has raised and answered the question, "Hath God cast away his

#### Questions:

1. From what Psalm is Rom. 11:9, 10 quoted?
2. What is the character of this Psalm?
3. What objections do some people raise against the so-called imprecatory Psalms?
4. How can these objections be answered?
5. What is the meaning of the statements of 11:9, 10?
6. What is the relevance of 11:9, 10 to the apostle's argument?
7. What difficult question is involved in the interpretation of Rom. 11:11-36?
8. How might this question be answered on the basis of a superficial reading of the passage?
9. Why is caution necessary in the interpretation of this passage?
10. What does Prof. William Hendriksen hold concerning the conversion of the Jews to Christ?
11. What is the view of Charles Hodge on the conversion of the Jews?
12. What does Dr. Albertus Pieters say is "not clear" in Rom. 11:11-36?
13. What view of the conversion of the Jews is maintained by Mr. David Freeman?
14. Name some Bible scholars that have held the view that Scripture predicts a future collective conversion of the Jews to Christ.
15. Name some Bible scholars that have held the contrary view.

people?" He has answered it by explaining that the rejection of the Jews is not total, because there is "a remnant according to the election of grace" that shall be saved. Having disposed of this question, he proceeds to another question, "Have they stumbled that they should fall?", which he answers in the verses that follow.

The gist of Paul's answer to this second question is that God's rejection of the Jews, as it was not total, is also not final. There is a contrast or comparison be

tween the words “stumble” and “fall.” They have stumbled, yes, but was this in order that they might fall? Was it in order that they might be permanently and irrevocably rejected? Clearly the word “stumble” implies a temporary disaster, while “fall” implies a permanent one. So the apostle teaches that the rejection of the Jews was not permanent and irrevocable, for he immediately answers his own question with an emphatic negative: “God forbid.” God’s intention in permitting the apostasy of the Jews was not that their rejection should be permanent and final, but rather (1) in order to bring about the salvation of the Gentiles, and this (2) to provoke the Jews finally to jealousy.

We might wonder just how the unbelief of the Jews could facilitate the salvation of the Gentiles. That it did have that effect is the teaching of Scripture (Acts 13:46; 28:28 compared with Isaiah 49:4-6). “The Jews, even those who were professors of Christianity, were, in the first place, very slow to allow the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles; and in the second, they appear almost uniformly to have desired to clog the gospel with the ceremonial observances of the law. This was one of the greatest hindrances to the progress of the cause of Christ during the apostolic age, and would, in all human probability, have been a thousand-fold greater, had the Jews, as a nation, embraced the Christian faith. On both these accounts, the rejection of the Jews was incidentally a means of facilitating the progress of the gospel. Besides this, the punishment which befell them on account of their unbelief, involving the destruction of their nation and power, of course prevented their being able to forbid the general preaching of the gospel, which they earnestly desired to do” (Charles Hodge). “By this stumble of the Jews out of their national place in God’s favour, and the admission of the Gentiles into it, the very people thus excluded are to be stirred up to set themselves in the end effectually to regain, as a nation, that pre-eminence from which they are now degraded” (Henry Alford).

“For to provoke them to jealousy.” This means, of course, that the salvation of the Gentiles is intended to provoke the unbelieving Jews to jealousy. God’s rejection of the Jews was not intended as a permanent and final casting away, but to bring about the more rapid evangelization of the Gentiles, and then ultimately, by the reaction of this upon the Jews, to lead to the conversion of the latter to their Messiah. The expression “to provoke them to jealousy” of course does not mean a sinful kind of jealousy. The apostle only means that the salvation of the Gentiles was intended to stir the Jews up to seek salvation for themselves through the Gospel.

“Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?” (11:12). If the rejection of the Jews has brought so much benefit to

the world, then certainly even more benefit can be expected from their conversion to Christ. The word “fulness” (Greek, **pleroma**) here is in contrast to the “diminishing” in the first part of the verse. This word **pleroma** is used with various meanings in the New Testament. It may mean “fulness” (John 1:16; Eph. 1:23; or it may mean a supplementary portion which is needed to make something complete (Matt. 9:16, where **pleroma** is translated “that which is put in to fill it up”). Here in Rom. 11:12 we take it in the common sense of “fulness,” as meaning the “full restoration” or “blessedness” (Hodge), or “replenishment” (Alford) of the Jews.

#### Questions:

1. How does Rom. 11:11 resemble 11:1?
2. What is the meaning of the expression “God forbid”?
3. What question is raised by Paul in 11:11?
4. What is the gist of the apostle’s answer to this question?
5. What two purposes did God have in permitting the apostasy of the Jews?
6. What is the difference in meaning between “stumble” and “fall” in verse 11?
7. Give some Bible references which show that the unbelief of the Jews facilitated the salvation of the Gentiles.
8. What was the attitude of many early Jewish Christians toward the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles?
9. What hindrance did many Jewish Christians tend to place upon Gentile converts?
10. If the Jews as a nation had accepted Christianity during the apostolic age, what would have been the probable effect upon the Gentile world?
11. What is the meaning of the phrase “For to provoke them to jealousy”?
12. What meanings does the Greek word **pleroma** have in the New Testament?
13. What is the meaning of this Greek word in 11:12?
14. What is Paul’s argument in verse 12?

## LESSON 55

## THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

**F. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them" (11:13, 14). These two verses are of the nature of a parenthesis in the apostle's argument. He pauses in his argument about the fall and restoration of the Jews to say a word about his own sentiments and conduct with reference to this great subject. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles. Yet we know from his history as recorded in Acts that it was his fixed practice to preach the Gospel to the Jews first in the places he visited. Here he speaks to the Gentiles, in the hope that his references to them might stir up some of his Jewish kinsmen to seek salvation and find it in Christ. It is clear that the salvation of the Gentiles and that of the Jews were closely inter-related. Every Christian should be deeply concerned about both. There was no real ground for ill-feeling on the part of either Jew or Gentile. Paul longed for the salvation of the Gentiles, not only for their own sake, but because this would prepare the way for the conversion of the Jews to Christ.

"And might save some of them." This does not imply, of course, that Paul, or any other preacher of the Gospel, could actually save sinners. The salvation of sinners is wholly a work of God, though it is a work in which God at some points makes use of human instruments. In our own day some preachers and evangelists speak very unguardedly about how many people they have "saved" or "converted." The impression is easily given that the evangelist's efforts were sufficient to accomplish the salvation of his hearers. As Paul wrote, there was no such implication. The clear meaning is simply: "That I might be the instrument in God's hand toward the salvation of some of them."

"For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (11:15). This verse is in part parallel to 11:12. The first part of the verse presents no special difficulty. "The casting away" plainly means God's rejection of the Jews; "the reconciling of the world" means the salvation of the Gentiles; "the receiving of them" means the future conversion of the Jews to Christ. But the last phrase presents a real difficulty. What does Paul mean by the expression "life from the dead"? There are two opinions as to the meaning of this expression in 11:15.

One view is that the expression "life from the

dead" is a figure of speech meaning "the transition from a state of depression and misery to one of prosperity." This is the view held by Charles Hodge. According to this view, the conversion of the Jews to Christ will be such a great joy and blessing that it can figuratively be spoken of as "life from the dead." The Jews in their unbelief, without Christ, are spiritually dead. When converted to Christ, they will be spiritually alive.

The other view of this expression, "life from the dead," is that the bodily resurrection of the dead at Christ's Second Coming is referred to. According to this view, the idea is that the Jews are to be converted to Christ shortly before His Second Coming. Soon after their conversion, therefore, the resurrection of the dead will follow. Therefore their conversion can be spoken of as "life from the dead." This view is taken by David Freeman in his book **The Bible and Things to Come**. He says: "What is meant by 'life from the dead' here? Does Paul mean that the conversion of the Jews will bring with it the resurrection of the dead? If so, Israel's acceptance of the Messiah will bring the coming of Christ from heaven. This is exactly what the apostle means, because he relates the 'life from the dead' to the 'reconciling of the world.' The former is the climax of the latter. 'Life from the dead' must be something far higher and greater than the 'reconciling of the world.' What is that which can be greater than the reconciliation now experienced by the world, but the resurrection of life? Paul, in one sweep, views the blessedness of the redemption purchased by Christ from its beginning to its glorious consummation" (pp. 67, 68). In a footnote Freeman adds: "The phrase, *zoe ek nekron*, 'life from the dead,' cannot be toned down to a metaphorical meaning, implying a mere spiritual revival. The context will not permit this interpretation. The opposite of 'casting away' requires a condition that is more glorious than 'the receiving of them.' The beginning of the closing act of God's dealing with man only can be meant" (p. 68).

In favor of the view held by Hodge is the consideration that nowhere else in the New Testament is the resurrection referred to as "life from the dead" (*zoe ek nekron*). Elsewhere the term for the resurrection is "the rising of the dead" (*he anastasis ton nekron*). Still we must admit that Paul could use the phrase "life from the dead" as a description of the event commonly referred to as "the rising of the dead." In the judgment of the writer, the interpretation given by Freeman is correct, and Rom. 11:15 means that the conversion of the Jews to Christ will bring the return of Christ from heaven and the resurrection of the dead.

**Questions:**

1. What is the place of 11:13, 14 in Paul's argument?
2. To whom did Paul regularly preach the Gospel first when he entered a new field of work?
3. What was Paul's motive in speaking to the Gentiles in 11:13, 14?
4. Does Paul's statement "If by any means I . . . might save some of them" imply that salvation is a work of man?
5. To what previous verse is 11:15 partly parallel?
6. What phrase in 11:15 is difficult to interpret?

7. What is the view held by Charles Hodge as to the meaning of the phrase "life from the dead"?

8. What other view is held as to the meaning of "life from the dead"?

9. What argument can be given to show that "life from the dead" must mean something more than spiritual revival?

10. What difficulty is involved in understanding the phrase "life from the dead" as referring to the bodily resurrection of the dead?

11. If "life from the dead" means the resurrection, what great event will follow the conversion of the Jews to Christ?

**LESSON 56****THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.****F. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

"For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches" (11:16). We have here two striking figures of speech, both of which teach the same truth. The "firstfruit" is that portion of the kneaded dough which was offered as a heave-offering to the Lord (Num. 15:21, "Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the Lord a heave offering in your generations"). This offering of the first of the dough sanctified the rest which was used by the people for food. The "root" is the portion of a tree from which the growth and life springs up. The root nourishes and sustains the branches. First there must be the root, before there can be any branches. We may therefore take "root" here as meaning "origin" or "original portion." Obviously "root" is parallel and equivalent to "firstfruit." The argument is that the whole lump partakes of the character of the firstfruit, and the branches partake of the character of the root.

We must now consider what is meant by the "firstfruit" and "root." Some have held that the firstfruit and root mean the first Jews converted to Christianity (at Pentecost and soon after) who became the root of the Christian Church. A much more plausible view is that the firstfruit and root are Abraham, or perhaps the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is clear that this view fits the context much better than the other one. Paul is arguing that the Jews shall be converted to Christ. He proves that they are in a certain sense "holy" because of their relation to their ancestor, Abraham, who was holy.

Next we must consider what is meant by the "lump" and the "branches." The only meaning that is consistent with the apostle's argument in this passage is that the "lump" and "branches" mean the Jews collectively, the Jews as a people. Paul's argument is, then, that as the patriarch Abraham was holy, so the Jews collectively are holy. The "lump" partakes of the holy character of the "firstfruit," the "branches" partake of the holy character of the "root."

We must take care to avoid a wrong understanding of the term "holy" in this connection. This is not the holiness of personal character produced by sanctification, but a technical holiness of position or standing. The terms "holy" and "holiness" are used in the Bible in more than one sense. There is the personal holiness of sanctification (Follow after . . . holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," (Heb. 12:14). There is also the external holiness of position or relationship; for example, Jerusalem is called "the holy city" (Matt. 4:5); "every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 14:21); note also Matt. 7:6; 24:15; 27:53; 1 Cor. 7:14; Luke 2:23. These passages, or at least some of them, use the terms "holy" and "holiness" in the technical sense of "consecrated to the service of God," "set aside for the service of God," "singled out as specially belonging to God." Paul says in 1 Cor. 7:14, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife . . ."; clearly this cannot be the sanctification or holiness of heart and life which follows the new birth, for it is an unbeliever that is said to be "sanctified." It must be a technical holiness of position or relationship.

Similarly in Rom. 11:1, when Paul says that the “lump” and “branches” are holy, he does not mean that the Jews collectively possessed that holiness of heart and life which is produced by the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying work in believers. Clearly the Jews collectively considered are unbelievers and therefore they are not sanctified, or holy, in that sense. Yet there is a true sense in which they can be called “holy.” They can be called “holy” in the technical sense by reason of their connection with their “root” and “firstfruit,” the holy Abraham. Abraham was called away from his home and country, that he might be in a special relation to God. That was a kind of holiness. The Jews of Paul’s day and of our own are the branches of which Abraham was the root. Therefore they are in a certain technical sense holy.

When God called Abraham and separated him from the world that he should be in a special relation to God, this did not concern Abraham alone. God also had Abraham’s posterity in mind. “God, in selecting the Hebrew patriarchs, and setting them apart for his service, had reference to their descendants, as well as to themselves; and designed that the Jews, as a people, should, to the latest generations, be specially devoted to himself. They stand now, therefore, and ever have stood, in a relation to God which no other nation has ever sustained; and, in consequence of this relation, their restoration to the divine favor is an event in itself probable, and one, which Paul afterwards teaches (ver. 25), God has determined to accomplish” (Charles Hodge).

#### Questions:

1. What two figures are used in 11:16 to teach the same truth?
2. What Old Testament ordinance does the term “firstfruit” refer to?
3. What is meant by the “firstfruit” and “root”?
4. What is meant by the “lump” and “branches”?
5. What two kinds of holiness are spoken of in the Bible?
6. What kind of holiness is referred to in Rom. 11:16?
7. What does Paul’s argument prove concerning the Jews as a body of people?
8. Why can the word “holy” in 11:16 not mean the holiness of heart produced by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit?
9. Does Paul’s calling the Jews of his day “holy” imply that they were saved from sin unto eternal life?
10. What great future event is probable by reason of the “holy” position of the Jewish people?

### LESSON 57

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

**F. God’s Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

We come now to Paul’s figure of the olive tree, which is one of the most important passages in the whole Bible for testing the system of Bible interpretation called Dispensationalism, which has been popularized by the writings of John Nelson Darby, by the Scofield Reference Bible and by the Pilgrim Edition of the Holy Bible. In the course of the study of this passage, we shall note its bearing on the teachings of Dispensationalism.

“And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee” (11:17, 18).

Here Paul seeks to guard against the Gentile Christians harboring a wrong attitude toward the Jews. In

view of the teachings of the apostle up to this point, it would be easy for his Gentile Christian readers to harbor a self-important, triumphant feeling over against the Jews. God has rejected the Jews and called the Gentiles to salvation! But this is no ground for any spiritual pride or carnal glorying; on the contrary, this affords reason for humility, thankfulness to God, and spiritual watchfulness. The apostle’s statements beginning with verse 17 are intended to guard against Gentile Christians feeling boastful over against the Jews.

Paul is speaking of a good or cultivated olive tree. Some of the branches were broken off, and branches from a worthless olive tree were grafted into the tree in their place. (The King James version uses the old form of the verb, “graffed,” but in this lesson we shall use the modern form, “grafted,” except when quoting from the Bible). Thus there is a good olive tree with its original branches, and a wild olive tree with its branches. Some branches are cut off from the good olive tree and cast aside; some branches are cut from the wild olive tree and grafted into the good

olive tree.

We must consider, first of all, what is meant by the good olive tree. It cannot represent the Jewish nation as such, because the apostle teaches that by unbelief some branches were broken off from the tree (verse 20) and that by faith some (Gentile) branches were grafted in. Obviously those Jews who refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah were not broken off from the Jewish nation as such, nor were Gentiles who accepted Christ incorporated into the Jewish nation as such. What, then, is the good olive tree? It must represent the true Israel, the body of people truly in covenant with God, to whom the gracious promises of God were addressed and to whom these promises really belonged—in a word, the Israel that really had a right to the name “Israel.”

There is only one good olive tree. Branches may be broken off and others grafted in but the one good olive tree lives on. There is just one covenant people of God on earth and it is continuous through both the Old Testament and the New Testament. This covenant people of God, represented by the one good olive tree, is the Old Testament Church and it is the New Testament Israel. The figure of the good olive tree proves the essential unity and continuity of the New Testament Church with the Old Testament Israel. Modern Dispensationalism draws a sharp distinction between Israel and the Church, insisting that “Israel is Israel and the Church is the Church”—that is, denying the essential unity and continuity of the New Testament Church with the Old Testament Israel—but Dispensationalism cannot do justice to Paul’s figure of the olive tree. As a matter of fact this passage has proved rather embarrassing to Dispensationalist interpreters.

Dispensationalism teaches that the promises of the Old Testament to Israel, Zion, Jerusalem, Judah, etc., do not belong to the New Testament Church but strictly to the Jews in a period still future. To apply these promises to the Christian Church is called “robbing Israel” by some writers. But in the light of Paul’s figure of the olive tree we must hold that the genuine Israel, to whom the promises were really addressed, is the covenanted body represented by the good olive tree which is one and the same in both dispensations. The Christian Church is therefore the true Israel to which the gracious promises of God in the Old Testament are addressed.

Remember that the good olive tree cannot be the Jewish people as such, for those Jews who rejected Jesus Christ are represented as broken off from the tree, but they certainly were not broken off from the Jewish people as such. The Jews who persecuted the apostle Paul and tried to kill him were still Jews, they were members of the Jewish people, but they were no longer branches of the good olive tree. They had been broken off by unbelief. So the good olive tree must

mean the believing, covenant-keeping people of God, not the Jewish people as such. Into this tree some wild olive branches—Gentile Christians—were grafted. They did not become members of the Jewish people but they became members of the genuine Israel, for they were incorporated into the organism of the olive tree and nourished by its life-giving sap.

The Gentiles are represented by wild olive branches. The wild olive is a worthless tree in itself. This impresses on our minds the spiritually destitute condition of the Gentile world, both of Paul’s day and of our own day. The Gentiles were far from God, sunk in sin, deeply depraved, “without hope and without God in the world.” But they were incorporated into the good olive tree and became new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Surely, then, there was no ground for boasting on the part of any Gentile Christians. They must remember that they did not bear the root, but the root bore them. They had been aliens, wild olive branches, but were incorporated into the good olive tree. All spiritual good that they might possess came to them through the good olive tree. They were only recipients, not contributors, of spiritual good. Human pride and vanity might lead them to boast themselves over against the Jews but Paul warns against this spirit, “Boast not against the branches”—that is against the Jewish branches that were broken off.

#### Questions:

1. What is the special importance of Paul’s figure of the olive tree at the present day?
2. What two editions of the Bible have specifically promoted the teachings of Modern Dispensationalism?
3. What is Paul’s purpose in setting forth the figure of the olive tree?
4. What is signified by the good olive tree?
5. Why can the good olive tree not signify the Jewish nation as such?
6. What truth is taught by the fact that there is only one good olive tree in Paul’s figure?
7. What truths concerning the relation between Israel and the Church are denied by Dispensationalism?
8. To what practice do some interpreters apply the term “robbing Israel”?
9. What was the relation of the Jews who tried to

kill Paul to the good olive tree? To the Jewish nation as such?

10. What truth about the Gentiles is brought out

by Paul's representing them as wild olive branches?

11. What was the source of all spiritual good possessed by Gentile Christians?

## LESSON 58

### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

**F. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

"Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee" (11:19-21).

Here Paul guards against another possible kind of boasting on the part of Gentile Christians. Even though the Gentile Christians might have to admit that all their spiritual good had come to them through their connection with the good olive tree, yet they might be inclined to boast that God had cut off Jewish branches in order that the Gentile branches might be grafted in. They might get the idea that it was because of some goodness or worthiness of their own that God made room for them in the olive tree.

But the truth was that the Jewish branches were broken off because of their unbelief, not because of any fine qualities of the Gentiles. They rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah, so they were broken off. And the Gentile Christians, by the grace of God, had come to believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and so they stood by faith where the Jews fell by unbelief. Here Paul teaches that the only way that anyone can retain a covenant relation to God is by faith. Those who have saving faith are in the good olive tree; those who lack saving faith are out of the good olive tree, or cut off from that tree.

The Gentile Christians, of course, might have ventured to assert that their faith was an act or work of their own, which they could claim credit for. While admitting that they did not have perfect righteousness of their own, they could conceivably claim to have faith and could claim credit for a decision of their own free will to accept Christ when others had rejected Him. But apparently the Gentile Christians of Paul's day did not make this claim, for the apostle does not undertake to answer it. The fact is that the errors of Pelagianism and Arminianism were invented at a later date; they did not exist in Christian circles in the time of the apostles. Apparently it never occurred to the Gentile Christians of Paul's day to claim any credit for their faith. Of course, when Paul represents standing by faith as the opposite of a

ground of boasting, he has the Biblical idea of saving faith as pure receptivity of God's free mercy.

Paul earnestly warns the Gentile Christians as a class, and by implication all Christians of every time and place, to "Be not high-minded, but fear." "The Gentiles will not be secure, because Gentiles, any more than the Jews were safe, because Jews" (Charles Hodge). Paul's statement, "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee," must not be taken as contrary to the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints (eternal security of believers). It does not imply that a true believer can fall away from grace and perish. We must bear in mind that Paul is not here speaking primarily of individual believers and their salvation, but of Gentile Christians as a class, over against the Jews. His words are an earnest warning against complacency, against a merely formal religious faith, against a presumptuous taking advantage of the goodness of God. The Gentile Christians must not suppose that their connection with the church and its privileges was for ever safe just because they themselves, of that particular generation, had been grafted into the good olive tree. We see the pertinence of the apostle's warning throughout the history of the Church. North Africa was once dotted with Christian churches, where today the religion of Islam is almost universal.

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (11:22). Here Paul mentions two aspects of God's character: His goodness and His severity. In our day, religion has suffered a great deal from a one-sided emphasis upon the love of God. While the Bible says that "God is love" modern religion has held that God is love and nothing but love. The wrath of God has been objected to as an old-fashioned and harsh doctrine. But in the Bible both the love and the wrath of God are insisted on and neither is emphasized to the exclusion of the other. In God's relation to men we see both displayed, His goodness and His severity.

"There is nothing in this language inconsistent with the doctrine of the final perseverance of believers, even supposing the passage to refer to individuals; for it is very common to speak thus hypothetically, and say that an event will not come to

pass, unless the requisite means are employed, when the occurrence of the event had been rendered certain by the previous purpose and promise of God; see Acts 27:31. The foundation of all such statements is the simple truth, that He who purposes the end, purposes also the means; and he brings about the end by securing the use of the means . . . Paul is not speaking of the connection of individual believers with Christ, which he had abundantly taught in chapter 8 and elsewhere, to be indissoluble, but of the relation of communities to the church and its various privileges. There is no promise or covenant on the part of God, securing to the Gentiles the enjoyment of these blessings through all generations, any more than there was any such promise to protect the Jews from the consequences of their unbelief. The continuance of these favors depends on the conduct of each successive generation. Paul therefore says to the Gentile, that he must continue in the divine favor, 'otherwise thou also shalt be cut off' " (Charles Hodge).

#### Questions:

1. What kind of Gentile boasting is Paul warning against in 11:19-21?
2. Why were the Jewish branches broken off from the good olive tree?

3. What is the only way that a covenant relation to God can be retained?

4. What is the Biblical idea of saving faith?

5. Why can no person claim any credit for his faith?

6. How do we know that Paul's warning of 11:19-21 is not contrary to the doctrine of the final perseverance of the believer?

7. What is the relevance of 11:19-21 at the present day?

8. What two aspects of the character of God are mentioned in 11:22?

9. From what wrong tendency has present day religion suffered?

10. How does Acts 27:22-24, 31, 34 help to show that warnings against apostasy are not inconsistent with the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints?

### LESSON 59

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

**F. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

"And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again" (11:23). Just as the continued standing of the Gentiles in the church and its privileges depends on their faith, so the Jews are excluded by nothing but by their unbelief. Ceasing to have faith would exclude the Gentiles, and ceasing to be unbelievers would admit the Jews again. "For God is able to graff them in again." God's power is not limited or frustrated; the obstacle is in the Jews themselves, and if that obstacle, in the course of God's mysterious providence, is removed at a future time, there is nothing to prevent the Jews from being grafted into the good olive tree again.

"For if thou were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" (11:24). There is a contrast here between the natural growth of branches in the tree which produced them, and the artificial ("contrary to nature") practice of grafting alien branches into

the tree. The Jews were the natural growth produced by the tree. The Gentiles were in the alien branches grafted "contrary to nature" into the good tree. As a matter of fact, God has grafted the Gentile branches into the tree, though this, as "contrary to nature," might have been regarded as improbable. If the grafting in of the Gentiles actually took place, then surely it is probable that the Jews, who are "the natural branches," shall be grafted in again. The unnatural and therefore improbable has already taken place; it is therefore highly probable that something which would be according to nature will at a future time take place, namely, that the natural branches, the Jews, shall be again incorporated into the true Israel, the covenant people of God, the good olive tree. Paul calls it "their own olive tree." They were separate from it by their unbelief, but still the olive tree was where they belonged. Not that they in their unbelief had any claim to such a standing, but that in God's arrangement of things that was where they belonged.

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (11:25). The great question concerning this verse is, does it predict a future conversion of the Jews collec-

tively to Christ? Charles Hodge states that while there have been many interpretations of the verse, all of them can be reduced to two main views of the passage: (1) One interpretation holds that this verse does not predict a future general conversion of the Jews, but only teaches that their blindness is not total, so that some of them will continue to be converted as long as Gentiles are still being saved. (2) The other view holds that Paul here teaches that there is to be a general conversion of the Jews to Christ, which shall not take place until the fulness of the Gentiles shall have been brought in.

Hodge states that the first of these two views was prevalent at the time of the Protestant Reformation, and that scholars who sought to answer the extreme views of the Millenarian teachers of that day reacted to the opposite extreme and almost entirely explained away the prophetic character of the verse. He cites a statement attributed to Martin Luther, who declared that the hearts of the Jews are so extremely hard that their conversion is impossible, and added that "some invent such a madness from the Epistle to the Romans."

Hodge declares that the second view of the passage has been the one generally accepted at all periods of the Church's history except the period of the Protestant Reformation, and that in his judgment it is the correct view. In support of this, Hodge states that this view best fits the whole trend of the context; that it is clear that the Jews are to be restored in the same sense that they were rejected, that is, as a body or community, which cannot be fulfilled by the small number of Jews converted along with the Gentiles through the history of the Church; and that it is plain that Paul is speaking of a great event, as shown by his manner of introducing the statement, "I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery. . . ." If Paul was not introducing something new or especially important, why should he use such a form of words? "The gradual conversion of a few Jews is no mystery in the Scriptural sense of the word." He adds that the word "mystery" in the New Testament is not generally used in the modern sense of "mystery," that is, something which baffles our understanding, but that it means something "hidden, or unknown; whether because it is an unrevealed purpose of God; or because it is future; or because it is covered up in parables or symbols . . . ; or because it lies beyond the reach of the human mind." This last sense, of course, corresponds to the modern usage of "mystery." Paul speaks of the blindness of the Jews until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in as a mystery, because this truth can be known only by special divine revelation. Thus Paul's use of the term "mystery" in 11:25 implies that he is speaking of something more and greater than that conversion of individual Jews to Christ which was already taking place in his own day.

"Lest ye should be wise in your own conceits." This is Paul's reason for the statement which he is about to make. He warns the Gentile Christians that they should not proudly assume that God has rejected the Jews forever, for this is not the case.

"Blindness in part is happened to Israel." This statement is true in two respects. Israel's blindness is not a total but a partial blindness, for all through the centuries of the history of the Church there has been a steady conversion of some Jews to Christ, so that the blindness has not been total at any one time; and it is not total with respect to their future history as a whole, for it shall not continue permanently; there shall come a time when not only scattered individuals but the Jews as a community shall be brought to Christ. Paul is not referring to the degree of blindness. Those that were blind were completely blind. But he is referring to the fact that at no time are all Jews blind to the truth, and that the blindness of the Jews collectively shall have an end.

"Until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." This clause is differently interpreted, according to the two types of interpretation already mentioned. Some hold that it merely means that as long as Gentiles are still coming in, the Jews will continue to be partially blind, so that only a minority of them will be converted to Christ; but that nothing is implied as to any conversion of the Jews after the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. According to this view, the verse simply means that the status quo which existed in Paul's day will continue unchanged to the end of the world, after which (the fulness of the Gentiles having come in), there will follow Christ's second coming and the judgment day. This interpretation seems hardly to do justice to the way Paul introduces his statement as an important mystery.

The other interpretation of the clause is that Paul implies that after the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, the Jews' blindness will be removed and they will be converted to Christ. The Greek words translated "until" in our English Bible are *achri hou*, followed by a verb in the aorist subjunctive. The correct translation is "until"; the usage of the Greek New Testament is against the idea of the meaning being merely "as long as the conversion of the Gentiles is continuing." The following instances of *achri* ("until") may be cited: Rev. 15:8, ". . . and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled" (implying that after the seven plagues were fulfilled it was again possible to enter into the temple); Rev. 17:17, "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (implying that after the words of God have been fulfilled, the beast will no longer possess this dominion).

This second interpretation appears to be the cor-

rect one. The blindness of Israel will continue until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, after which, it is implied, their blindness will cease and they will be converted to Christ. This leaves the question of just what is meant by the fulness of the Gentiles coming in. The most probable meaning of “the fulness of the Gentiles” is the whole number of God’s elect among the Gentiles. Some scholars hold that “the fulness of the Gentiles” means Gentiles converted to Christ from every nation of the world. In any case, when God’s principal purpose concerning the salvation of the Gentiles has been accomplished, the Jews’ blindness will be removed and their conversion will follow.

It must be remembered that we are here dealing with unfulfilled prophecy, which is never completely clear until the time of fulfillment. Many questions will inevitably arise in our minds as to the exact time and manner of the fulfillment. These questions cannot be answered, and need not be answered. It is possible, of course, that the Jews will be very suddenly and quickly converted to Christ. We must remember, too, that we cannot tell exactly when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in. These matters are part of God’s secrets, which he has not revealed to us.

#### Questions:

1. Where did the obstacle lie which prevented the Jews from being grafted back into the good olive tree?
2. What is Paul’s argument in 11:24 concerning the conversion of the Jews?
3. Why does Paul call the good olive tree “their own olive tree” in 11:24?
4. What unnatural and improbable event had already taken place in Paul’s day?
5. What difficult question is involved in the interpretation of 11:25?
6. How many main types of interpretation of 11:25 are there?
7. What interpretation of 11:25 was common at the time of the Protestant Reformation?
8. What opinion concerning the conversion of the Jews was held by the Reformer Martin Luther?
9. What arguments can be given to prove that 11:25 predicts a future conversion of the Jews to Christ?
10. What is the importance of Paul’s statement in 11:25, “I would not, brethren, that he should be ignorant of this mystery. . . .”?
11. What is the Biblical meaning of the term “mystery”?
12. In what respects is Israel’s blindness partial?
13. What two views are held as to the meaning of the clause, “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in”?
14. Give some New Testament references where the word “until” implies that after a certain event happens, a change will occur.
15. What is the probable meaning of “the fulness of the Gentiles”?
16. Why can we not fully answer the questions which may arise in our minds as to the fulfillment of 11:25?

### LESSON 60

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

**F. God’s Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob (11:26). This is one of the most difficult verses in the Epistle to the Romans. The difficulty is in the first clause, “And so all Israel shall be saved.” What is meant by the expression “all Israel”? Does this mean (1) the Jews collectively; or (2) the elect of God from both Jews and Gentiles; or (3) the elect of God among the Jews

of all ages? Arguments have been put forth for each of these answers.

The first answer, that “all Israel” means the Jews collectively, is the answer given by Charles Hodge, Alford, W. G. T. Shedd, Geerhardus Vos. The second answer, that “all Israel” means the elect of God from both Jews and Gentiles—that is, the Church—is the answer given by Augustine, Calvin, Philip Mauro. The third answer, that “all Israel” means the elect of God among the Jews of all ages, is the answer given by Herman Bavinck, William Hendriksen, O. Hallesby, Louis Berkhof. The arguments for and

against each of these answers are summarized by Professor Hendriksen in his booklet **Israel and the Bible**. For himself, he concludes that the “all Israel” of verse 26 is identical with the “remnant according to the election of grace” of verse 5.

One of the arguments against the view that “all Israel” means the Jews as a people is the alleged silence of Jesus Christ on the subject of a future conversion of the Jews. One verse that is sometimes cited as evidence that Jesus foretold a conversion of the Jews is Matt. 19:28 (“And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”) This verse can be immediately dismissed as without relevance to the subject we are discussing. It speaks of something which shall take place in the kingdom of glory after the second coming of Christ; therefore it has no bearing on the question of a conversion of the Jews before His second coming.

Another verse that is sometimes cited in this connection is Luke 21:24, “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Against the idea that this speaks of a future restoration or conversion of the Jews, it is held that it only teaches that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles to the very end of the times of the Gentiles, without implying that there may or will be a change after that. This may be correct, but on the other hand if the meaning is merely “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles to the very end, until the end of the world,” it seems a peculiar way to express this idea by speaking of the times of the Gentiles being “fulfilled.” The natural reading of the verse would seem to imply that Jerusalem shall no longer be trodden down of the Gentiles after the times of the Gentiles have been fulfilled. (This is another instance of the Greek *achri hou* with a subjunctive aorist verb). However, as this verse speaks of the future of Jerusalem, and not of the conversion of the Jews to Christ specifically, we will leave it to one side as of doubtful bearing on our subject.

There is, however, one saying of Jesus which seems to have a definite bearing on the subject, namely, Matt. 23:29, “For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Needless to say, Jesus is

here speaking to the unbelieving Jews, who despised and rejected Him and who soon after this crucified Him. He tells them that they shall not see Him again till they shall say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Can this refer to the scattered conversions of individual Jews through the ages of church history? The words certainly seem to imply that a time will come when the Jews as a people shall accept Jesus as their Messiah. This saying of Jesus of course does not make it clear when and under what circumstances the Jews will say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” But as to the fact that at some time they will say it, the text seems to be clear. It seems, therefore, to prophesy a future conversion of the Jews to Christ.

#### Questions:

1. What three views have been held as to the meaning of “all Israel” in 11:26?
2. Name some Bible scholars who have held that “all Israel” means the Jewish people.
3. Name some Bible scholars who have held that “all Israel” means the whole body of the elect of God from both Jews and Gentiles.
4. Name some Bible scholars who have held that “all Israel” means the elect of God among the Jews of all ages.
5. What argument concerning the meaning of “all Israel” in 11:26 is based upon the alleged silence of Jesus Christ concerning the future conversion of the Jews?
6. Why does Matt. 19:28 not have any bearing on the question of a future conversion of the Jews to Christ?
7. What can be said about the bearing of Luke 21:24 on the question of a future conversion of the Jews?
8. What saying of Jesus seems definitely to predict a future conversion of the Jews, and where is it found?
9. What does this saying of Jesus fail to tell us about the future conversion of the Jews?

### LESSON 61

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

**F. God’s Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written,

There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (11:26). In the last lesson we canvassed the various views that have been held as to the meaning of “all Israel” in 11:26, and then we considered the argument that “all

Israel” cannot mean the Jewish people because of the alleged silence of Jesus Christ upon the subject of a future conversion of the Jews. We rejected one often cited text as irrelevant to the subject, dismissed another as doubtful, and found that a third (Matt. 23:39) seems definitely to prophesy a future conversion of the Jews to Christ.

“Israel, here, from the context, must mean the Jewish people, and **all Israel**, the whole nation. The Jews, as a people, are now rejected; as a people, they are to be restored. As their rejection, although national, did not include the rejection of every individual; so their restoration, although in like manner national, need not be assumed to include the salvation of every individual Jew” (Charles Hodge). Hodge adds that “all Israel” in this verse therefore does not mean (1) “all the true people of God,” nor (2) “the remnant according to the election of grace.” The present writer believes that Hodge and those who agree with his position are correct in this.

Those who reject the idea of a future conversion of the Jews make much of the opening words of the verse: “And so . . .” They point out that Paul did not say “And then . . .,” but “And so . . .,” meaning (they say) that “all Israel shall be saved” **while the fulness of the Gentiles is being brought in**. We readily admit, of course, that there is a difference between “And then . . .” and “And so . . .” But the phrase “And so . . .” does not necessarily eliminate the idea of a future conversion of the Jews to Christ. The Greek can equally well be translated “And thus . . .” Alford explains this as meaning “when this condition shall have been fulfilled,” that is, when the condition described in the last words of verse 25 shall have been fulfilled, namely when the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in. This seems a perfectly proper and reasonable explanation of the force of the “And so . . .”

In the second part of verse 26 Paul cites the Old Testament in support of what he has just said. There is some difficulty in deciding just what Old Testament passage or passages he is quoting. Isaiah 59:20 is the closest to the language used by Paul. Hodge suggests that Paul may be giving a sort of summary of a number of passages, such as Isaiah 59:20,21; 27:9; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 14:7. “The apostle teaches, that the deliverance promised of old, and to which the prophet Isaiah referred in the passage above cited, included **much more than the conversion of the comparatively few Jews who believed in Christ at the advent**. The full accomplishment of the promise, that he should turn away ungodliness from Jacob, contemplated the conversion of the whole nation, as such, to the Lord” (Charles Hodge).

It will be observed that we have said nothing about the possibility of a return to the Jews to Palestine. The reason is that the apostle Paul says nothing

whatever about such a return. On this, Alford says. “I have not mixed with the consideration of this prophecy (Rom. 11) the question of the restoration of the Jews to **Palestine**, as being clearly irrelevant to it: the matter here treated being, **their reception into the Church of God.**”

“For this is my covenant with them, when I shall take away their sins” (11:27). This verse is apparently quoted from Isaiah 59:21 and 27:9, the latter in the form given in the LXX or Greek translation of the Old Testament. It completes the proof from the Old Testament of the truth that Paul has been setting forth. “All the apostle intended to prove, is proved by the language of the prophets. The covenant of God with his ancient people secured, after their apostasy and consequent banishment in Babylon, and their dispersion over the earth, and their rejection of Christ, the ultimate purging away of their sin, and their restoration, as a nation, to the Messiah’s kingdom. This national conversion is also predicted in Zechariah 12:10, and in many other passages of the Old Testament.”

In speaking of a future conversion of the Jews to Christ, we must of course realize that this does not imply that every individual Jew is to become a Christian. “Now, of course, the Apostle does not mean that all the Jews will be saved when Christ comes. If he meant this he would have to be understood as teaching that all the Gentiles are to be saved. Just as he does not mean by the ‘riches of the world’ and ‘the riches of the Gentiles’ the conversion of all Gentiles, so he does not mean by the ‘fulness’ of the Jews the conversion of all the Jews. Any idea of a universal salvation is foreign to the teaching of the Bible.” (David Freeman, *The Bible and Things to Come*, p. 69).

#### Questions:

1. What view was held by Charles Hodge as to the meaning of “all Israel” in 11:26?
2. What argument is based on the opening words of 11:26 by those who reject the idea of a future conversion of the Jews to Christ?
3. How can this argument be answered?
4. What is Paul’s purpose in quoting from the Old Testament in 11:26,27?
5. What can be said about the bearing of Rom. 11 on a return of the Jews to Palestine?
6. What verse in Zechariah is understood to predict a future conversion of the Jews to Christ?
7. How can it be shown that the apostle Paul’s statements do not imply that every individual Jew shall be converted to Christ?

## LESSON 62

## THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

**F. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

"As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (11:28,29). These two verses form a summary of what the apostle Paul has taught about the rejection and future conversion of the Jews up to this point. "As in the whole context Paul is speaking, not of individuals, but of the rejection and restoration of the Jews as a body, it is evident that the calling and election which he here has in view, are such as pertain to the Jews as a nation, and not such as contemplate the salvation of individuals" (Charles Hodge). This consideration must be borne in mind or we will not be able to understand these two verses. If the calling, election and salvation of individuals were under discussion, it would be quite impossible to say that the same people were both enemies as concerning the Gospel, and also beloved because the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. But when we bear in mind that Paul is speaking of the rejection and future conversion of the Jews as a people, it all becomes clear.

"As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes." The Jews were rejected for their unbelief. They were branches cut off from the good olive tree. By this rejection of them, salvation was brought to the Gentiles. In order to accomplish the salvation of the Gentiles, God regarded and treated the Jews as enemies. This implies, of course, that those who died in their unbelief were eternally lost. They had rejected the one and only way of salvation, Jesus the Messiah. From the book of Acts and from Paul's epistles we can see what bitter enemies the Jews were of the Gospel of Christ. However the statement that "they are enemies for your sakes" probably means that they are enemies of God, since it is of God that they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. Being enemies of God, they were of course also enemies of the Gospel and of those faithful servants of God who proclaimed the Gospel.

"... but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake." Even while in the state of enmity against God and while being treated as enemies of God as concerning the Gospel, they were in another and very different sense beloved of God—they were beloved of God as touching the election, for the fathers' sakes. That is, these very Jews that were enemies of God as concerning the Gospel, were still being carefully watched over and kept by God, against the day when the Jews as a people shall be converted to Jesus their Messiah. All in unbelief must

perish in their sin, of course, but still they were beloved in one sense, as the stock whose descendants would one day be converted to the Messiah.

"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." This verse as translated in the King James version is not entirely clear. It is hardly necessary to mention the very crude misinterpretation that regards it as teaching that a sinner need not repent of his sins in order to be saved. "Repentance" in this verse means a change of mind or purpose or God's part. The American Revised Version reads: "For the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of"; the Revised Standard Version, "For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable"; the Book of Books version, "For the gifts and the calling of God are such that He does not change His mind." God's gifts is a general, inclusive term for His favors; God's calling is the best and most important of His gifts. Paul states the principle that God's gracious purposes are not changeable, but irrevocable. The term "calling" is here equivalent to "election," as shown by the context, where they are used interchangeably. Those individuals whom God has elected to eternal life shall certainly be saved; and if God has chosen a people to be his peculiar people, they shall remain His people, for His gracious purposes are unchangeable. The choice of the Jews as a people of course implies nothing as to the personal salvation of particular individuals within that people. When God chose the Jews as His people this did not imply that the majority of any one generation of Jews in Old Testament times should be personally saved unto eternal life. There exists today in some circles a very crude error which holds that from Moses to Christ each and every Israelite who complied with the external requirements of God's law was personally saved unto eternal life. This is of course entirely unfounded and untrue. God's choice of a people as a people is one thing; His election and salvation of individuals is another matter. In neither case does God "repent" of His purposes, or change His mind. But we must not confuse the election of a people to connections and privileges, with the election of individuals to personal salvation and eternal life.

**Questions:**

1. What is the place of 11:28,29 in Paul's argument?
2. Is Paul here speaking of God's choice of the Jews as a people, or of His election of individual Jews to eternal life?
3. Why did God regard and treat the Jews as enemies?

4. How can it be shown that in 11:28 “enemies” means “enemies of God”?

5. In what sense were the Jews beloved of God?

6. For what reason were they beloved of God?

7. What is meant by saying that “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance”?

8. What is the difference between God’s “gifts” and His “calling”?

9. What other word does Paul in this context use as equivalent to “calling”?

10. What kind of “calling” is Paul speaking about here?

### LESSON 63

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

**F. God’s Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

“For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy” (11:30,31). In these two verses Paul repeats and confirms what he has already said, and brings out the remarkable parallel between the cases of the Jews and the Gentiles. The Gentiles were once unbelieving but obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jews. The Jews are now unbelieving, but shall obtain mercy through the salvation of the fulness of the Gentiles. This is not an exact parallel because the occasion of obtaining mercy is different in the two cases. Yet the resemblance is noteworthy.

“For as ye in times past have not believed God”—in the Greek “have not believed” is literally “have disobeyed.” This brings out the truth that the Bible represents faith as an act of obedience to God, and unbelief as disobedience to God. Men are not merely invited to believe on Christ; they are commanded to believe on Christ and those who do not believe are disobedient to this command of God.

“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all” (11:32). “Here the idea is, that God, in the dispensation of his providence and grace, has so ordered things, that all Gentiles and Jews, first the one, and then the other, should reveal their true character as sinners, and stand out in history confessed as unbelievers. . . . Nor is mere permission all that is expressed. God’s efficiency or control is directly asserted. . . . The agency of God in giving men up to sin is punitive; it is consistent with their liberty and responsibility, and with his own holiness. He does not cause their sin, but he so orders his dispensations, that their sinfulness is revealed, and the mode of its manifestations determined. It seems also to enter into the design of the apostle to show that God had dealt alike with Gentile and Jew. They stood on the same ground. Both were dependent on sovereign mercy. Both had sunk into a state from which the grace of God alone could save

them. As all were equally miserable and helpless, God determined to have mercy upon all, and to bring all, Jews as well as Gentiles, into the fold of Christ” (Charles Hodge).

This brings us to the close of Paul’s treatment of the plan of redemption. The next four verses (33-36) are a sublime expression of the wisdom, knowledge, goodness and grace of God. “Few passages, even in the Scriptures, are to be compared with this, in the force with which it presents the idea that God is all and man is nothing” (Charles Hodge). Henry Alford says of these four verses that in them “the Apostle, overpowered with the view of the divine Mercy and Wisdom, breaks forth into the sublimest apostrophe existing even in the pages of Inspiration itself.”

The question naturally arises, just what is the place of these four verses in the Epistle to the Romans? Do they have a special relation to the subject matter of chapters 9-11, namely, God’s rejection of the Jews and calling of the Gentiles? Or is the reference to the whole doctrine of the Epistle up to this point? Or is the reference limited to the single matter of the future conversion of the Jews to Christ? Charles Hodge observes that there is nothing to indicate any limitation to the immediate context, and so he concludes that the occasion for this wonderful outburst of praise is the entire plan of salvation revealed in the Epistle up to this point.

Three main ideas are presented in verses 33-36, namely, (1) In Himself and in all His works God is not only infinitely great and good, but also incomprehensible to the human mind; He transcends human understanding. (2) God is entirely and absolutely independent of man. (3) God is all-comprehensive, for He is the source, the means and the end of all that exists.

#### Questions:

1. What parallel is brought out in 11:30,31?

2. Why is this parallel not a perfect one?

3. What is the literal meaning of the phrase “have

not believed in God" in 11:30?

4. What is meant by the statement that God has concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all?

5. Why does God's concluding men in unbelief not make God responsible for their sins?

6. What is the character of 11:33-36?

7. What question exists as to the relation of 11:33-36 to the rest of the Epistle?

8. How is this question probably to be answered?

9. What three main ideas concerning God are taught in 11:33-36?

#### LESSON 64

#### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

**F. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

**God is not only infinitely great and good, but also incomprehensible to the human mind.**

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (11:33). The first part of this verse may also be translated: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God," making "riches" parallel to "wisdom" and "knowledge." If this translation is adopted, God's "riches" would mean His grace, His mercy to sinners. On the other hand, the translation given in the King James Version makes "riches" a description of God's wisdom and knowledge. As far as the grammar of the Greek is concerned, either translation is proper. Charles Hodge states that inasmuch as the grace of God is a prominent subject in this Epistle, the translation which regards "riches" as parallel to "wisdom" and "knowledge" is to be preferred. Henry Alford points out that in Philippians 4:19 the "riches" of God (same Greek word) is mentioned as a special attribute or quality of God. Alford also prefers to take "riches," "wisdom" and "knowledge" as parallel or co-ordinate attributes of God. He explains "riches" as meaning "the riches of the divine goodness."

God is the Infinite Being. He is infinite in His being and in all His qualities or attributes. That is, there are no limits that can be applied to God. "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth" (Shorter Catechism, 4). While much modern religion tends to believe in a finite or limited God, the Bible teaches that God is infinite. Modern man has tried to make a god in his own image, a god who is really only a superman, a mere projection of the human mind. A prominent churchman of our own day has publicly said that the cry of humanity today is for a limited God, and that we can no longer respect any absolutes except those in the moral realm. Another prominent preacher holds that God can help us to love our fellow men but God cannot

control the weather, so it is folly to pray for rain. This is just another instance of the modern notion of a finite God. Over against the finite god of modern theology, the infinite God of the Bible has one tremendous advantage: He is real, He really exists, He is the living and true God, not a mere figment of the human imagination.

People object to the idea of an infinite God today because this idea cannot be analyzed by the human mind. It always baffles us. We cannot draw a circle around it and say we understand it. Those who will worship no God except one whom they can fully understand and analyze will not worship the God of the Bible. In reality they will worship only their own human mind. They are idolaters just as truly as any heathen that ever bowed down to wood and stone. The true God baffles the human mind just because He is God. If we could understand Him He would not be God and we would not be creatures.

"We can only wonder and adore. We can never understand. And it is well that it is so. What can be understood must be limited. What is fully comprehended no longer exercises, excites, or enlarges. It is because God is infinite in his being, and incomprehensible in his judgments and in his ways, that he is an inexhaustible source of knowledge and blessedness" (Charles Hodge). We must realize that the Christian faith ends in mystery. Our little knowledge which is possible by divine revelation soon carries us to the borderland of mystery, where, as Hodge said, "we can only wonder and adore," but never understand.

Christianity has suffered terribly from the inroads of 18th century rationalism, which has continued to have its baneful effects to the present day. The aim and ideal of 18th century rationalism was complete comprehension of all reality. This required the rejection of everything in the Christian faith that could not be completely understood or explained by the human mind. It involved the rejection of the God of the Bible and the setting up of a false god made in the image of the human mind. Over against this false religion of reason, we believe in the awful, mysterious, incomprehensible God of the Bible—the

living and true God.

There is a shade of distinction between God's "judgments" and His "ways." God's "judgments" in this verse probably means His plans, counsels, purposes, decrees. These are declared to be "unsearchable," that is, not accessible to human study or investigation. They lie in the realm of the secret things of God, which man cannot approach to inquire into. God's "ways," on the other hand, would mean His methods of procedure, His implementation of His eternal decrees in the works of creation and providence. God's "ways" are said to be "past finding out." The Greek literally means "untraceable"; it is an adjective formed from the Greek word for "footprint." God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence, but it is beyond human ingenuity or research to trace out these mysterious pathways; at most we can have only a very limited, incomplete idea of God's "ways."

#### Questions:

1. What two opinions are there as to the meaning and purpose of the word "riches" in 11:33?

2. What verse in another of Paul's epistles shows that "riches" can be regarded as a distinct quality or attribute of God?

3. If "riches" is taken as a distinct quality of God, what is its meaning?

4. What is meant by saying that God is the Infinite Being?

5. What does much modern religion teach as to the being of God?

6. What great advantage does the God of the Bible possess over the "god" of modern theology?

7. Why do many people today object to the idea of an infinite God?

8. What is meant by saying that the Christian faith ends in mystery?

9. What is rationalism?

10. What harm has rationalism done to Christianity?

11. What is the difference between God's "judgments" and His "ways"?

12. Why are God's judgments unsearchable and His ways untraceable?

## LESSON 65

### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS. 9:1 to 11:36, Continued.

**F. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

**God is Entirely and Absolutely Independent of Man. 11:34,35**

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again" (11:34,35). The first of these two verses teaches the absolute independence of God in His plans and purposes. God's counsel—His eternal decree—is God's counsel; it is not in any sense based on anything in His creation. The questions "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? who hath been his counselor?" of course imply the answer "No one." The teaching of the verse therefore is that God stands alone in His plans and purposes and is not in respect of any of them limited by His creatures.

This is the truth of the sovereignty of God. It is expressed many times in the Bible by such phrases as "It pleased God . . .," "It pleased the Lord . . .," "According to the good pleasure of his will." The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms also use similar expressions repeatedly to designate

the sovereignty of God—His absolute supremacy and independence in His plans and purposes.

This truth of the sovereignty and independence of God is greatly spoken against at the present day. In the first place, it is denied by all liberals and modernists who believe in a limited or finite God. Only an infinite God can be truly independent in His plans. In the second place, it is denied by all those who say that when God created mankind He "limited Himself" so that after the creation of man He is no longer supreme and independent. Such people confidently assert that God is limited by the free will of His creatures. They do not even hesitate to use such expressions as "God's hands are tied"; "God wants to save you but He is helpless until you make your own decision"; "Give God a chance" (or an "opportunity," which is evidently the same idea, namely that God cannot act until the human will gives Him an "opportunity" by acting first); "God has done all He can; now it is just up to you to make your own decision" and many similar modes of speaking. All of these flatter the natural man and his powers and detract from the glory and honor of God by an implied denial of His independence and sovereignty.

There are those who assert that God has from all

eternity foreordained what shall come to pass but that this foreordination is based on His eternal foreknowledge of what would come to pass anyway. In the matter of the salvation of sinners, this becomes the teaching that God has from all eternity elected some to eternal life, but He has elected those whom He foresaw would at some time of their life by their own human free will decide to repent and accept Christ. This, of course, is just an elaborate, round-about way of saying that God's eternal foreordination and election are not real and effective, but a mere verbal fiction. If God has foreordained the salvation of those whom He foresaw would choose to be saved, then God's foreordination is a fiction. This really amounts to God, in His eternal decree, deciding to leave the eternal issues of life to the free will of sinful creatures. It amounts to God leaving the whole matter to sinful man, and simply **ratifying** the all-important decision made by human free will. This has accurately been named the doctrine that "God elects those who elect themselves." It regards man's choice as real and effective, whereas God's choice is a merely formal ratification of man's choice.

These denials of God's sovereignty and independence do not arise from careful exegesis of the text of Scripture. Talk with those who advocate these views and in a few minutes it becomes evident that they are basing them upon a kind of human reasoning. Because they cannot harmonize God's sovereignty with man's freedom and responsibility, they try to escape from this paradox by virtually denying God's sovereignty in the interests of man's freedom. The Reformed theology for which our Church stands, on the other hand, reverently lets the paradox stand unsolved, recognizing that this paradox (between God's sovereignty and man's freedom) is deeply imbedded in the Scriptures, and holds the two truths of God's sovereignty and man's freedom without sacrificing one or the other.

A very crude misstatement of this subject is sometimes met with. It is sometimes stated that Calvinism teaches God's sovereignty, Arminianism teaches man's freedom and responsibility, and you have to take both Calvinism and Arminianism to get the whole truth. If it were not for the fact that this form of statement evidently appeals to some people and has some popularity, it would hardly be worth answering. In the first place, it is an absurdity to represent Calvinism and Arminianism as mutually complementary systems, which have to be combined to get the whole truth. Anyone who knows anything about the history of this controversy knows that at the points of difference between them Calvinism and Arminianism are mutually **contradictory** systems. In the early 1600's the Arminians in Holland (then called Remonstrants) issued a paper in which they called in question five articles of the creed of the Reformed Church of Holland. This created controversy and a special synod was held—the Synod of Dort,

1618-19—to settle the controversy. The Synod of Dort condemned the five points of the Arminians, and adopted five articles of its own to set forth the truth. The five "Canons of Dort" are not complementary but contradictory to the five points of the Arminians. To say that Calvinism and Arminianism are just two sides of the same picture, as some say, is to talk through one's hat. It is like saying that the statement "Caesar crossed the Rubicon" and the statement "Caesar did not cross the Rubicon" are two sides of the same picture.

In the second place, the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism is not that Calvinism believes in God's sovereignty while Arminianism believes in man's freedom and responsibility. The real difference is that Calvinism believes fully in both God's sovereignty and man's freedom and responsibility, without trying to solve the rational paradox that is involved, while Arminianism feels that the paradox must be solved, and therefore denies the real sovereignty of God in the interests of holding on to man's freedom and responsibility. The real difference between the two systems, then, is a difference in their attitude toward this paradox. Arminianism faces the paradox with a rationalistic attitude: the paradox must be solved at any cost. If this involves denying the real sovereignty of God, so be it; we must then say that God elected those whom He foreknew would of their own free will repent and believe. Calvinism, on the other hand, approaches this paradox with an attitude of reverence and godly fear: the paradox is one of the secret things that belong to the Lord our God; we need not solve it; we need only adhere to what the Scripture teaches concerning both of these truths which we cannot fully harmonize.

The Arminian view is prevalent today in American evangelical or fundamentalist circles. Some consider this only an academic question, of no practical importance. The truth is that nothing is more important than the truth about God and our relation to Him. The Arminian view implies that it is in the power of sinful man, without the effectual calling or irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit, to make a "decision" to repent and accept Christ. This in turn implies that the natural man cannot be really totally depraved and dead in trespasses and sins. So it will be seen that Arminianism involves very serious consequences.

#### Questions:

1. What great truth is taught in 11:34,35?
2. What expression is frequently used in the Bible and the Westminster Standards to designate the sovereignty of God?
3. What is the attitude of present day liberals and modernists to the sovereignty of God?

4. What are some of the statements made by those who say that God has "limited Himself" in His dealings with man?

5. What is wrong with the common saying "Give God a chance"?

6. Why is it not correct to say that God has from eternity elected those whom He foresaw would of their own free will decide to repent and believe?

7. What paradox is deeply imbedded in the Scriptures?

8. Why is it not correct to say that Calvinism and Arminianism are both true, and only two sides of the same picture?

9. What controversy was settled at the Synod of Dort? When and where was this synod held?

10. What is the real difference between Calvinism and Arminianism?

11. What is the right attitude toward the paradox between God's sovereignty and man's freedom?

12. Why is the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism an important matter?

*(Note: This series of lessons on the Epistle to the Romans will be continued, D. V., in the next issue.—Ed.)*

## Contributions Received

The following contributions have been received since our last issue went to press:

**December, 1977.** No. 4030, \$1.00.

**January, 1978.** No. 4031, \$2.50. No. 4032, \$200.00. No. 4033, \$7.50. No. 4034, \$2.50. No. 4035, \$2.50. No. 4036, \$2.50. No. 4037, \$1.00. No. 4038, \$10.00. No. 4039, \$141.89. No. 4040, \$1.50. No. 4041, \$2.50. No. 4042, \$7.50. No. 4043, \$12.50. No. 4044, \$2.50. No. 4045, \$15.00. No. 4046, \$5.00. No. 4047, \$10.00. No. 4048, \$5.00. No. 4049, \$1.00. No. 4050, .50. No. 4051, \$2.50.

**February, 1978.** No. 4052, \$22.50. No. 4053,

\$2.50. No. 4054, .25. No. 4055, \$3.00. No. 4056, \$1.00. No. 4057, \$5.00. No. 4058, \$20.00.

Later contributions will be acknowledged in our next issue. Without such generous contributions as these, it would hardly be possible to continue publishing the magazine, as subscriptions and sales of back issues and reprints provide only about half of the amount needed. We are trying to resist the tide of inflation by not raising our subscription rates. Many thanks to all who have helped. Your contributions are deductible from your Federal taxable income if you live in the United States. Documentary proof of this is available if needed by any contributor.

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## Religious Terms Defined

**AMYRALDISM.** A theological view named after Moses Amyraldus (Amyraut), a French Reformed theologian of the 17th century. Also called Post-Redemptionism and Hypothetical Universalism. Amyraldism is an inconsistent form of Calvinism. It teaches that God gave Christ to render the salvation of all men possible on condition that they believe, and that from the whole number of those whose salvation has been rendered possible, God has elected some to actual salvation and eternal life. Amyraldism regards the work of Christ as universal, but the work of the Holy Spirit as particular.

**ANABAPTISTS.** A sect which arose in Germany at the time of the Reformation, which practiced the

re-baptism of those who had been baptized as infants. The more extreme type claimed to have founded a new and perfect church, to have the power to work miracles, that human government and magistrates are unnecessary among Christians, and even that polygamy is legitimate.

**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.

**ANGELS.** Literally "messengers." Angels in the Bible are purely spiritual beings of the supernatural realm, created by God for His service. They are assigned special functions in connection with the salvation of the elect (Heb. 1:14). Some of the angels fell into sin (Jude 6).

**ANGEL OF JEHOVAH, THE.** A term used in Scripture to designate, not a created angel, but a Theophany or appearance of God to His people (Gen. 16:7; Ex. 3:2-6). Revelation by theophany accompanied events of great importance in the work of redemption. The Angel of Jehovah is both identified and distinguished from Jehovah, suggesting that the Second Person of the Trinity is meant (John 1:1-3).

**ANIMISM.** A form of false religion in which natural objects are regarded as indwelt by souls or spirits, which are regarded with superstitious awe.

**ANNIHILATIONISM.** The belief, which exists in various forms, that human beings shall or may altogether cease to exist. Annihilationism is chiefly important because it denies the truth of the Scripture doctrine of eternal punishment.

**ANTEDILUVIANS.** Those members of the human race that lived before the great flood of Genesis 6-8.

**ANTHROPOMORPHISM.** Speaking of God in human terms, to teach some truth about God. When Scripture says that "the arm of the Lord is not shortened" and that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth," these are anthropomor-

phisms and are not to be taken literally, yet they always teach some truth about God. We must on the one hand be on guard against understanding such language literally and on the other hand we must seek to understand and grasp the truth that is intended.

**ANTICHRIST.** A term which occurs in Scripture only in the first and second Epistles of John, meaning "opponent of Christ." In theology the term Antichrist is used to designate the great future enemy of Christ in whom the power of evil will reach its climax. Many scholars interpret the "man of sin" of 2 Thess. 2:3-10 and "the beast" of Revelation 13 as identical with the antichrist of John's Epistles.

**ANTINOMIANISM.** The false teaching that the Christian, by reason of Christ's atonement and obedience to God's law, is freed from the obligation of personal obedience to the moral law of God. The truth is that the Christian, while freed from the penalty of the law, is still under the precept of the law as his rule of life.

**ANTITRINITARIANISM.** A collective name for all those views which reject the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, that the one God exists in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

## Reviews of Religious Books

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

*As this issue goes to press, we have on hand seventy-four (74) book reviews that have been edited, typewritten and are ready for publication. Were we to publish them all, it would nearly fill an issue of the magazine. Accordingly, we are in the present issue publishing twelve of these reviews, and will hold the rest for (D. V.) publication in future issues.—Editor.*

**HARD QUESTIONS**, ed. by Frank Colquhoun. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1977, pp. 131, paperback. \$2.95.

A collection of 36 brief essays which attempt to answer questions frequently arising in the minds of new Christians and non-Christians being challenged by the claims of Christ. The answers have been prepared by a like number of British evangelicals, and they vary widely in quality. Some are excellent;

too many are weak; too frequently they are grossly unscriptural and loose formulations.

Thus, clumsy attempts are made to defend God's gracious love from the misunderstanding that it functions only as an eternal force. The result is the crudest sort of Arminianism: "God's love can never be irresistible. . . . But suppose we will not repent? What will God do? Will He remove from us the ability to say No to Him? But that would be to make us less than human beings" (p. 75). "Either man has a free will to disobey the purposes of God or he is a puppet. . . . he can frustrate the will of God" (p. 113). In such sections we sense a striving after a truth which needs to be grasped, but the authors have so enmeshed themselves in rationalistic oversimplification and humanistic presuppositions that they utterly fail in the attempt.

How are we to regard sectarian heretics and other

non-Christians? With love, with compassion, with patience—certainly; but nowhere does Scripture conclude that therefore “they are our brothers and sisters for whom Christ died” (p. 128). That some who sincerely use the term evangelical in referring to themselves also hold to universalism in the extent of the atonement is no surprise, but that all are therefore brethren is—if we can accept the words as accurately expressing the author’s thought—a naked universalism clearly condemned by God’s Word and utterly incongruous with anything akin to evangelicalism.

Again, does the Old Testament really “describe the bare survival of the soul in pathetic terms, rather like the dreary existence of a semi-conscious ghost” (p. 67) or is this simply a careless way for a Gentile to express his frustration that the Old Testament does not reveal as much as one might like about the state of the soul after death? Other examples of blatantly unscriptural statements abound through a broad spectrum of important subjects.

Despite the many valuable insights, despite the fluid prose, despite the numerous truths which are carefully expounded by some very able teachers of God’s Word, the book as a whole is so marred that it is wholly inappropriate to put into the hands of the readership to which it is directed.

The publisher has repeatedly enriched the Church with sound words through many years. The really hard question, which seems inexplicable, is how they could have let this get into print.

—Joseph P. Duggan

**THE WATER THAT DIVIDES: THE BAPTISM DEBATE**, by Donald Bridge and David Phipers. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1977, paperback, pp. 208. \$3.95.

Donald Bridge is a Baptist, while David Phipers is an Episcopalian (Church of England). They present Biblical arguments for infant baptism and for baptism of adults only. The book especially reflects the religious scene in England.

It is shown that the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace is the strongest argument for infant baptism.

On page 42 occurs an amazing statement: “The first covenant was concluded on Mount Sinai through Moses with the people of Israel (see Ex. 19:20). In it God offered salvation in return for obedience to His law.” This is stated as “commonly believed.” Later it is stated that the advocates of Covenant theology reject “this common belief in two basic covenants” and hold that “the really basic covenant is the one **covenant of grace**. It is found

throughout the Old and New Testaments. It is always received by faith. The two halves of the Bible should be regarded not as separate covenants made by God with mankind, but as records of the way in which the one covenant was administered in two different ways for necessary reasons” (p. 43).

If it is indeed “commonly believed” in England that at Sinai “God offered salvation in return for obedience to his law,” this reviewer stands utterly astonished. This would be the most extreme kind of Dispensationalism, rejected by all orthodox Christians, including Baptists.

On the whole the book sets forth fairly the arguments for and against infant baptism as these are held by Christians of these two persuasions today. The book would be improved and the issue clarified by omitting the discussion of the use of infant baptism by merely nominal Christians who are really pagans. No one worthy of being called a Christian believes in indiscriminate infant baptism. Note pages 153-155.

Also there is a confusion about “which parents are Christians” (p. 157). Church membership in the Visible Church is rightly regarded as based on **profession**, not on **proof of regeneration**. This whole passage obscures the issue. The Reformed Faith holds that a credible profession of faith is required for church membership and its privileges. A “credible” profession is one that it is **possible** to believe, not one that compels belief by demonstrative proof. As a matter of fact, it is possible to be saved and yet lack full personal assurance of salvation as a subjective conviction in one’s own mind. Also assurance is a variable, with its ups and downs. A Christian may truly believe, yet wait long for assurance. See the Westminster Confession *in loc.* (“On Assurance of Salvation”). All attempts of other people to determine absolutely who is a new creature in Christ Jesus are bound to fail, and produce evils that are greater than they attempt to remedy. Roman Catholics deny the possibility of assurance this side of heaven. The first generation or two of Protestants, having passed mostly through drastic crisis conversions, jumped to the conclusion that assurance is of the essence of faith. A century or so later, the Westminster Assembly rethought this whole question and gave a sounder and more mature answer.

The book closes with an appeal to both sides to soften their rigorous attitudes and be more charitable in the future, and each to make some concessions to the other.

—J. G. Vos

**THE MORMON PAPERS: ARE THE MORMON SCRIPTURES RELIABLE?** by Harry L.

Ropp. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1977, paperback, pp. 119. \$2.95.

Mormonism is the fastest growing religious body in the United States. This book examines theories of the origin of the Book of Mormon, and takes special note of internal inconsistencies. The absence of archaeological confirmation of Joseph Smith's claim about the pre-history of ancient America is noted. The myth of the Israelite origin of the American Indians is exploded. Note is taken of Joseph Smith's alleged but fantastic translation of Egyptian papyri. Finally there is a chapter on witnessing to Mormons—how and how not to do it.

—J. G. Vos

**OUR REASONABLE FAITH**, by Herman Bavinck, translated by Henry Zylstra. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49506. 1977 (1956 copyright), 568 pp. \$6.95.

A common complaint with most Dutch theologians is that you cannot understand a word that they write, but this is not the case with Dr. Bavinck. Herman Bavinck was one of the leading Calvinist theologians at the turn of the century. He wrote in a clear and lucid manner, and presented Christian truth in a systematic fashion, yet always in an understandable way. If you have the notion that all theology and Christian doctrine are as dry as dust—please read this book!

This volume was first published in the Dutch language in 1909 under the title **MAGNALIA DEI** ("The Wonderful Works of God"). This work follows guidelines of the author's much larger work, **Reformed Dogmatics**, yet it covers the field in a briefer and less technical format.

In a review of this volume, found in a 1957 edition of this magazine, the reviewer had these words to say: "The reviewer commends this book heartily and does not hesitate to call it a truly great book. Every thoughtful reader will find his grasp of the Christian system of truth deepened and enlarged by reading **Our Reasonable Faith**." I add my endorsement.

—Samuel Sterrett

**PRESERVING THE PERSON: A LOOK AT THE HUMAN SCIENCES**, by C. Stephen Evans. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1977, paperback, pp. 176. \$4.95.

"The demise of the person" (pages 14 ff.). The problem of human freedom in a mechanistic universe. The key to an answer to this is sought in some form of limitation of science. The mind, unlike the

body, may not be mechanistically determined. Over against man reduced to an impersonal machine, we cling to our conviction that man is created in the image of God, and is therefore not merely a person but a special kind of person.

—J. G. Vos

**WINTER PAST: A YOUNG WOMAN'S SEARCH FOR EMOTIONAL HEALTH**, by Nancy Anne Smith. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1977, paperback, pp. 120.

A long, hard struggle against pain and depression, which ended in victory.

—J. G. Vos

**DEVELOPING A CHRISTIAN MIND**, by Nancy B. Barcus. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1977, paperback, pp. 102. \$2.95.

"A fearless, happy ease amid the conflicts of secular thought" (cover). Eight noted unbelievers are cited and examined: Loren Eiseley, Henry David Thoreau, B. F. Skinner, Julian Huxley, Max Planck, Jacques Monod, Charles Reich, Alfred North Whitehead. All are opponents of Christianity and all are opposed to each other. It is shown that all non-Christian thinkers reject the truth because of their basic assumptions. Secular humanism cancels itself out. Many are determinists and hold that this determinism cancels human responsibility.

—J. G. Vos

**THE CHURCH UNDER SIEGE**, BY M. A. Smith. Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1976, 277 pp. \$5.95.

Today there is a great lack of knowledge in the general area of church history. This volume covers the period of church history from Constantine to Charlemagne in a most interesting and informative manner. The author, a Baptist minister in Lancashire, has written **FROM CHRIST TO CONSTANTINE**. So in many ways this could be called a continuation of his first book.

There was one drawback: there are two printing errors. On page 51, footnote number 2 reads "pp. 30 31," but it should read pages 46 and 47. On page 193 footnote number 6 reads "pp. 140-1," but it should read pages 164-5.

There are two items that are of value (especially if you are a student in seminary):

1. In the beginning of the book there is a time chart that lists the events of secular world history and places some of the important events of church history in correlation to these events.

2. At the rear of the book, there is a glossary which gives an explanatory list of the people who were most prominent in the church's history from the Fourth to Ninth Centuries.

All in all, it is safe to say that this is a work that presents the highlights of a fascinating period of history for all Christians.

—Samuel Sterrett

**ALL TRUTH IS GOD'S TRUTH**, by Arthur F. Holmes. William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 255 Jefferson St. S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49503. 1977, pp. 145, paperback, \$3.95.

Although not technical, this work is a major contribution to Christian theory of knowing (epistemology). It is written for college students and other interested but non-technical students of Christian philosophy and apologetics. Professor Holmes's many years' experience in teaching philosophy at Wheaton College have acquainted him with the problems of both philosophy and the evangelical mind. He offers needed and valuable insights to that evangelical world: e.g., the unity of all truth in God, the denial of the sacred/secular dichotomy, that truth is both propositional and personal, that man's finitude and fallibility with the consequent error does not preclude knowing the truth, that gaining truth necessitates hard reasoning, that human reason if it is to be reliable must submit to the standards of truth, objective reality (the facts), and sound logic, that to think "Christianly" demands knowledge and application of the biblical view of nature, man, and history. In short, the book calls evangelicals to take up pursuit of the cultural mandate and divest themselves of the narrow, simplistic, and non-biblical.

Dr. Holmes falls into the camp of traditional apologetics/epistemology. To him the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian has to do with the Christian's final rule of faith and practice (the Scripture) and his focal point (Jesus Christ the ultimate unity of truth). This position stands in contrast to presuppositionalism which views the difference in terms of starting points, viz., truth is uniquely the possession of the biblical system. All other systems if they have truth have borrowed it, for their views of fact, models, and methods consistently pursued obviate even the simplest truth(s). Failure to see this difference of starting-point and the resultant effects on epistemology is, in this reviewer's opinion, the major weakness of the book. This weakness forces the author into rather strained views of sin as

mere negation of good rather than rebellion against the truth, an overly optimistic evaluation of the ability of unaided human reason, judgment of the validity of a belief by standards which do not include Scripture, etc.

This reviewer highly recommends this book to those interested in philosophy and/or apologetics.

—Leonard Coppes

**WHAT ABOUT BAPTISM?**, by F. N. Lee. Scottish Reformed Fellowship, copies are obtainable from: Frankland, 3 Montpelier Terrace, Edinburgh, EH10 4NE, and Keddie, 5 Frogmore Close, North Cheam, Surrey. 1976, 17 pp. 20p (no American price).

**TEN COMMANDMENTS TODAY!**, by F. N. Lee. The Lord's Day Observance Society, London and Edinburgh. 1976, 20 pp. 15p (no American price).

These are two booklets written by the same author. The first is a short, but clear, statement of the paedobaptist position. It is written as a dialogue between a Mr. Presbyterian and a Mr. Baptist. The first part deals with the mode of baptism and the second half discussed the subjects of baptism.

The second booklet should be one that is familiar to readers of this magazine. It appeared as an article in **BLUE BANNER, FAITH AND LIFE**, Vol. 29, Jan.-Mar. 1974.

—Samuel Sterrett

**COMMUNITY OF THE KING**, by Howard A. Snyder. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1977, paperback, pp. 216. \$4.25.

This is a book on the nature of the Church, especially the visible Church. It contains many good insights, but lacks, from the standpoint of the historic Reformed faith, a sense of the need of basic orthodoxy. This is seen in the numerous quoted comments from authors of all shades of belief. Just in passing, the reviewer noted among many others, the following men of doubtful orthodoxy (to say the least!): William Barclay (a Universalist), Karl Barth (father of neo-orthodoxy), John Bright (advocate of negative higher critical views of Scripture), E. Stanley Jones (popular but confused in theology), Hans Kueng (Roman Catholic), Elton Trueblood, Bernard Zylstra, Watchman Nee (unsound views on trichotomy in relation to sanctification), Richard Niebuhr and Benjamin T. Roberts (advocate of ordaining women). These persons of dubious orthodoxy are freely scattered among such honored names as John Warwick Montgomery, Harold J.

Ockenga, Francis Schaeffer, Billy Graham, Arthur Glasser and numerous others of the present, as well as the great figures of past centuries. The uninformed reader is likely to be misled into thinking that quotations from the former category (of doubtful orthodoxy, or none at all) are to be taken as support for a truly Biblical view of the Church.

The General Index is replete with errors in giving page numbers. The reviewer encountered a large number without searching for them specially.

Not recommended for the general Christian reader. Those with scholarly knowledge of the Biblical view of the Church do not need it.

—J. G. Vos

**HE GAVE US A VALLEY**, by Helen Roseveare. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1976, pp. 188, \$3.95.

Helen Roseveare was a missionary for twenty years in the Belgian Congo (now named Zaire) including the time of the Simba uprising. The first thirteen years of her time in the Congo are briefly covered in the first two chapters of this book since that time had already been covered more fully in her first book, **Give Me This Mountain** (Inter-Varsity Press, 1966). This book deals with her return to Zaire and the seven years she spent in the newly independent country establishing the Evangelical Medical Center of Nyankunde. Anyone who thinks that missionary life is a series of one success after another and one exciting incident after the other should read this book. The book gives a realistic picture of the frustrations and failures as well as the triumphs that Helen Roseveare experienced. She recounts the endless days spent going from one government office to the next and back again, the promises which the government made and failed to keep, the student rebellion against her authority, and through it all her faith in Jesus Christ which keeps her going. Recommended.

—William L. Roberts

**GETTING TO KNOW YOUR FAITH**, by Paul Steeves. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1977, pp. 126. \$2.95.

This book is the third one in a series of books by Paul Steeves entitled **Getting to Know . . .**, dealing with basic doctrinal issues of the Christian life. This book covers five topics—Scripture, Jesus Christ, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, regeneration by the Spirit, and Jesus's return. Each topic has six studies plus a summation for the topic. Each one of the studies looks at a passage of Scripture and has questions to be answered in writing. This study guide is appropriate for group study as well as individual study because each topic can be conveniently studied through on a weekly basis. The level of the studies is very basic, but would be appropriate for young Christians, especially high school or college age.

—William L. Roberts

**DON'T JUST STAND THERE**, by Martin Goldsmith. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1976, pp. 128. \$2.25.

The subtitle of the book is "a first book on Christian missions." This is exactly what the book covers. Using both the Old and New Testaments, Martin Goldsmith shows the need and command for Christians to be reaching all nations with the gospel. Goldsmith also draws on his experiences in Southeast Asia where he was a missionary for ten years. The book does a good job of covering the basics of what Christian missions are all about. The only parts of the book with which this reviewer felt uncomfortable were the discussion of the form of worship (p. 71), his discussion of church government (pp. 70-71), and his interpretation of Scripture as pertaining to the office of elder (p. 77). Although this book is to be a "first book on Christian missions," it is a book which many evangelicals need to read. Alas, it is also the type of book that does not get the wide readership which it deserves. Recommended.

—William L. Roberts





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# **BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE**

VOLUME 33

JULY-SEPTEMBER, 1978

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## Hope for Weak Christians

*“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him. . . . A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.”* Isaiah 42:1-3

This is a prophecy about our Saviour. He will not break a bruised reed, nor quench a smoking flax (“a dimly burning wick,” as the Revised Standard Version translates it). A “bruised reed” is one that has been hit and bent over, but not broken clear off. The angle where the reed is bent means that the veins of the reed are constricted at that point; only with difficulty and to a limited extent can the life-giving sap of the reed reach the part beyond where it is “bruised.” The part beyond the bruise is alive, but it is not flourishing.

Consider the dimly burning wick—the chimneyless oil lamp or flare of ancient Palestine. Sometimes it would burn only dimly, with more smoke than flame. There is fire there; combustion is taking place; but the rate of combustion is slow, so that there is not a vigorous and bright flame. It is alive, but it is not what a lamp ought to be.

Is our Christian life a bruised reed, a dimly burning wick? Think of our failures, our inconsistencies, our weaknesses, our discouragements. How feebly we live for our Lord! How much of self, how little of Jesus, there is in our lives! How often we have turned aside from His way to our own way! How often we have followed Him afar off! How often our love to Him has waxed cold, our vision of Him grown dim! All of us will readily confess that sometimes—perhaps most of the time—our life has been a bruised reed and a dimly burning wick. We cannot honestly claim more.

Be comforted. Christ will not break a bruised reed, nor quench a dimly burning wick. He will not say, “I

do not want this bruised reed; break it off; pull it up by the roots; throw it into the fire to be destroyed.” He will not say, “This dimly burning wick is useless. It cannot serve the purpose of a lamp. Extinguish the smoldering, flickering flame; throw the worthless wick out on the rubbish heap.” No, Christ will not do that. For the life in the reed is His life, and the flame of the wick is His flame. Bruised as the reed may be, it is not dead; it is alive. That life in the Christian is Christ’s life, imparted in the new birth by the Holy Spirit. That flame of the dimly burning wick is Christ’s flame, the flame given by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Christ suffered and died to give life to the reed, to kindle the flame on the wick. He will not abandon it; He will not reject it.

Perhaps we should lament that we are only a bruised reed, a dimly burning wick. But we should also rejoice and give thanks that by divine grace we are a reed with life in its cells, a wick with a living flame burning, however feebly, at its tip. What our Lord has undertaken, He will complete. Christ uses and transforms bruised reeds, dimly burning wicks. He can make the bruised reed grow straight and strong. He can fan the dimly burning wick to a brightly glowing, white-hot flame. It can become a beacon of light to the lost in this world’s darkness.

Moreover, we should understand, such is the real destiny of every Christian. Every bruised reed is to be a straight and strong reed someday, and every dimly burning wick is to burn with a white-hot flame someday. Our eternal destiny as Christians is to be strong and straight reeds, and brightly burning lamps, for our Lord’s honor and praise and glory. If you are truly in Christ, even though today you may be but a bruised reed and a dimly burning wick, yet your sure destiny is to be strong and straight and bright for Him, to all eternity. Let that be your encouragement in your struggle with sin, temptation and weakness.

—J. G. Vo

## Blue Banner Question Box

### Question:

*What should be thought of the doctrine of trichotomy, that man is a three-fold being composed of body, soul and spirit?*

### Answer:

This doctrine is a very common one in some Christian circles of the present day. Apparently it has been held by a minority of Christians from ancient times, but it has never been accepted by the Church in its official creeds or confessions. Briefly, the doctrine is that body, soul and spirit are three separate elements of the human personality. Concerning the body, there is no question. But with regard to "soul" and "spirit," the question is, Are soul and spirit two separate parts of the human personality, or are they two aspects of one and the same thing? Trichotomy (which means "division into three") holds that soul and spirit are separate parts of man; dichotomy ("division into two") holds that soul and spirit are two aspects of the same thing, the non-material part of man.

The doctrine of trichotomy is older than Christianity, for it was held by Pythagoras, Plato and many other ancient philosophers. This, of course, does not prove it either true or untrue. The advocates of the theory in Christian circles base it especially on two passages of the New Testament, namely 1 Thess. 5:23 ("I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless . . .") and Heb. 4:12 ("piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit"). Many people cite these texts as if a mere reading of their words from the Bible were sufficient to prove conclusively that trichotomy is true, and that those who hold to the other view do not believe the Bible.

It is not so simple as that, however. Any standard work on systematic theology will give a summary of the arguments involved. See A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (one volume edition), pp. 483-488; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 191-195; A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (1949 ed.), pp. 299, 300; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, pp. 47-51.

It would require too much space even to outline the arguments for rejecting trichotomy here. But we may briefly state: Scripture commonly speaks of man as composed of body and soul; over against two passages which seem to imply trichotomy, there are hundreds which seem to imply the division into two parts only. In the New Testament the words "soul" and "spirit" are used interchangeably. A. A. Hodge points out that deceased persons are indifferently referred to as "souls" (Acts 2:27-31; Rev. 6:9; 20:4) and as "spirits" (Luke 24:37,39; Heb. 12:23).

Why, then, are "soul" and "spirit" apparently distinguished in 1 Thess. 5:23 and Heb. 4:12? We shall give A. A. Hodge's explanation, as it is brief:

"The use made of these terms ('soul' and 'spirit') by the apostles proves nothing more than that they used words in their current popular sense to express divine ideas. The word *pneuma* ('spirit') designates the one soul emphasizing its quality as rational. The word *psyche* ('soul') designates the same soul emphasizing its quality as the vital and animating principle of the body. The two are used together to express popularly the entire man" (*Outlines of Theology*, 1949 ed., p. 300).

Is this question of trichotomy versus dichotomy a merely academic question, or what some people would call "theological hair-splitting"? By no means. Those who hold the theory of trichotomy often (but not always) associate with it special and unsound views on the subject of sanctification. This is quite common in some Christian circles in China. The idea is that the "soul" is something base and unworthy, while the "spirit" is something good and noble. Sanctification, then, becomes a process in which the human spirit gains control over and dominates the human body and the human soul. According to this theory, the "spiritual" man is a man in whom the human spirit controls the whole personality. Sanctification is thought of as a conflict of one part of the human personality against other parts of the human personality.

According to the plain teaching of the Bible, however, man's **whole** nature (including his spirit) is defiled and corrupted by sin. The Bible speaks of **filthiness of flesh and spirit**. There is no such thing as a "better self" or "higher nature" in man which is more holy and pure than the rest; all is spoiled by sin. Moreover, according to the Bible, the "spiritual" man is **the man who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God**, not the man whose human spirit controls his soul and body. According to the Bible sanctification is not a conflict of the human spirit against the soul and body, but a conflict of God the Holy Spirit and the new nature received in regeneration, on the one hand, against the whole sinful nature ("the flesh") on the other hand.

It is particularly because of its affinity for unsound views of sanctification that the theory of trichotomy is to be rejected. We realize that many faithful Christians hold this theory to be true. Nevertheless, we believe that the verdict of Scripture is against it.

—J. G. Vos

# Studies in the Epistles to the Romans

## LESSON 66

### THE CALLING OF THE GENTILES AND THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS, 9:1 to 11:36, Continued

**F. God's Rejection of the Jews was not Final, for there is to be a Conversion of Many of them to Christ. 11:11-36, Cont.**

Man cannot place God under any obligation, because God Himself is the Source, the Cause and the End of all things. "It is for the display of His character everything exists, and is directed, as the highest and noblest of all possible objects. Creatures are as nothing, less than vanity and nothing in comparison with God. Human knowledge, power, and virtue, are mere glimmering reflections from the brightness of the divine glory. That system of religion, therefore, is best in accordance with the character of God, the nature of man, and the end of the universe, in which all things are of, through, and to God; and which most effectually leads men to say, **NOT UNTO US BUT UNTO THY NAME BE ALL THE GLORY!**" (Charles Hodge).

This brings us to the conclusion of what is commonly called the doctrinal part of the Epistle to the Romans. In these twelve chapters God's plan of salvation has been presented and defended more clearly and completely than in any other part of the Bible. "The leading principle of all is, that God is the source of all good; that in fallen man there is neither merit nor ability; that salvation, consequently, is all of grace, as well sanctification as pardon, as well election as eternal glory. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Charles Hodge).

### **PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13.**

**A. The Duty of Cultivating Practical Personal Holiness. 12:1-21.**

#### **Christian devotion to God.**

In this and the following chapters we have a message, not to the unsaved, but to Christian people. An unsaved person cannot even begin to live the kind of life here described. It is his duty to live that kind of life, but he cannot, until he is saved and given the desire and the power to do so by divine grace. How wrong and foolish, then, is that type of contemporary evangelism which addresses the unsaved sin-

ner with an invitation to adopt "the Christian way of life" or "Christ's way of life." Such "evangelism" contains no evangel—no Gospel—but consists merely of good advice in the form of ethical teachings.

The apostle Paul here presents many practical duties of the Christian life. This chapter covers just about every kind of Christian duty. Yet these are not just a list of unrelated items. They are related as the features of Christian character and conduct.

These features of Christian character are all to be taken together, not singly or separately. We may not single out and stress some, while omitting or neglecting the rest. For example, 12:16a, "Be of the same mind one toward another," must not be allowed to eliminate 12:9b, "Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good." These two obligations must be taken together and always kept in balance with each other.

Holiness is not adequate if it is lop-sided. It is not adequate if it is not complete and well-balanced. Suppose someone is a wonderful church officer, but at home he is so mean that his family is always unhappy and miserable. That is not true Christian holiness. Or suppose some person is an ideal husband or wife or parent in the home, but is never willing to make an effort or sacrifice for the work of the Church. Such is not true Christian holiness because it is one-sided, it is out of balance.

We know that an airplane propellor which rotates at tremendous speed must be carefully balanced. If not, it cannot function properly. A pilot once made a forced landing and one tip of his propellor hit the ground and several inches were broken off. What could he do? He cut the same amount off from the opposite tip, thus balancing the propellor again, and so was able to reach home safely. Even an ordinary four-blade electric fan will not work right if one blade is removed, leaving three. An ordinary flywheel is useless unless it is balanced. So it is with Christian character.

There are many one-sided Christians, whose character is incomplete and lacks balance. What should they do? Certainly they should not use the method adopted by the airplane pilot for emergency repairs. We must gain balance not by cutting down where we are long, but by building up where we are short.

### **Holiness, or Consecration to God. 12:1.**

Holiness really includes all the other features of character and life which are to follow. Holiness is not an abstraction in itself, it is not something that can be isolated. Holiness is not really co-ordinate with meekness, earnestness, etc. Rather, holiness includes all these, and they are the fruits of holiness in a Christian's life.

Holiness is consecration to God and His service. This, we are informed, is our "reasonable service." It is what God can reasonably expect of us.

We find holiness summarized in 12:21, in the words: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Evil in this universe is no figment of the imagination; it is real; it is powerful; it must be faced and reckoned with. Either we will be overcome of evil, or we will overcome evil with good. We cannot be neutral or non-combatant in the conflict with evil. If we do not wage war against evil, evil will conquer us. But by God's grace we are enabled to wage war against evil and overcome evil with good.

Holiness is not an abstraction which we can have by itself. Holiness always takes the form of concrete Christian virtues which we find taught in this chapter. Holiness in itself is complete consecration to God; holiness in its effects is overcoming evil with good; holiness in its manifestation is helpfulness, earnestness, meekness, kindness and so forth. If we lack these specific Christian virtues, we do not have practical Christian holiness.

## **LESSON 67**

### **PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued.**

#### **A. The Duty of Cultivating Practical Personal Holiness. 12:1-21, Continued.**

##### **The secret of the source of holiness. 12:2.**

12:2 tells us the secret of the source of holiness. First of all, we do not get it by copying the ways of this world. "And be not conformed to this world." As a matter of fact, the character of this world, and of worldly people, that is, people who are not saved Christians, is just the opposite of the Christian character described in this chapter. The worldly character is unholy, selfish, proud, unkind, and so forth.

What the Christian knows to be wrong and sinful, the world regards as legitimate. Take such a simple matter as Sabbath desecration, for example. We can easily think of many illustrations. And what the Christian knows to be right and his duty, the world often regards with contempt and even ridicule. For example, to love our enemies is a Christian duty, yet

#### **Questions:**

1. Why cannot men place God under any obligation?
2. What is the leading principle of God's plan of salvation as revealed in the first eleven chapters of Romans?
3. To what class of people is the message of Romans 12-15 addressed?
4. What is wrong with the type of "evangelism" which addresses the unsaved sinner with an invitation to adopt "Jesus' way of life"?
5. What is meant by saying that the features of Christian character must be balanced?
6. How is balance to be gained in cultivating Christian character?
7. What is the relation between holiness and the various features of Christian character?
8. What is the meaning of holiness?
9. How is holiness summarized in 12:21?
10. Why can we not be neutral in the conflict between good and evil?

the world regards it with ridicule and contempt. We cannot get holiness by copying the world or by acquiescing in the world's standards. If we accept the world's standards of right and wrong, we will sin against God and injure ourselves. In matters of conduct and conscience the world is seriously in error. If we follow the world we run the risk of God's displeasure and righteous judgments. It is neither right nor safe to follow the will of the majority in matters of religion and morals.

Verse 2 goes on to tell how we do get holiness. Not by being conformed to this world, but by being transformed by the renewing of our mind. But what does this mean? We might perhaps paraphrase it thus: "Do not let your life be a copy of the ways of the world, but have a changed character by receiving a new heart, so that it will be possible for you to live your life according to the will of God."

"The renewing of your mind"—getting a new mind—is the same thing as regeneration, or being

born again, except that we should understand that “the renewing of our mind” is not a once-for-all transaction, but something often repeated, and indeed a continuous process in the Christian’s life. This process begins with regeneration, or the new birth, and it continues throughout the Christian’s life. It is the continuous working out of the new birth. Being born again is the beginning of the renewing of a person’s mind. Sanctification is the continuation of the renewing of a person’s mind. As in the case of the natural life, so in the Christian life, first there is birth and then there follows growth.

Transformed by the renewing of your mind—changed by receiving a new heart and a new way of thinking. The unsaved person thinks wrongly about everything connected with God, his soul and his duty. But when a person is transformed by the renewing of his mind, God puts that person’s mind on the right track and he begins to think aright about these matters. He repents of his old sins. He begins to hate what he once loved. He begins to love and enjoy what he once hated. He is renewed in the spirit of his mind.

But how do we become transformed by the renewing of our mind? This is not something that we can do for ourselves. A railway locomotive can run when everything is all right, but if it is off the track, there is one thing it cannot do: it cannot get itself back on the track again by its own power or efforts. First it must be set back on the rails, and then after that it can run as it was designed to run. We cannot transform ourselves. We cannot renew our own heart or mind. We cannot of ourselves begin to love what we naturally hate, nor begin to hate what we naturally love. The Bible emphasizes this truth by the famous question: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil?” (Jer. 13:23).

We cannot accomplish this for ourselves. But there is a way. This change comes into a person’s life by the miraculous, almighty power of God. It is the work of God the Holy Spirit. It is mysterious; it cannot be analyzed or explained; the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit (John 3:8). It is mysterious, yet it is real, it is powerful, it brings obvious results. It changed Saul the persecutor into Paul the Christian. It changed the cannibals of the South Sea Islands into law-abiding, industrious, useful Christian people who saved the lives and ministered to the needs of allied fliers who were forced to bail out over the jungles during World War II.

It changed our own ancestors from furious, fierce, lawless, wild savages and barbarians, as they were two thousand years ago, to civilized Christian peoples—imperfect, it is true, often inconsistent, but still very different from what they were before Christianity reached them in the forests and wilderness of northern Europe and the British Isles. The renewing of the mind by the Holy Spirit is a reality. It brings results.

Since this change is the work of God the Holy Spirit, we should always seek this change from Him, and always give Him the honor and glory of it. Do not dare to take any credit to yourself because you are different from the world. If you are not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of your mind, remember that the credit for this does not belong to you. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots, and none of us can change his own character or heart. It is God who has made us different from the unsaved world. To God alone belongs the credit and the praise and the honor and the glory. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

#### Questions:

1. Why can we not gain holiness by being conformed to this world?
2. What is the difference between the Christian’s standard of right and duty, and the world’s standard?
3. What is the meaning of the clause: “be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”?
4. What is the relation of regeneration to the renewing of our mind?
5. What is the relation of sanctification to the renewing of our mind?
6. Why can we not accomplish the renewing of our mind for ourselves?
7. Give some examples from Christian history of people who were transformed by the renewing of their mind.
8. Who is the source and agent of this change called “the renewing of our mind”?
9. Why are we not entitled to any credit for the renewing of our mind?

## LESSON 68

## PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued.

**A. The Duty of Cultivating Practical Personal Holiness. 12:1-21, Continued.****Helpfulness, or Practical Concern for our Fellow Christians. 12:4-8.**

We should omit discussion of verse 3 for the time being. This verse deals with humility or meekness, which we should consider later in connection with some other verses of the chapter. Verses 4-8 deal with our relation to our fellow Christians. We cannot have real holiness without having helpfulness too. Centuries ago many people had a very false idea of holiness. They thought that they could run away from the world and shut themselves up in a monastery or convent, or even all alone in a hermit's cell out in the forest somewhere, and there cultivate holiness by prayer and meditation, isolated from the society of their fellow men. There are people in the world who still think that way—not only the monks and nuns in Roman Catholic institutions, but there are also some Protestants who seem to have a similar idea of holiness. But Biblical holiness is not like that. It is really a very practical matter. It expresses itself, not in running away from our fellow men, but in helpfulness to them. If we are truly holy, we will be concerned about the welfare and progress of our fellow Christians. We will realize that we cannot live the Christian life all alone. We will understand that we are all members of a body, and that our individual Christian life is connected with the lives of a great many other Christian people.

Each one of us has a part to perform as a member of that body, the Church, the body of Christ. We are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Each and everyone of us has a function to perform. Our function is unique, and no one else can replace us; God has called each Christian to that particular place and function in the body of Christ.

At this point we ought to guard against two common mistakes. First of all, in saying that each of us has a function to perform as a member of the body of Christian people, we do not mean that each person must have an **official** function to perform in the church as an organization. This portion of Scripture is dealing with something broader than merely official service in the organized church, such as the service of ministers, elders, deacons, teachers, and so forth. These official functions are only a part; they are not the whole matter, by any means. The service of Christian helpfulness which Paul is discussing is broader and more inclusive than official service in the church. For example, note verse 8, "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity [or liberality]"—this does not necessarily mean some official function

of church officers, though that may be included, but the act of any Christian in giving something to the poor and needy or in contributing something to the support of the Gospel. Again, "he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness" (12:8). Clearly what is spoken of is something broader than official functions in the organized church. We can serve God faithfully and well and be a real help to our fellow Christians, without holding office in the organized church. Every private Christian is a king and priest unto God.

It is important to emphasize this because there exists a tendency to think that every church member must have some sort of **official** function or duty in the church. That is not only an unbiblical idea, but it leads to great evils in practice. Not only are people assigned to positions or tasks for which they are not qualified, but they are thereby led to have a wrong idea of Christian service and to neglect, it may be, the real service that God would have them do. Moreover this tendency leads to the multiplication of offices, committees, and organizations for the mere purpose of providing functions for so many people. Church organization should be kept simple and workable. The tendency to multiply and complicate organization is a bad tendency. Ships are not built so that somebody can be captain of them; they are built because they are needed to transport people and goods. Organizations should not be set up just to keep more people busy about "church work," but only to meet a real and definite need.

In the second place, we should not make the mistake of supposing that every Christian can be helpful in exactly the same way as other Christians. Many people make this mistake. They measure all pastors and their work by some one pastor whom they have admired; all elders by some one elder, and so on. But actually each Christian's capacity for service is special and unique. "Having then gifts **differing** according to the grace that is given to us . . ." (12:6). Each of us has his own gift, bestowed on him by the Holy Spirit. We should not seek or desire, then, to be just like someone else; nor should we complain or be dissatisfied because our capacities are different from other people's. Rather, we should seek to discover what particular gift God has bestowed on us, and then use it for the glory of God and the benefit of our fellow Christians. That is the pathway to true helpfulness.

**Questions:**

1. What is the general subject of 12:4-8?
2. What false idea of holiness was common hundreds of years ago?

3. Why can we not live the Christian life all alone?
4. Why is it not correct to say that every Christian must have some **official** function to perform in the organized church?
5. What harm is done by multiplying organizations

so that more people can be kept busy with “church work”?

6. What verse shows that it is a mistake to suppose that all Christians can be helpful in the same way?

7. What should be our attitude toward our own gift bestowed on us by the Holy Spirit?

## LESSON 69

### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued.

#### A. The Duty of Cultivating Practical Personal Holiness. 12:1-21, Continued.

##### Helpfulness, or Practical Concern for our Fellow Christians. 12:4-8, Continued.

God is glorified not only by Christian ministers, but also by Christian farmers, Christian business men and Christian school teachers, by Christian people in every lawful occupation and walk of life—people who will take their Christianity seriously and will seek both holiness and helpfulness in their daily life.

In China, missionaries often had to try to discourage people from trying to become preachers. Many were converted so wonderfully that they immediately wanted to go to a school and learn to be a preacher. It was necessary to impress on such people’s minds that their conversion to Christ did not imply that they were called to official service, and that there were many other ways to serve God besides the official preaching function of the Church. God is glorified by Christian business men, Christian policemen, Christian carpenters, Christian factory workers, Christian mothers and housewives, just as truly as by Christian preachers.

Paul is stressing Christian helpfulness as an expression of Christian holiness. He mentions various Christian activities and duties: prophecy, ministry, exhorting, giving, ruling, showing mercy. Prophecy here means what we would ordinarily call preaching today, the giving of a sermon or discourse in the assembly of the Church. Ministry refers to any kind of service or duty in the Church. Teaching and exhortation are not necessarily distinct from prophecy; they may describe the same work from a different point of view.

What we should note here is that Paul commands us each to “wait on” his own particular work. The Christian who ministers is to “wait on” his ministering, the one who exhorts is to “wait on” his exhorting, the one who teaches is to “wait on” his teaching, etc. Note that in the English Bible the words “let us wait” are in italics, indicating that they are not found in the Greek text, but have been added in the English

translation because the idiom of our language requires them to make the grammar and sense complete. In the Greek it is just, “Or ministry, on ministering,” etc. That is to say, each of us is to concentrate on what God has committed to us to do. Each of us is to pay particular attention to his own particular task and his own special opportunity to be helpful to others.

There is hardly anything that glorifies God and helps the Church more than each person strictly minding his or her own business, as God has committed it to him or her. Remember the saying of Jesus to Peter when Peter asked about John, “Lord, and what shall this man do?”. Jesus replied, “. . . what is that to thee? Follow thou me” (John 21:21,22).

Never mind if someone else makes a mistake sometimes, or if someone else fails in his task sometimes, or if someone else does not perform his task as well as we think we ourselves could perform it. Let each one of us concentrate on our own service to God, in the sphere and circumstances in which God has placed us. If we have been called to special office in the Church, let us concentrate on fulfilling the duties of our office faithfully. If we are private Christians, let us concentrate on helpfulness to our fellow Christians in the ways that God places before us.

Any amount of trouble can be caused in a church by a meddlesome spirit on the part of a few people. To be “a busybody in other men’s matters” (Greek, literally, a supervisor of other people’s affairs) is forbidden in God’s Word, and is classed with such sins as murder and theft (1 Peter 4:15). Yet this is hardly an uncommon sin, and it is a sin that has enabled the devil to do great harm to the Church. Sometimes one member of a church, or a little group, will carry on such a continuous fault-finding and criticism of the work of the pastor, the elders or the deacons, that their work is greatly undermined and the Church as a whole greatly disheartened and discouraged. Yet the fault-finders and self-appointed critics may themselves be doing nothing or very little in the way of Christian service. Their meddling destroys the Church. If there are legitimate complaints or criticisms they should be presented, in a friendly and loving

way, to the persons directly concerned, and if that fails, complaint should be made in an orderly, lawful way to the courts of the Church. But continuous under-cover fault-finding and criticism of others, whom God has not placed under our jurisdiction, is very sinful.

We might think of any piece of machinery—an automobile, for example. Each and every part has a function to perform. A spark plug cannot do the work of a carburetor, nor can a gear-shift take the place of a steering wheel. Each part has its specific function to perform, and when all are working harmoniously according to their proper functions, then true progress is possible. The maker of such an automobile will receive credit for having built an excellent machine, and the owner will derive satisfaction from the harmony and helpfulness of all the parts.

But it takes very little, sometimes, to stop an automobile entirely. A single broken wire will stop the most powerful car, if it is the right wire. Two or three drops of water inside the distributor will bring a speeding machine to a stop. Think how much trouble two or three Christians can make if they cease to be

helpful and become a stumbling-block to their fellow Christians. How important it is that we all live and work together in helpfulness and harmony.

#### Questions:

1. What other callings besides preaching can glorify God?
2. Why do not missionaries in foreign fields encourage every convert to try to become a preacher?
3. What is meant by “prophecy” in this chapter?
4. What is meant by “ministry”?
5. Why are the words “let us wait” in 12:7 printed in italics?
6. On what is every Christian to concentrate?
7. What does God’s Word say about being a busy-body in other people’s matters?
8. What troubles are caused by meddling and fault-finding with the Christian service of others?

### LESSON 70

#### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued.

##### A. The Duty of Cultivating Practical Personal Holiness. 12:1-21, Continued.

##### The Obligation of Christian Love. 12:9,10.

“Let love be without dissimulation.” Dissimulation means pretense, hypocrisy. Presumably “love” in verse 9 means love to all men, since love for our fellow Christians is specially mentioned as “brotherly love” in verse 10. So in our love for our fellow men, we are to be sincere, without pretense or hypocrisy. There is a kind of love which consists merely in words, without deeds. It is a mere pretense or sham. We may talk about how much we love our neighbor, yet shut our eyes to his need and pass by as did the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan. There is no room in the Christian life for shams or deceptions. Our love for our fellow men is to be sincere and genuine.

“Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” “The words **evil** and **good**, in this passage, may be understood of moral good and evil; and the exhortation be considered as a general direction to hate the one and love the other. But the great majority of commentators, out of regard to the context, take the terms in a restricted sense, making the former mean **injurious**, and the latter **kind**. The sense of the whole verse would then be, ‘Let love be sincere; strive to avoid what is injurious to others,

and earnestly endeavor to do what is kind and useful.’ As the words themselves admit of either of these interpretations, the choice between them depends upon the context. The latter is, on this ground, perhaps to be preferred” (Charles Hodge).

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.” Here we have a command which specifically requires love for our fellow Christians. The Greek word here used for “kindly affectioned” is a word which is used to express the strong natural affection between parents and children. It may also be used of any tender affection. “Here, no doubt, the idea is, that Christians should love each other with the same sincerity and tenderness as if they were the nearest relatives” (Charles Hodge). But how far short we fall in the practice of this! Some churches might almost be described as hotbeds of hatred and enmity, with member set against member and group against group. Sometimes persons who might be considering becoming members get an inside view of such feuding and enmity, and immediately decide against joining such a church.

“In honor preferring one another.” This sentence, as translated in the King James Version, must be understood as an exhortation to humility. But the Greek word translated “preferring” means to lead, to go before, to set an example. And the Greek word

translated "honor" may mean respect or kindness. Charles Hodge gives the following as a possible paraphrase of the clause: "as to respect and kindness going before each other, or setting an example one to another." The Revised Standard Version translates it: "outdo one another in showing honor." "It is not only an injunction of politeness, but that in all acts of respect and kindness we should take the lead. Instead of waiting for others to honor us, we should be beforehand with them in the manifestation of respect" (Charles Hodge).

#### **The Obligation of Christian Earnestness. 12:11-13.**

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality." Here we have presented some eight Christian duties, all of which may be summed up under the term "earnestness."

First of all, the Christian should be a busy person, not slothful in business. He should be active about his daily occupation of earning a living. This applies, of course, to everybody except those who by reason of youth, age, sickness or infirmity are unable to work. A man may have a fortune in stocks and bonds, but if he is a Christian he will not spend his days in idleness nor will he squander them in selfish pleasures; he will occupy himself with useful work, not because he has to work in order to eat, but because God requires a busy, active life of every Christian. Even those who do not have to work to earn a living must work to serve and please God. It is a sin not to work. "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work" is a divine commandment just as truly as "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." The person who wastes his time during the week in idleness or foolishness is breaking the moral law of God just as truly as the person who does unnecessary work on the sabbath day.

Next, the Christian is to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. We might paraphrase "fervent in spirit" as "enthusiastic." We are to be enthusiastic about our religion, enthusiastic in serving the Lord. Are we enthusiastic about our religion, or do we regard it as more or less of an unpleasant duty? Would we be willing to die for our faith, as the martyrs did?

Communism has gained half the world and everyone knows that real Communists are enthusiastic for their Communist faith. We can call it fanaticism if we wish, but the fact remains that they are willing to make sacrifices and even to die for their faith. Is Christianity losing the battle because Christians do not take their faith as seriously as Communists take theirs?

Someone has said that it is really much harder to live for one's religion than to die for it. No doubt there is much truth in this statement. Perhaps we in America are not likely to be called to suffer a martyr's death, though it is certainly possible. But at any rate we are called upon to live for our religion—to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. We are called to Christian earnestness. If we really have salvation, if the Spirit of God is really working in our hearts and lives we will be dead in earnest about our religion, and we will be dead in earnest about life itself.

This earnestness will be manifested not only in our daily tasks, not only in our enthusiasm about our religion, but also as we see in verse 12, by "rejoicing in hope," by being "patient in tribulation," and by "continuing instant in prayer." We will always have a deep happiness because of our Christian hope, the hope of eternal glory, of which God has told us that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." This happiness will be deeper than all our frequent troubles. If we are called upon, in God's providence, to suffer tribulation, as all of us are at some time and in some way, we will not become sour or bitter by this experience. We will show our Christian earnestness by being patient in tribulation.

And we will make prayer the habit and practice of our lives. We will not only pray in special emergencies—not just when we happen to find ourselves faced with death from starvation and thirst on a rubber raft out in the ocean somewhere—but we will pray daily, continuing instant in prayer. It sounds easy, of course, but it is perhaps the hardest of all Christian duties to perform. Satan has so many ways of diverting us from it and making us discouraged.

A story is told to the effect that Satan decided to go out of business and offered to sell his tools to the highest bidder. He was preparing to auction them off and had each tool marked with a price tag stating the lowest bid he would accept on that tool. Most had ordinary prices marked on them, but at one side there lay a wedge-shaped tool with an extremely high price marked on the tag. Someone asked Satan why he placed such a high price on what appeared to be a common wedge. He replied: "That is a special tool; it succeeds when all others fail. It is called Discouragement, and I can nearly always depend on it to destroy the happiness and usefulness of Christians whom I cannot influence by any of my ordinary methods or temptations."

The great enemy of prayer is discouragement. But by faith and Christian earnestness it can be overcome. Remember the story of Giant Despair in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

**Questions:**

1. What is the meaning of “dissimulation”?
2. What two interpretations of 12:9b (“Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good”) are possible, and which is probably the correct interpretation?
3. What is the meaning of the Greek word for “kindly affectioned” in 12:10?
4. What kind of love should we have toward our fellow Christians?
5. What is the true meaning and force of 12:10b (“in honor preferring one another”)?
6. What Christian obligation is set forth in 12:11-13?
7. Why should every Christian lead a busy and industrious life?
8. What is the teaching of God’s Word on the subject of slothfulness?
9. What is said about the duty of working in the Ten Commandments?
10. Is it really harder to live for our religion than to die for it, and if so, why?
11. Do Christians equal Communists in enthusiasm for their faith, and if not, what may be the reasons for this?
12. What is the effect of discouragement in the Christian life, and how may discouragement be overcome?

**LESSON 71****PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued.****A. The Duty of Cultivating Practical Personal Holiness. 12:1-21, Continued.****The Obligation of Christian Meekness. 12:3, 14-21.**

There is a great deal about Christian meekness in this chapter. But, first of all, what do we mean by meekness? Verse 3 almost provides a definition of meekness: “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” Meekness is also called humility, humbleness, lowliness of mind, etc. Also such terms as gentleness, forbearance, condescension, are closely related in meaning to meekness.

Meekness is really a kind of courage, and that, the very highest kind of courage. We might think that meekness is the opposite of courage. But really meekness is the very highest and noblest kind of courage. Meekness is the calm courage that dares to face the realities of one’s own life. Meekness is the courage that enables a person to admit a wrong; the courage that enables a person to say “I am sorry” and to ask for forgiveness. Meekness is the courage that enables a person to face suffering without panic. Meekness is the courage that enables a person to experience **serious injustice** without becoming cynical and bitter about it.

Meekness is the courage that dares to give up the ambition to be great and important, and is willing to take a lowly place and to do one’s best for God in ordinary surroundings and circumstances. Meekness is the courage that dares to crucify human pride and

vanity and selfishness, and dares to live a life of humble, unselfish helpfulness.

By nature we are all tremendous cowards. We are terribly afraid—afraid to take second place, afraid to crucify our worldly pride and ambition, afraid to confess that we have done wrong, afraid to ask for forgiveness, afraid to suffer pain, afraid to suffer injustice. We are moral cowards. But the Christian receives the grace of meekness. He receives the meek courage which enables him to face all these situations and to rise above them and conquer them by the power of God.

Now note the exhortation to meekness in Romans 12. First read verse 3. Ah, here is where we are all tempted to go astray! Think carefully, and we will realize that no one is immune to this subtle temptation to have an exaggerated opinion of our own qualities, character, achievements and importance. But if we grow in Christian meekness, the grace of God will enable us more and more to overcome this selfish pride.

Now note verse 14, which refers to conduct under persecution. “Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not.” This text does not tell us to obey the wishes of the persecutors; it does not say that a Christian must agree with the demands or comply with the requirements of persecutors of Christianity. But it does say that, as to our personal attitude toward persecutors, we must not curse them, we must not hate them; we must “bless, and curse not.” When they do us wrong, we must do them good, not wrong in return for wrong.

The great African bishop Cyprian, who was un-

justly put to death by the Roman government in the year 260 after Christ, was arrested, tried by a Roman court, and ordered to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods of Rome. He refused. The judge advised him to consider his answer carefully, as his life was hanging in the balances. Cyprian replied, "Do your duty. This matter does not admit of consideration." Thereupon he was sentenced to be beheaded with a sword. His only answer as he heard the sentence of the court was to say, "Thanks be unto God." At the place of execution a great crowd had gathered, many of them friends and admirers of Cyprian. The executioner who was to wield the sword trembled at his task. Cyprian knelt and offered prayer, then expressed as his last wish that from his estate 25 gold pieces be given as a gift to the executioner who was to behead him. Thus Cyprian not only showed no bitterness or hatred, but also deeply impressed the public, both Christian and non-Christian, with the truth that for a Christian, "to die is gain."

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (12:15). Here Christian sympathy is enjoined upon us. The selfish Christian will be absorbed in his own affairs; we will not think of other people's joys and sorrows. But the meek, humble and unselfish Christian will share in other people's joys and sorrows, as well as his own.

"Be of the same mind one toward another" (12:16). This does not mean that unity and agreement are to be sought by the sacrifice of truth. If a member of the Church is teaching false doctrine, denying the truths of the Scriptures, we are not to agree with him for the sake of peace and harmony. Of course, it would be wrong, and sinful in God's sight, to do that. There is a worship of peace and harmony in the churches today which is nothing but idolatry. It seeks external peace by the sacrifice of truth and righteousness. Some will not tolerate any serious discussion or debate on doctrinal or practical issues because they fear it will mar the "peace" of the Church. Objection is also raised against submitting matters in an orderly and lawful way to the courts of the Church, on the ground that this causes controversy and disturbs the "peace" of the Church. We should realize that there is no such ideal of peace at any price in the Bible. The Bible always puts truth and righteousness first, and never commands us to seek peace at the cost of truth or righteousness. If we were as zealous for the glory of God as we are for the external peace and harmony of the Church, unexpected blessings might be poured out upon us.

But the text we are considering certainly does mean that we are to avoid a stubborn spirit that cannot brook opposition. We are not to become dissatisfied because we cannot have our own way about everything. In a magazine there appeared a letter seeking counsel. The writer of the letter said she wanted her own way all the time, and her husband wanted his own way all the time too, and it was a problem how they could have a happy home, and what should she do? There is no way to have the blessings of happiness and harmony and at the same time insist on having our own way all the time.

We are not to sacrifice our real principles for the sake of peace, but on the other hand we must be careful to make sure that what we call principles are not really just plain stubbornness and a selfish desire to have our own way.

#### Questions:

1. What verse of chapter 12 approaches a definition of meekness?
2. What terms are synonymous with meekness, or related to it?
3. Why is it true that meekness is the highest kind of courage?
4. What are some of the things that Christian meekness will enable a person to do?
5. To what subtle temptation are we all subject, as suggested in 12:3?
6. What does this chapter teach about conduct under persecution?
7. How did Cyprian exemplify Christian conduct in connection with his martyrdom?
8. What verse enjoins the duty of Christian sympathy?
9. How do we know that 12:6 does not mean that peace is to be sought at the cost of truth and righteousness?
10. Why is it wrong to have a stubborn spirit, and what harm will it do?

## LESSON 72

**PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued.****A. The Duty of Cultivating Practical Personal Holiness. 12:1-21, Continued.****The Obligation of Christian Meekness. 12:3, 14-21, Continued.**

“Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate” (12:16). It takes a truly great person to translate these words into life and character. Abraham Lincoln, though he was President of the United States, could talk with people from the humblest walks of life, without the least arrogance because of his exalted position. It takes a truly great man to do that. Someone trying hard to maintain his own dignity could not do it. He would be too self-conscious.

As Christians we are to condescend to men of low estate. After all, in God’s sight we are all men of low estate. There is no respect of persons with God. The Christian who receives the grace of meekness will not be trying to maintain his own dignity. He will not have a “complex” that will make him difficult for others to get along with.

“Be not wise in your own conceits” (12:16). “No species of pride is more insidious or more injurious than the pride of intellect, or a fancied superiority to those around us, which leads to a contempt of their opinions, and a confident reliance upon ourselves. The temper which the gospel requires is that of a little child, docile, diffident, and humble . . .” (Charles Hodge).

“Recompense to no man evil for evil” (12:17). A missionary was once asked some questions about heaven by a man who had heard just a very little of the Gospel of Christ. One question asked was whether it will be possible for us in heaven to get even with those who treated us badly while we were on earth. The missionary replied by saying that those who have their heart set on revenge will not enter heaven at all.

It is a natural evil tendency of our sinful heart—the desire to get even with some person. But we should realize that this desire is wicked, and we should crucify it with the rest of our sinful lusts.

“Provide things honest in the sight of all men” (12:17). Charles Hodge comments that the translation of this clause in the King James Version is unfortunate and gives a wrong idea of the meaning. “Paul does not mean to direct us to make provision for ourselves or our families in an honest manner, which is probably the sense commonly attached to the passage by the English reader, but to act in such a

manner as to command the confidence and good opinion of men” (Hodge). The clause may be an allusion to Proverbs 3:4, which in the Greek version of the Old Testament is similar in language to Rom. 12:17.

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (12:18). This verse recognizes, by implication, that there may be times when it is not possible to maintain peace. There are times when we must fight for the defense of our country; there are times when we must contend for the truth of God (Jude 3); there are times when it would be a base betrayal not to fight against evil. We cannot always maintain peace. Sometimes it is our duty to fight. But war is always an evil. It may sometimes be a necessary evil, it may be an unavoidable evil, but we must remember that it is an evil. We do not believe in war for its own sake; and we should not believe in controversy for its own sake.

The ideal is peace, not peace at any price, but peace “if it be possible.” If it be possible, this means, without the sacrifice of something more precious and important than peace. Note well that the apostle speaks of living peaceably with all men; not just with our friends and neighbors, but with all men. This includes those who hate us, those who are attacking us and trying to work against us, those who are not beneath taking a mean, unfair advantage of us. If it is possible, we are to live at peace with them.

This is meekness, the meek courage that dares to keep the peace even at the risk of being misunderstood or regarded as cowardly. The Christian should be known as a peaceful and peace-loving person. He will never glorify war for its own sake; he will hate war and will resort to it only because of grim necessity; and in his personal relationships he will always seek for peace and good will when it is possible to do so without acting against conscience.

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (12:19). Here again we have a solemn admonition not to seek vengeance. The world talks continually about vengeance. As Christians we should not think in such terms. Even a nation at war should not seek vengeance. Revenge is far from the Christian ideal and spirit. Rather, we are commanded to give place unto wrath, and leave vengeance to the Lord.

God, who is absolutely just, as well as merciful, will render retribution to evildoers. He will pay them according to absolute justice. No sin will be overlooked. God will render to all according to

their deeds, unless they repent and seek His mercy in Christ.

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; and if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head” (12:20). This verse is taken from Proverbs 25:21,22. It must not be misunderstood. This verse does not mean that war is not to be prosecuted against public enemies, foreign or domestic. But when the conflict is over, we are to seek the real welfare of those whom it was our duty to fight and oppose.

The early Christians lived out these precepts in their daily lives. In a world in which meekness was all but unknown, they not only preached meek courage—they also lived it. In a world which had lost its conviction of the seriousness of life in a cynical pessimism and despair, the early Christians lived a life of moral purity, deep earnestness and courageous meekness. They dared to be different, they dared to challenge the world’s ideas of nobility and greatness, and they amazed the world with the character—Christian character—which they manifested. May we, by God’s grace, follow in their train.

#### Questions:

1. Why does it take a truly great man to condescend to men of low estate?
2. What kind of pride is specially insidious, and what harm does it do?
3. How should we treat the natural tendency of our hearts to desire to get even with those who have wronged us?
4. What is the correct meaning of “Provide things honest in the sight of all men”?
5. Why does Paul say “if it be possible” in 12:18?
6. Why is it not always our duty to maintain peace?
7. With what classes of people are we to try to live at peace?
8. Who reserves the right to take vengeance?
9. What is the true teaching of 12:20?
10. What traits of character did the early Christians exemplify?

### LESSON 73

#### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued.

##### B. The Christian’s Civil Obligations. 13:1-7.

##### Subjection unto the Higher Powers. 13:1-2.

Verses 1-2 are inadequately translated in the King James Version, because of the use of the ambiguous word “powers” for the Greek *exousiai*, which properly means **authorities**. Power and authority are not identical. Recently an American general was kidnapped by Communist prisoners of war on an island off the coast of Korea. While he was in the hands of the Communists, the general possessed authority but no power. The Communist prisoners who perpetrated this deed, on the other hand, had power but no authority. The policeman who attempts to arrest the bandit has both power and authority. The Greek word *exousia* (plural, *exousiai*), like the English word “authority,” implies something more than mere power. These terms imply power that is in some sense or within some sphere of existence, recognized or sanctioned.

It has sometimes been attempted to hold that “authority” (*exousia*) always means legitimate authority in the highest sense, that is, that which God approves of, that which is in accord with the moral law of God. This attempt breaks down, however,

when we examine the usage of the word *exousia* in the New Testament. For we find that this word *exousia* is used time and again of Satan and Satan’s kingdom. Some instances may be cited here. In each case the English word “power” is used to translate the Greek word *exousia* which properly means “authority.” Luke 22:53, “. . . this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” Acts 26:18, “. . . to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. . . .” Eph. 2:2, “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Eph. 6:12, “For we wrestle . . . against powers . . . against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Col. 1:13, “the power of darkness.” Col. 2:15, “having spoiled principalities and powers.” Rev. 13:4, “the dragon which gave power unto the beast.” Rev. 23:5, “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.” Rev. 13:12, “And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him . . .” It is clear, then, that the Greek word for **authority** is not limited to authority that is in accord with the moral law of God, but is also used of evil and Satanic authority.

Rom. 13:1 is translated thus in the Revised Stan-

Standard Version: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." Williams' version translates as follows: "Everybody must obey the civil authorities that are over him, for no authority exists except by God's permission; the existing authorities have been established by him, . . ."

So much for the word "powers." The Christian is commanded to be subject unto the higher powers. The apostle adds that "there is no power but of God" and that "the powers that be are ordained of God." We must now consider the meaning of these statements.

God is the ultimate source of all authority. Parents would have no authority over their children, magistrates would have no authority over citizens, except for authority derived from God. This is true not only of moral and legitimate authority, but even of the authority of Satan. We learn from the book of Job that Satan cannot go a hair's breadth beyond what is permitted him by God. He has no power or authority whatsoever but what is derived from God. In a certain sense God has given power or authority to Satan. We have already seen that the New Testament speaks of the authority of Satan and Satan's kingdom. Whatever authority Satan may have can come from no other source but God. This does not imply, of course, that what Satan does is pleasing to God or in harmony with God's law.

After his resurrection Jesus said to His disciples, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). This is legitimate authority in the highest moral sense; it is the authority which is pleasing to God, of which God approves, and which is in harmony with God's moral law. On the other hand, Rev. 13:5 speaks of authority given unto the wild beast from the sea. This authority, though coming ultimately from God, is wicked, immoral and contrary to God's law.

Between the authority given to God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the authority given to the beast, there exists an intermediate zone of authority which proceeds from God and is "ordained of God" in a certain sense, yet is not legitimate or pleasing to God in the highest sense. This is the authority of civil governments which exist in the world but which do not recognize and obey the Lord Jesus Christ. The secular or non-Christian civil governments of the world are certainly not "ordained of God" in the highest sense; they are not pleasing to God in the highest sense, for they do not recognize and obey God's Son as they are commanded to do in Psalm 2:10-12. On the other hand, there is obviously a vast difference between, say, the United States government as it exists today, and the kingdom of the Beast as it is pictured in Revelation 13. The United States

government fails to honor Jesus Christ, yet in general it fulfils the God-ordained functions of civil government, maintaining law and order, punishing crime, etc. Insofar as it fulfils the proper functions of civil government, it is "ordained of God" and it is our duty to obey its laws. In the providence of God, it is the government which exists over us.

Some have held that in Rom. 13:1-7 Paul was not speaking of the non-Christian governments of world history, but of an ideal Christian State which would be realized at a future time. This interpretation, however, is quite untenable. Paul is talking about "the powers that be." In the Greek it is "the existing powers" (**hai ousai exousiai**). This phrase, "the existing powers," cannot possibly mean "the powers which do not exist now but will come into existence at a future time." The only interpretation which does not do violence to the Greek words is that Paul was writing of the powers which were in existence at the time he wrote the Epistle. He uses the present tense throughout. He commands his readers to obey the existing powers, to pay taxes to them, etc. The only powers they could obey or pay taxes to were those in existence in their time.

#### Questions:

1. Why is Rom. 13:1-2 inadequately translated in the King James Version?
2. What is the difference between power and authority?
3. How can it be shown that in the New Testament the word "authority" is not limited to authority which is pleasing to God?
4. What is the ultimate source of all authority?
5. How can it be shown that the authority of Satan is derived from God?
6. What kind of authority is spoken of in Matt. 28:18?
7. What kind of authority is spoken of in Rev. 13:5?
8. What kind of authority exists which is intermediate between that of Matt. 28:18 and that of Rev. 13:5?
9. In what respect is the United States government of the present day displeasing to God?
10. What Scripture passage clearly commands civil magistrates to honor the Son of God?
11. In what sense is the present United States government ordained of God?

12. How do we know that Paul's expression, "the powers that be," means the governments of Paul's

day and our own day, not an ideal Christian State to be realized in the future?

#### LESSON 74

#### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued.

**B. The Christian's Civil Obligations. 13:1-7, Continued.**

**Subjection unto the Higher Powers. 13:1-2, Continued.**

We have seen that the apostle Paul in 13:1 teaches that "the existing powers (authorities)" are ordained of God. That is, in a certain sense they exist in accordance with the will of God. They exist by His permission and providence. Even though displeasing to God by reason of their failure to honor and serve His Son, still He permits them to exist and to function in human society. "It is clear that this passage (vers. 1, 2) is applicable to men living under every form of government, monarchical, aristocratical, or democratical, in all their various modifications. Those who are in authority are to be obeyed within their sphere, no matter how or by whom appointed. It is the *ousai exousiai*, the powers that be, the *de facto* government, that is to be regarded as, for the time being, ordained of God. It was to Paul a matter of little importance whether the Roman emperor was appointed by the senate, the army, or the people; whether the assumption of the imperial authority by Caesar was just or unjust, or whether his successors had a legitimate claim to the throne or not. It was his object to lay down the simple principle, that magistrates are to be obeyed. The extent of this obedience is to be determined from the nature of the case. They are to be obeyed as magistrates, in the exercise of their lawful authority. When Paul commands wives to obey their husbands, they are to obey them as husbands, not as masters, nor as kings; children are to obey their parents as parents, not as sovereigns; and so in every other case. This passage, therefore, affords a very slight foundation for the doctrine of passive obedience" (Charles Hodge). "We are to obey magistrates, because they derive their authority from God. Not only is human government a divine institution, but the form in which that government exists, and the persons by whom its functions are exercised, are determined by his providence. All magistrates of whatever grade are to be regarded as acting by divine appointment; not that God designates the individuals, but it being his will that there should be magistrates, every person, who is in point of fact clothed with authority, is to be regarded as having a claim to obedience, founded on the will of God . . . There is no limitation to the injunction in this verse, so far as the objects of obedience are concerned, although there is as to the extent of the obedience itself. That is, we are bound to obey all that is in actual authority over us, whether their authority

be legitimate or usurped, whether they are just or unjust. The actual reigning emperor was to be obeyed by the Roman Christians, whatever they might think as to his title to the sceptre. But if he transcended his authority, and required of them to worship idols, they were to obey God rather than man. This is the limitation to all human authority. Whenever obedience to man is inconsistent with obedience to God, then disobedience becomes a duty" (Charles Hodge).

"Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (13:2). The Revised Standard Version translates this: "Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment." The Greek word *krima*, translated "damnation" in the King James Version, properly means simply "judgment." It does not necessarily mean eternal damnation. If obedience to magistrates is a duty, then disobedience to magistrates is a sin, and those who commit the sin will receive punishment for it. The reference of verse 2 is evidently not to a punishment which will be inflicted by the civil magistrates, but to a judgment of God. For he is discussing obedience as a duty required by God, and disobedience as a sin against God.

We should clearly discern that what Paul is discussing here is not the right of magistrates to rule, but the duty of Christians to obey magistrates. Whether the magistrate has a right to rule is one question; whether Christian people ought to obey whatever magistrates exist in the providence of God, is another question. What are the proper limits of Christian people's obedience to wicked magistrates, is still a third question. If these different questions are not clearly distinguished, only confusion and error can result. In Rom. 13:1-7 Paul is not discussing the right of magistrates to rule, nor is he discussing the proper limits of obedience to wicked magistrates. He is teaching only the simple principle that it is the duty of Christian people to obey the existing magistrates. That the magistrates may be wicked men, and that it may be God's plan to overthrow the existing government and set up a better one in its place, is perfectly true. That there are well-defined limits to the obedience which Christian people ought to render to magistrates, is also perfectly true. But what the apostle is teaching is that it is the Christian's duty to obey **the existing authorities** as long as, in God's providence, they continue to exist as authorities.

**Questions:**

1. What principle is Paul laying down in Rom. 13:1,2?
2. How can it be shown that Rom. 13:1-7 does not teach the doctrine of "passive obedience," that the commands of magistrates are to be obeyed without any limits?
3. When is disobedience to magistrates a Christian

duty?

4. What is the true meaning of the word translated "damnation" in 13:2?
5. What kind of judgment is referred to in 13:2?
6. What three questions must be clearly distinguished if we are to understand Rom 13:1,2 aright?

**LESSON 75****PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued.****B. The Christian's Civil Obligations. 13:1-7, Continued.****The Functions and Powers of Civil Government. 13:3,4.**

"For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (13:3,4).

Here Paul states an additional reason for obedience to magistrates: not only is obedience our Christian duty, but magistrates are for the purpose of restraining evil and promoting good. In these verses we find the Biblical teaching on the functions of civil government. Briefly stated, the functions of the civil government as established by God are to **administer justice in human society**.

Civil government is necessary by reason of the existence of sin. Whether there would have been such an institution as the State in human society if the human race had never fallen into sin is a debated question. It may be granted that something analogous to the State would have existed. But it would have been very different from civil government as it exists in a sinful world. For in a sinless world the use of force would have been unnecessary, and there would have been no crime or injustice to punish. In a sinless world, the State would be merely an expression of the organic unity of the human race and would exist purely for co-operative purposes, not for the restraint of evil. But in the world of sinful, fallen humanity the State exists to restrain evil. It is one of God's ways of restraining and limiting the effects of sin in human society.

The first clear revelation in the Bible of the institution of civil government is in Gen. 9:6, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be

shed: for in the image of God made he man." This divine command that murder shall be punished by the death penalty, implies the existence of a constituted government of some kind which can execute the penalty.

Throughout the Bible we find a great deal of teaching on the subject of civil government and its functions and duties. And it is unmistakably clear that the primary function of civil government is the maintaining of justice in human society.

The State is, of course, only one of the divine institutions existing in human society. There are also the Family and the Church. Each of these has its own proper sphere and its own proper functions to perform. None of them may trespass on the territory of another. For the United States Government to enact a law specifying requirements for ordination to the office of the Gospel ministry, would be to trespass on the sphere of the Church. For the State to make a law forbidding parents to teach their children religion, would be to trespass on the sphere of the family. According to the Bible, there are limits to the functions of the State. It may not take over the functions of the church and the family.

In the totalitarian states of yesterday and of today we see the full development of the evil tendency of the State, or civil government, to take over everything. The totalitarian state crowds the family and the church into narrower and narrower bounds, while the State assumes control of more and more areas of human life. It demands that all human organizations and activities be directed toward enhancing the greatness and glory of the State. Those which do not do this may be regarded as unnecessary and therefore forbidden. Parents are compelled more and more to surrender their children to the control of the State. The Church finds its very existence made contingent upon the will of the State. Human freedom vanishes as everything passes under the control of a totalitarian, unlimited State.

In democratic countries such as the United States

of America the same tendency of the State to expand its areas of activity and control exists, though to a much smaller degree than in the totalitarian countries. In democratic nations this tendency is sometimes called "Statism." It is seen in the civil government assuming control over more and more of the people's life and activities. Business, agriculture, education, and many other lines of activity, are more and more brought under government regulation or control. There is also the tendency of the State to carry on business enterprises in competition with its own citizens.

State regulation and control of industry, business, etc., are not necessarily wrong. They are legitimate just to the extent that they are truly necessary for the maintaining of justice. And justice, of course, must not be taken in the narrow sense of mere punishment of individual lawbreakers. Justice in human society means equity between man and man, between group and group. The State is the arbiter between a man and his neighbor, between one group of people and another group of people, to see that justice is maintained. If justice requires that some particular line of activity, such as the postal service, be a government monopoly, then the State is warranted in acting accordingly.

But the tendency of the State to overstep all bounds and take over more and more of human life is certainly wrong and contrary to God's plan revealed in the Bible. This is clear from the fact that the family and the church, as well as the individual, also have rights and functions which God has ordained, which the State may not take over. Certainly totalitarianism and statism are contrary to the Bible teaching of the functions and purpose of the State. God did not ordain civil government to be an all-inclusive provider for all the needs of human beings, nor is the chief end of man to enhance the greatness and power of the State. The State was instituted to restrain the consequences of sin by maintaining justice in human society—justice in the truest and broadest sense.

### Questions:

1. What additional reason does Paul state why Christians should obey magistrates?
2. How may the divinely intended function of civil government be briefly stated?
3. Why is civil government necessary in human society?
4. Would the State as we know it have existed in a sinless world?
5. Where in the Bible is the institution of civil government first revealed?
6. What three divine institutions exist in human society?
7. Why may no one of these institutions trespass on the territory of the others?
8. What tendency reaches its fullest development in totalitarian states?
9. What is the effect of totalitarianism on the family and on the Church?
10. What becomes of human freedom under a totalitarian government?
11. What is meant by Statism?
12. To what extent is government regulation or control of business, industry, etc., legitimate?
13. What is the meaning of justice in human society?
14. What does the Bible imply concerning the tendency of the State to take over more and more of human life?

## LESSON 76

### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued.

#### B. The Christian's Civil Obligations. 13:1-7, Continued.

#### The Functions and Powers of Civil Government. 13:3,4, Continued.

In Romans 13:3,4, Paul teaches that the State is to praise them that do good and to punish them that do evil. "Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same" (12:3b). Some have wondered how Paul could make such a statement about the civil government when the Roman Empire persecuted Christians unto death. The explanation is simple.

Paul is speaking of the ordinary course of government, not of exceptional circumstances and conditions. The Roman Empire did not **always** persecute Christians. We easily tend to forget the time element which was involved. In the early period of the Christian Church, as pictured in the Book of Acts, it was the Jews who persecuted Christianity while the Roman Government protected the Christians. There were occasional outrages on the part of Gentiles against Christians, as at Ephesus (Acts 19). But it should be noted that this riot at Ephesus was not instigated by government officials but by private parties, and it was subdued and order restored by the

town clerk, a local official subordinate to the Roman Empire. He reminded the rioters that they might be held responsible by higher authorities (of the Roman Empire) for their disorderly conduct on that day. Thus we see the Roman Empire maintaining justice, law and order in the face of an angry mob stirred up by the silversmiths of Ephesus. Paul's Roman citizenship protected him time and again from the violence of the Jews. At this early period, the Roman Empire, with all its faults, maintained justice, law and order.

Later, of course, there was a change. The Jews passed out of the picture with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and Rome embarked on a program of bitter persecution of Christians. When Paul wrote, "Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same," he did not of course mean that no government would ever persecute Christians. Paul himself did good, yet he was beheaded by the Roman Empire. But persecution is after all the exception. As a general principle it is true that those who are orderly and law-abiding, who do good, are praised and protected by the State.

Paul teaches, also, that the civil magistrate is authorized to use force for the restraint of evil and the punishment of evildoers. "He beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil (13:4b). The use of the sword implies the death penalty. This in turn implies the power of lesser penalties in the administration of justice. If the State has the God-given authority to punish murder with death, it also has the God-given authority to punish theft, arson or perjury with fine or imprisonment.

There is a great deal of sentiment arrayed against the death penalty today. Many oppose it, strange to say, on religious grounds. Yet it must be insisted that the death penalty for murder has the sanction of both the Old Testament and the New. Scripture not only authorizes the punishment of death for murder, but it requires this. No human government is at liberty to change this requirement of God's Word. Those who oppose the death penalty on religious grounds invariably have a sentimental view of religion which does not take account of the awful reality of sin nor of the holiness and righteousness of God.

The passage of Scripture we are studying also has a bearing on the question of Pacifism. Those who say that the use of force is always wrong in dealings between nations do not take account of the whole teaching of Scripture on this subject. If the civil magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain," he is empowered to use force against evil when necessary. But there is no difference in principle between the use of force to restrain evil within a nation, and the use of force to restrain evil between nations. If it is right for a policeman to shoot a murderer or robber who is resisting arrest, it is also right for a nation to use armed force to protect itself or others against an aggressor nation. Those who hold that all international evil can be dealt with adequately without force do not understand the real wickedness of the human heart nor the nature of evil as it is revealed in the Bible.

#### Questions:

1. How could Paul say that those who do good will be praised by civil rulers, when the Roman Government persecuted Christians unto death?
2. Who were the chief persecutors of Christianity in the early period of the Church, as pictured in the Book of Acts?
3. What was the nature of the riot at Ephesus, and what was the connection of the Roman Government with it?
4. What change in the persecution of Christianity came with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70?
5. What does Romans 13 teach about the use of force to restrain evildoers?
6. What is the teaching of Scripture on the penalty for the crime of murder? Where is this taught in the Bible?
7. What is the bearing of Romans 13:3,4 on the question of Pacifism?
8. What truths of the Bible do pacifists fail to grasp?

### LESSON 77

#### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued.

**B. The Christian's Civil Obligations. 13:1-7, Continued.**

**The Christian's Proper Attitude Toward the Civil Government. 13:5-7.**

"Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for

wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing" (13:5,6). The apostle here teaches that obedience to magistrates is not only a civil duty which will be enforced by the State, but that it is a religious duty, a part of our conscientious obedience to God.

We are to obey the lawful commands of magistrates, not only because we have to, but also because we ought to. We are not to obey merely because of "wrath," that is, not merely because of the fear of suffering penalties, but also as a matter of conscientious devotion to God. This implies that we are to be law-abiding citizens, not only when there is some probability or danger of our being caught or punished. We are to obey the law even when we could easily break it without fear of consequences. This is the high ideal of Christian duty toward civil government which is taught in the Word of God. Where this is taken seriously, Christians will be models of law-abiding conduct. For example, a Christian should be scrupulously exact and honest in making out his income tax return, not only because the law provides penalties for dishonesty, but much more because to cheat on one's income tax is to sin against God.

God's Word requires of us that we obey not merely those laws of the State which we believe to be fair and just, but also those laws which we may believe to be unfair and unjust, as long as they are the law of the State. The individual Christian is not empowered to pick and choose among the laws of his country and decide which he should obey and which he may disobey. The Christian is to obey all the laws, even those which he regards as unfair to him. Unfortunately in the United States there have been some laws which were obviously designed to benefit one class of the population at the expense of another class; for instance the discriminatory laws of a few years ago which placed a heavy tax on the sale of oleomargarine. These laws were not designed to benefit all the people, but to protect the interests of some over against others. Many Christian people objected to these laws and felt that they were unjust and unfair. But no one had a right to disregard or disobey them on that account. Those who objected had a right to work for the repeal of the laws, but as long as they were on the statute books, they must be obeyed as a matter of Christian duty.

There is really only one exception to the principle that a Christian must always obey the laws of the State, and that is that when obedience to the laws of

the State would involve disobedience to the law of God, it is the Christian's duty to obey God rather than men. For example, a law (such as has existed in some countries) requiring a government license or permit to preach the Gospel is null and void in the sight of God, and should be disregarded by Christian people. To comply with such a law by applying for a license to preach the Gospel is to render the things of God to Caesar. We are commanded by Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel, and we have no right to make His command contingent upon the permission of the State. Similarly, a law requiring people to engage in idolatrous worship should be disobeyed, as was done by Daniel's three friends. Again, a law forbidding people to change their religion is contrary to the commands of God and should be disobeyed. God commands every person in the world to become a Christian, and no civil law forbidding this can be regarded as valid.

#### Questions:

1. What does the apostle Paul teach in 13:5?
2. What does Paul mean by the phrase "not only for wrath"?
3. When must the Christian obey the laws of his country?
4. How should a Christian make out his tax return?
5. Why should a Christian obey even those laws which he considers unjust?
6. Under what circumstances is it our Christian duty to break the laws of the State?
7. Give some examples of possible laws which a Christian ought not to obey.
8. Show from the history of Moses' parents, of Moses, of Daniel, and of the apostles, that it may be our duty to break human laws.

### LESSON 78

#### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued.

##### **B. The Christian's Civil Obligations. 13:1-7, Continued.**

##### **The Christian's Proper Attitude Toward the Civil Government. 13:5-7, Continued.**

"For they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing" (13:6b). The State and its officials are properly regarded as God's servants. They serve God in fulfilling the proper func-

tions of civil government faithfully. The country does not exist for the government, but the government for the country, and both for God. In some totalitarian countries, officials have become extremely proud and arrogant, so that even petty officials have a haughty and overbearing attitude, as if they were doing the common people a great favor just to let them exist. In totalitarian states, officials easily come to think that the country exists for them. Instead of trying to serve the public, they think the

public exists to support and serve them. This is of course a completely upside-down view of the relation between officials and people. The government and its officials exist for the benefit of the people. They are God's servants to men for good. This is not only true in a democracy such as the U.S.A., but it is true under any form of government, rightly considered. The Roman Empire at the time of Paul's writing this Epistle was certainly not a free democracy. Yet even at that time, Paul wrote that civil rulers are God's servants for people's benefit.

Even though the civil rulers may be ungodly men who have no idea of serving God, still in God's reckoning of things they serve as His servants to accomplish some of His purposes in human society. Even in dealing with non-Christian officials in a non-Christian government, the Christian is to look at matters from God's viewpoint. He is to remember that civil government exists in human society for the restraint of evil, and that even these non-Christian officials, in spite of their infidelity, are used by God for the accomplishment of this purpose. The Christian is to regard the government not merely as the government regards itself, but as the Bible regards human government, from the standpoint of God's purpose in human society.

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor" (13:7). Since civil government is an institution of God for the benefit of human society, it follows that we must do our duty toward it. This involves not merely obeying its laws, but also positive support, both financial and by our influence. Here "tribute" means ordinary taxes, as on land or property; "custom" means duty levied on merchandise. "Fear (**phobos**) and "honor" (**time**) are essentially the same, differing only in degree. "Fear" means proper respect for superiors;

"honor" means a proper esteem for our equals in human society.

In the next lesson of this series we shall consider the bearing of Paul's teaching in Romans 13:1-7 on the Covenanter principle of political dissent.

#### Questions:

1. What is the place of the State and its officials in relation to God?
2. Does the country exist for the government, or the government for the country?
3. For whom do both the country and the government exist?
4. What attitude on the part of public officials is common in totalitarian countries?
5. Why should the Christian regard even non-Christian rulers as servants of God?
6. Besides obeying the laws, what duties do we owe to the government?
7. What is meant by "tribute" and "custom"?
8. What is the difference between "fear" and "honor"?

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"Since Divine revelation directs itself against the mind and inclination of the sinner, sinful tendency could not be wanting, to represent that revelation differently from what it was given."

—Abraham Kuyper

## *Religious Terms Defined*

**ANTITYPE.** That which corresponds to a type; the fulfilment of a type. A type is the appearance on a lower plane, or smaller scale, of something which will later appear on a higher plane, or larger scale. Thus the Flood was a type of the Judgment Day; the Judgment Day is the antitype of the Flood. Melchizedek as priest-king is a type of Christ; Christ is the antitype of Melchizedek. In dealing with supposed types and antitypes, caution is necessary, for many have indulged in fantastic identifications, far beyond what a sober study of Scripture warrants. For example, it is unwarranted to say that the dove released from the ark by Noah was a type of the Holy Spirit, or to say that the inn to which the Good Samaritan

took the wounded man was a type of the Church. More than similarity is required; it must be shown that Scripture intends the typological meaning.

**APOCRYPHA.** Those books excluded from the Bible because of lack of divine inspiration. (Westminster Confession I.3). Some parts of the Apocrypha have some value for scholars as historical sources, but the books of the Apocrypha are not Scripture and should not be treated as Scripture.

**APOSTASY.** Forsaking the truth of God, by word or by actions, on the part of an individual, a church or a nation; especially, falling away from those truths

which are essential to the existence of Christianity, such as the Trinity, the Deity of Christ and the substitutionary atonement. The Bible predicts a general apostasy before the second coming of Christ (2 Thess. 2:3). In our day there are large denominations which formerly were Christian but which today proclaim a message which is not Christianity, but only "high ideals," "character building," "positive thinking," "spiritual values" and the like, while the heart of Christianity, the substitutionary atonement, is omitted. Such denominations, when serious efforts to reform them have failed, are to be regarded as apostate (Reformed Presbyterian Testimony, XXII.6).

**APOSTLE.** Literally, "one sent." A person sent upon a commission; especially, one of the group of men chosen by Jesus Christ as official witnesses of His resurrection, and ordained as official representatives for establishing the doctrine, worship, government and discipline of the New Testament Church.

**APOSTLES' CREED.** The most ancient Christian creed, which, however, was certainly not composed by the apostles of our Lord. Its origin is unknown; it reached its present form only by a long and gradual process of development.

**ARCHAEOLOGY.** The scientific investigation of ancient civilization and culture by excavation and study of their remains. Archaeology is of use to confirm written history where the latter exists, and to fill gaps in our knowledge where no written history exists. Many statements of the Bible which had been questioned by skeptics have been shown to be true by archaeological discoveries, and much light has been shed on statements of the Bible which were formerly obscure.

**ARIANISM.** A heresy in the ancient Church which denied the true deity of Jesus Christ. Named after Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, Arianism taught that Christ existed before the creation of the world, but denied that He is the eternal Son, of the same substance with the Father. Arianism was opposed by Athanasius, and rejected as a heresy by the Church at the Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325.

**ARMINIANISM.** The doctrinal system derived from the teachings of the Dutch theologian Jacobus

Arminius, which regards the sovereignty of God as limited by the free will of man, and which conceives of the work of salvation as divided between God and man, with the decisive factor in the hands of man.

**ASCETICISM.** The tendency, which came into the Christian Church from pagan sources in the early centuries, to seek a higher type of holiness by withdrawal from human society and renunciation of the ordinary pleasures and comforts of life which are not necessarily evil. In practice, asceticism led to the notion that it is a sin to be comfortable and enjoy life. It sought holiness by self-decreed misery.

**ASSURANCE.** The consciousness of the absolute certainty of one's own present and eternal salvation, to which a believer may attain in the course of time by a right use of the means of grace and by the witness of the Holy Spirit in his heart.

**ATHEISM.** The denial of the existence of God.

**ATONEMENT.** The satisfaction of the justice of God that was necessary for sinners to be forgiven. That perfect, finished work of Jesus Christ by which He offered Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile sinners to God.

**FALSE THEORIES OF THE ATONEMENT.** All doctrines of the Atonement which regard the essential nature of Christ's sufferings as something other than a sacrifice offered to God to satisfy His justice on account of sin.

**ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.** Those qualities of God's nature which make Him the kind of being He is.

**COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.** Those attributes of God which can be bestowed on angels and men, such as wisdom, holiness, goodness, love.

**INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.** Those attributes which God alone can possess, such as to be almighty, infinite, unchangeable.

**ATTRIBUTES OF THE CHURCH.** Those qualities which the Church possesses as the body of Christ, namely, unity, holiness and catholicity.

## Reviews of Religious Books

*The favorable reviewing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Purchase books from your book dealer or from the publishers. Please do not send orders for books to the manager of this magazine.*

**THE PRACTICE OF GODLINESS**, by Abraham Kuyper. Paperback, pp. 121. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. \$1.45.

Very timely application of God's Word to life today, even though the book was first published in

1948. The discussion of Christian warfare is very helpful in focusing on the implications and the results of the fall into sin. This fact has resulted in warfare between man and Satan, man and nature, and man and man. The Christian is to wage this warfare on the terms and in the areas set forth in God's Word. The section on humility before God is the best, a thought provoking discussion of humility and fasting as an aid in maintaining it. It is necessary that the Christian be disciplined and not be enslaved to any thing or any appetite. I highly recommend this book.

—J. Edward Hindman

**MEMOIR OF SUKEY HARLEY**, by Sukey Harley. Paperback reprint, pp. 127. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. \$1.45.

The memoir of this woman has been much in demand in years past. She was very keenly aware of her Lord's presence with her and of the necessity of not offending His presence with sin. Her frankness and honesty before God are much to be admired. The style of writing, however, is confusing to follow at times.

—J. Edward Hindman

**SAVED AT SEA**, by O. F. Walton. Paperback, pp. 124. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. \$1.45.

This book is for young readers. It reads easily and the adventure is certain to hold one's attention. The rescue at sea recounted is the center for a very thought-provoking question, "Are you built upon the Rock, or on the sand?"

—J. Edward Hindman

**THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE**, by George S. Bishop. Paperback, pp. 191. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. \$1.95.

The main thrust of this book is to support the inerrancy of Scripture. There is a very interesting chapter on the inspiration of the Hebrew vowel-points. The author writes to show the value of the Old Testament and its importance. The chapter on Jonah is worth the price of the book. He presents an interesting discussion of Christ's use of Jonah as a sign.

—J. Edward Hindman

**SPRINGS OF LIVING WATER**, by John Henry Jowett. Paperback reprint of 1914, pp. 366. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. \$2.95.

A book of daily devotional thoughts. Each one gives a short selection of Scripture to be read. For the most part, the author's thoughts and ideas are helpful. I have found this book to be a refreshing one. I almost like it better than Spurgeon's **Morning and Evening**.

—J. Edward Hindman

**OF THE IMITATION OF CHRIST**, by Thomas a-Kempis. Paperback reprint, pp. 226. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. \$1.45.

This book is claimed to be a classic in Christian literature. I am not of that opinion. Kuyper's **The Practice of Godliness** is much more appropriate than this book. The meditations on the sacraments are interesting but perpetuate the teaching that only the priests are to share fully in the observance of the Lord's Supper. Check it out from your local library if you need a copy for research.

—J. Edward Hindman

**SPIRITUAL COUNSEL TO THE YOUNG**, by J. K. Popham. Paperback, pp. 180. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. \$1.95.

This book is a collection of Popham's articles in **The Friendly Companion** of several years ago. He attempts to discuss and apply Biblical principles to the lives of young people. The greatest deficiency is that the material is 40 to 50 years old. All references are naturally to what were current events in England at that time. This makes the reading very tedious. My counsel would be to save your money.

—J. Edward Hindman

**NONE LIKE THEE**, by Cl. Stam. Premier Printing Ltd., 1249 Plessis Rd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2C 3L9, 1977, 85 pp.

The subtitle is "A Meditative excursion into the prophesies (sic) of Micah of Moresheth or Seven Sermons on Reformation." A program of worship or liturgy accompanies each sermon, a feature which would make the book useful for a pastorless congregation. An elder could employ the suggested liturgy and read the sermon. If this were done in a competent manner, the congregation would be edified and blessed in her worship. The series of sermons was in fact preached in 1976 in the Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington, Ontario. In all the sermons there is a strong emphasis on reformation of church and individual believer on the basis of the Word of the living God.

The perspectives of Reformed theology are evident throughout, e.g., God's faithfulness to His covenant with His people and the progressive realization of the provisions of the covenant in a redemptive-historical succession of divine acts. Each sermon contains not only an exposition of what the text meant in its original historical and religious setting, but what the text means in today's church and world situation. In order to function as a prophetic voice for our time, a sermon must consist not merely or mostly of information but also of specific application by way of exhortation and admonition. In the latter respect, these sermons are not as forceful as they ought to be.

—Joseph A. Hill

**THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE JESUITS**, by Edmond Paris. Protestant Truth Society, 184 Fleet St., London, E.C. 4, England. 200 pages, no price stated.

This book was not written because of a lack of information concerning the Society of Jesus. However, if one desires to know and study the history of and since the Reformation, he cannot escape a study of this most influential and powerful of all orders within the Roman Catholic Church. For this reason there is such a super-abundance of material available about this body.

This volume brings the reader information of the past and then brings him into the history of his own century. It informs and documents the manner in which the society founded by Ignatius Loyola uses its immense influence and power. There is of necessity much documentation in this work. It is an excellent addition to the history of Ignatius' followers, opening new adventures of thought and giving new insight into the tortured history of the last half century. It should have a wide readership. Highly recommended.

—John J. Byker

**WHO WILL LEAD US?**, by Leonard J. Coppes. Pilgrim Publishing Company, Mounted Route 12, Phillipsburg, NJ 08865. 1977, 154 pp. \$3.95.

The author of this work is no stranger to the pages of this magazine. His study consists of a series of edited sermons first communicated in the author's pastoral charge. This is (to the reviewer's knowledge) the only work in the Reformed tradition that places its emphasis upon the diaconate. Because this is the first work, there are still many questions that must be answered. Dr. Coppes points out that he is only setting forth some general guidelines to be of help for future studies (p. 151).

This is an excellent work, one that moves one to reconsider his position, but it is marred by many printing errors.

Error	Correction
p. 18 'me'	he
p. 51 'boing'	doing
p. 98 'mattef'	matter
p. 128 'though'	thought
p. 133 'giaconate'	diaconate

Also on page 101, there are two sentences that (in the reviewer's opinion) should be removed to avoid a contradiction. Fourteen lines from the bottom, the following sentences should be omitted: "All do not speak in tongues, do they?" That one is the same."

With the exception of the errors, this is an outstanding work and commended to the readers of this magazine.

—Samuel Sterrett

**THE BETRAYAL OF THE WEST**, by Jacques Ellul. The Seabury Press, New York, NY 10017. 1978, pp. 207. \$9.95.

The fame of Jacques Ellul was established with the publication of **The Technological Society** in which he described modern society's submission to technological control. Now he shows all of Western culture has been caught in this trend. What he describes, as in all of his works, is the slow destruction of civilization—but not the destruction of the world.

When Ellul refers to the West he is thinking of that unique synthesis of Greek and Christian influences which set the pattern for the future. The turning point came when Paul answered the Macedonian call and turned his back on the East. Thus, God directed the future of the West and issued his most radical challenge to man, the challenge to exert the freedom and responsibility found in Christianity.

And what is the alternative? Without this freedom and responsibility Western man was to turn to probabilistic answers and see everything as the result of "circumstances." In this insecurity, he was to grasp at the most available source of power, technology, and proceed to control the world God had created and, eventually, to distort everything in it. And that is where we are now. Ironically, Western man started out responsible and free in his Christian heritage and has become irresponsible and enslaved to technology.

What causes this shift? The answer to this question is apparent when it is realized that Ellul stresses the importance of maintaining the tension inherent in any dialectic. In this case, it is the dialectic between Christianity and Greek culture. Man has destroyed

this balance between the sacred and the secular, between good and evil as he has turned his back on God. Western man has done nothing less than substitute his own power for the revealed power of God. "Research and development" has replaced the quest for truth and salvation has been found in science and technology.

The point is that the West claims to have a monopoly on truth and needs no response from God or the rest of the world. If God seems to be dead, it is simply because the West has responded to other voices. These belong to the modern intellectuals and technicians who offer hollow answers to contemporary problems. Utopians and others have betrayed the West because they see no hope there. But what is needed is a return to that syncretism which produced the West. This means reasserting the necessity of the gospel and cross of Jesus Christ in society.

Because the West has been betrayed, Ellul sees little hope that this necessary change will take place. Civilization, as we have known it, is doomed because the necessary Christian answer is no longer considered. At this point, most will chide Ellul for his obvious cynicism and apparent Puritanical conservatism. Others will accept this claim and the book's prophetic language (and seldom is it put more strongly in his other works) as the prophecy Ellul intends it to be. For Ellul this conclusion would be most satisfactory for it is as a prophet that he most clearly sees himself and presents his case here.

There may even be some who will take exception to Ellul's theology. Such a judgment would be unjustified without a prior reading of at least some of his earlier work. Some might even try to locate Ellul among those other pessimistic critics of Western civilization; Spengler, Weber, or Sorokin. This would be a mistake, not only because this book lacks the scope or substance of these earlier works, but also because Ellul **does** offer hope. Man is not abandoned, for the final answers will find their resolution in God's ultimate judgment. Without such a context or understanding, the full meaning of this book is lost and Ellul himself is betrayed.

—Russell H. Heddendorf

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ROBERT FLOCKHART**, ed. by Thomas Guthrie. Paperback, pp. 224, no date. \$1.95. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

Flockhart was a soldier and in his own words "a great sinner" for 29 years. Following his conversion he requested of the Lord to be allowed to serve God in this life as many years as he had served Satan. He died at age 65. The account of his life is very compelling. This man was known as "the street

preacher," and in his service confronted many obstacles in taking the message of the good news to those in greatest need.

—J. Edward Hindman

**THE SYRIAN LEPER**, by E. P. Rogers. Paperback, pp. 100. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. 95 cents.

This is an excellent little book which applies Scripture to one's heart. It is a series of five sermons based on the healing of Naaman. It is well worth both the price and the time required to read it.

—J. Edward Hindman

**BAPTISM AND FULLNESS: THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TODAY**, by John R. W. Stott. InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 60515. Second edition 1976, paperback. 119 pp. \$2.25.

In this second edition of his book Stott has enlarged his discussion to include the promise, fullness, fruit, and gifts of the Spirit. He shows that today the gift of the Spirit is the same as the baptism of the Spirit. The Pentecostal outpouring is unrepeatabe as are the similar events recorded in Acts 8 and 19. He maintains that the experience of the 3000 converted on the day of Pentecost is normative for this age. The baptism of the Spirit is synonymous with regeneration (in time, that is) but not with the fullness of the Spirit—a continuous and repeatable experience which needs to be increasingly appropriated. Happily, he sides with Scripture in advancing the means of grace (as understood in reformed tradition) as the means for cultivating this experience. The fruit of the Spirit is set forth as being a unit, supernatural in origin, and yet developed gradually, naturally, and certainly through self-discipline and patience. The New Testament gifts of the Spirit are shown to number over 20, and consist of both natural and supernatural talents. He argues that one should not draw too hard a line between these or try too hard to identify one's (or someone else's) talents as belonging to one or another of these categories. Unfortunately, he asserts the continuance of miracles today. He denies clearly the continuance of apostles, prophets, and tongues-speaking.

This book is well worth reading and/or passing on to those interested in or involved in the neo-pentecostal movement.

—L. Coppes

**HERMAN DOOYEWEERD AND REFORMED APOLOGETICS**, by Cornelius Van Til, an un-

published syllabus. 150 pp.

This syllabus is a major contribution in the ongoing debate between its author and Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd (and his followers). It is must reading for every serious student of Christian philosophy and apologetics.

In the first major section Van Til faces and answers the critique of his own philosophical base as propounded by Dr. Robert Knudsen and Dooyeweerd. They charge him with accepting the starting point of scholasticism, viz., "the metaphysical notion of the archetypal intellect" (p. 15). Van Til traces his own constant battle against that very proposition, setting forth his radical exposition and denunciation of the theory of self, fact, and logic such a proposition entails. In short, such a charge simply cannot be sustained from what Van Til has written to date.

The last two major sections document Van Til's charge that Dooyeweerd's philosophy is no support in the quest for a truly reformed apologetic. By way of background Van Til carefully sets forth the position of Abraham Kuyper upon whose thought both he and Dooyeweerd seek to build. Kuyper is shown to have advanced two basically contradictory and mutually exclusive philosophical lines: a reformed and a scholastic line. Dooyeweerd, says Van Til, does not go far enough in rejecting the scholastic line on the one hand. On the other hand, Dooyeweerd introduces new and undesirable difficulties by adopting the Kantian concept of system in order to reject Kuyper's scholastic concept of system. Other basic criticisms are set forth and defended. Thus instead of consistently confronting the apostasy and rebellion of all unregenerate thought Dooyeweerd grants the unbeliever his concept of system, fact, and logic.

—L. Coppes

**THE APOLOGETIC METHODOLOGY OF FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER**, by Cornelius Van Til. An unpublished syllabus. 54 pp.

This critique by Dr. Cornelius Van Til is introduced by a four-page summary of his evaluation of Dr. Schaeffer's major books. The 54 pages of the main text reproduce letters written by Van Til in which he analyzes Schaeffer's work at greater length.

Dr. Van Til asserts that Schaeffer employs an apologetic that is different from his own and from the Bible's.

—L. Coppes

**PROMISE AND DELIVERANCE, FROM**

**CREATION TO THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN**, Vol. I, by S. G. DeGraaf. Translated by H. Evan Runner and Elizabeth W. Runner. Paideia Press, Box 1450, St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada, L2R 7J8, 1977. 423 pp. \$9.95.

This book was written to guide Sunday school teachers in teaching little children. It successfully translates the reformed Kuyperian position into children's language, and is extremely helpful for all ages. Biblical accounts are explained with biblical emphasis, viz., with focus on God rather than man, on Christ and redemption rather than moralizations, and on covenant and covenantal responsibility. This work almost exclusively emphasizes biblical theological perspective and lacks detailed involvement (if there is any involvement at all) in present-day problems and helps, e.g., apologetic against evolution, archaeological-historical information, etc. Hence, if the book were used such areas would require supplementary resources. Biblical history is presented as real (**historie**) and sovereignly controlled.

One should **carefully** note the differences between Kuyper and the "Toronto" school in evaluating the lengthy translators' introduction.

Definitely recommended.

—L. Coppes

**THIS WAS HIS FAITH—THE EXPOSITORY LETTERS OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**, ed. by Jill Morgan. 1977 (reprint), paperback. \$3.95.

G. Campbell Morgan was a godly and much-used evangelical lecturer in Britain, America, and other countries. Arranged topically. For the most part, standard evangelical theology and very helpful. However, here and there one notes an unwillingness to take sides on controversial matters. For example, he claimed that Calvinism and Arminianism are both true in part (p. 208). The "higher criticism" (Wellhausen, etc.) he brushed off with this statement: "My attitude toward the Higher Critics is that of refusing to attack the critics or fight the Criticism" (p. 241).

—J. G. Vos

**DAYLIGHT**, by Andrew Kuyvenhoven. Paideia Press, P.O. Box 1450, St. Catherines, Ontario L2R 7J8, Canada. Paperback, pp. 382. \$5.95.

Recommended by Joel Nederhood—a good sign when "Christian Reformed" is no longer a dependable guarantee of Reformed orthodoxy. The author is pastor of a Christian Reformed congregation in Canada.

A one-page meditation for every day in the year, based on a single text of Scripture, and listed under a definite theme. Rewritten and sometimes expanded for the Christian Reformed Church's "Back to God Hour." There is a general theme for each month, e.g., January, "Thy Kingdom Come," February, "Living With God," and ending with December, "Jesus Is Coming." Filled with Scriptural truth, truly edifying. Heartily recommended.

One caveat: under July 28, we are told: "When in doubt, abstain." This oversimplifies the issue. There are many Christians who have needless doubts, who make themselves continually miserable. Some are even plagued with thoughts that they have committed the unpardonable sin. The old slogan, "If it is doubtful it is dirty," overlooks the fact that many Christians have a diffident personality type. We may never do that about which we have a doubt. But our doubts themselves may be sins, and we should seek by prayer and counsel to get them **resolved**. Bible study and the counsel of mature Christians will help.

—J. G. Vos

**BAPTISM**, by Philip Mauro. 1977, reprint of 1914. Reiner Publications, Swengel, Pa. 17880. 105 pp., paperback. \$2.50.

This reviewer has read with appreciation some of the other writings of Philip Mauro. In particular his book entitled "Dispensationalism Justifies the Crucifixion" is a very worthy production. The present little book is partly a positive statement of the importance and meaning of Christian baptism, and partly a critique of paedobaptism or infant baptism.

The reviewer finds this of relatively little value, not because it is a polemic against infant baptism, but because of the atomistic manner in which it is treated. It deals in alleged proof texts and the refutation of what they are alleged to teach. To deal adequately with a subject such as this it is necessary to have an organic approach to Scripture, and especially a view of the one Covenant of Grace as running through both Testaments.

The author apparently holds that proof of regeneration is the basis of Baptism (and church membership). From the standpoint of Reformed Christianity this is a wrong approach. Church membership and its privileges are based on **profession**, not on proof of regeneration. This faulty approach has led the author even to assert that Simon the Sorcerer (Acts, chapter 8) was truly saved, since the Scripture account states that he believed and was baptized! This in spite of Peter's telling him that he has no part nor lot in this matter and was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and needed to repent!

We still believe that the Covenant of Grace is the real key to the question of infant baptism. And that the efficacy of Baptism—its effects in the life—are not tied to the time of administration. There are covenant conversions (gradual as to awareness of new life) and there are crisis conversions. Paul on the Damascus Road had a crisis conversion. John the Baptist, on the other hand, was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb.

—J. G. Vos

**FALLACIES OF EVOLUTION: THE CASE FOR CREATIONISM**, by Arlie J. Hoover. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. 1977, pp. 85, paperback. \$2.50.

The cover states that this is an authoritative refutation of the arguments for teaching only evolution in the public schools. The author pleads for equal treatment for creation and evolution. The book emphasizes the logical fallacies by which evolutionism is promoted, in the hope that parents and students can see how they are being deceived by "proofs" that are not proofs. An excellent book for its purpose. One minor error: Norman Macbeth's book is listed as "Darwin Retired"; this should be "Darwin Retried." A lot of good ammunition that can be used on people who hold evolution just because someone has told them "science has proved it."

—J. G. Vos

**RESURRECTION: TRUE OR FALSE?**, by Spiros Zodhiates. AMG Publishers, Ridgefield, NJ 07567. Paperback, pocket size, pp. 129. \$1.75. 1977.

This book is difficult to hold open. Requires constant muscular effort of both hands. Standard evangelical truth about the eternal destiny of Christians. Much comfort for afflicted Christians, and indeed for all who realize that eternity and what it will be is, after all, our supreme concern. Recommended.

—J. G. Vos

**YOU AND PUBLIC OPINION**, by Spiros Zodhiates. AMG Publishers, Ridgefield, NJ 07567. 1977, pp. 196, paperback, pocket size. \$2.95.

This book is difficult to hold open. Requires constant muscular effort of both hands. We consider the price (\$2.95) too high for a pocket-size paperback. Evangelical standards for a Christian judging himself and judging the opinions of others about himself. Also, what is right and wrong about judging others, the function and fallibility of conscience, and related matters. A good book on an unusual subject.

—J. G. Vos

**LEARNING TO LOVE**, by J. R. Miller. 1977 reprint of an old book. Paperback, pocket size, pp. 165. \$2.95. AMG Publishers, Ridgefield, NJ 07657.

An old book revised and edited by Spiros Zodhiates. We are nowhere told the original date of publication or the original publisher. This book is difficult to hold open. Requires constant muscular effort of both hands. We consider the price (\$2.95) high for a pocket-size paperback reprint of an old book. The contents are standard evangelical truth, with a strong plea for Christian self-denial, commitment and service. Many anecdotes and illustrations.

—J. G. Vos

**SPIRITUAL WARFARE**, Anonymous (The Spiritual Counterfeits Project). 1977, paperback, pocket size, pp. 32. \$.25. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, IL 60515.

A small, brief treatment of demons, demonism, the occult, and related matters. Too brief to be really adequate, but good as far as it goes. In the "Suggestions for Further Reading," the name of Frederick S. Leahy (author of **Satan Cast Out**) is misspelled.

—J. G. Vos

**JEWISHNESS AND JESUS**, by Daniel C. Juster. 1977, Inter-Varsity Press. Downers Grove, IL 60615. Paperback, pocket size, pp. 40. 25 cents.

After the first page or two "Jesus" is spelled "Yeshua." An attempt to see Christianity through Jewish eyes. Some valid information but hardly anything original, not available in a good Bible dictionary or Bible encyclopedia.

—J. G. Vos

**THE KALIMANTAN KENYAH: A STUDY OF TRIBAL CONVERSION IN TERMS OF DYNAMIC CULTURAL THEMES**, by William Conley. 1976, paperback, pp. 458, illustrated. The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, P.O. Box 185, Nutley, NJ 07110. \$4.95.

This is one part of a series entitled "Studies in the World Church and Missions," edited by Harvie M. Conn. It deals with an Indonesian tribe and their mass conversion to Christianity. Of interest to serious students of missions and the Great Commission.

—J. G. Vos

**TREASURY OF THE WORLD'S GREAT SERMONS**, ed. by Warren W. Wiersbe. Kregel Publications, P.O. Box 2607, Grand Rapids, MI 49501. 1977, pp. 662. \$12.95.

A large collection of sermons from all periods of the church's history. Many masterpieces of sermonizing are here. The quality varies greatly, however. In addition to Richard Baxter and Charles Spurgeon and Jonathan Edwards, there are sermons by such men of doubtful orthodoxy as Henry Van Dyke, Horace Bushnell, Walter Rauschenbusch and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Evidently the editor/compiler does not consider Biblical orthodoxy strictly necessary for a great sermon. Use with discrimination.

—J. G. Vos

**IN THE BEGINNING GOD**, by G. H. Morrison. AMG Publishers, Ridgefield, NJ 07657. No date. Paperback, pp. 93. \$1.95.

Studies and meditations on man's earliest history, from the Creation to Jacob. Viewpoint is evangelical. Recommended.

—J. G. Vos

**WORDS OF COMFORT**, by J. R. Miller. AMG Publishers, Ridgefield, NJ 07657. No date, pp. 103. Paperback, \$1.95. Gift binding, \$3.95.

Many poems and helpful messages of comfort for the afflicted and distressed. Viewpoint is evangelical. Recommended.

—J. G. Vos

**BIG MACRAE**, by G. N. M. Collins. Knox Press (Edinburgh), 15 North Bank St., Edinburgh, Scotland. Paperback, pp. 125. 80 pence. 1976.

The story of a notable Scottish Christian leader. Highly recommended.

—J. G. Vos

**GENESIS ONE AND THE ORIGIN OF THE EARTH**, by R. C. Newman and H. J. Eckelmann Jr. 1977, pp. 156, paperback. \$3.95. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, IL 60515.

Written from a creationist point of view, this book attempts to grapple with the problem of the age and origin of the earth. Not easy reading but well worth reading. Contains an appendix with an article on

Primeval Chronology by William Henry Green (died 1900) of the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary in its better days.

—J. G. Vos

**THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE ROLE RELATIONSHIP OF MEN AND WOMEN**, by George W. Knight III. 1977, pp. 76, paperback. \$3.95. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

Dr. Knight is a professor at Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis. In this book as in all his writings he aims at fidelity to the inspired Word of God, not accommodation to popular tastes, prejudices and demands. A good corrective of the flood of current literature demanding the ordination of women to ruling office in the Church.

—J. G. Vos

**A NEW LAND TO LIVE IN**, by Francislee Osseo-Asare. 1977, pp. 159, paperback. \$3.95. InterVarsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, IL 60515.

The story of an African-American marriage and the lessons learned from it. God's guidance manifested in many difficult situations.

—J. G. Vos

**COMING TO FAITH IN CHRIST**, by John Benton. 1977, paperback, pp. 16. 50 cents. The Banner of Truth Trust, P.O. Box 621, Carlisle, PA 17013.

A clear, straightforward, readable question-and-answer tract on the way of salvation. "What must I do to be saved?" is well answered.

—J. G. Vos

**EXPOSITIONS OF ST. PAUL**, by Richard Sibbes (1577-1635). 1977, pp. 540. \$11.95. The Banner of Truth Trust, Box 621, Carlisle, PA 17013.

The print is too small for comfortable reading. Sibbes' works totalled seven large volumes. This is a reprint of Volume 5. Like others of the early Puritans, Sibbes' comprehensive grasp of the Scriptures is amazing. The Table of Contents (12 pages) forms a summary of Paul's Epistles. Always truly practical and edifying.

—J. G. Vos

**THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF ROBERT LEWIS DABNEY**, ed. by T. C. Johnson. 1977, pp. 585. \$11.95. The Banner of Truth, P.O. Box 621, Carlisle, PA 17013.

The print is too small for easy reading. Perhaps this is unavoidable. Dabney was an outstanding theologian of the American Southern Presbyterian Church, born 1820, died 1898. Charles Hodge called him "the best teacher of theology in the U.S., if not in the world." Strictly orthodox from the standpoint of the Reformed faith. During the American civil war he was at the height of his career. On the slavery controversy he held what for his time and place was an enlightened view. He opposed emancipation, but also opposed the worst features of slavery, such as the slave trade, separating families, violation of the chastity of female slaves. Highly critical of Abraham Lincoln. The reader must keep in mind that this was well over 100 years ago.

In later years he was afflicted with total blindness, which he bore with Christian patience and courage.

—J. G. Vos

*The following notice is not an advertisement. Blue Banner Faith and Life received no payment for publishing it. It is intended to call a publication to the attention of our readers who may be interested. Blue Banner Faith and Life has never accepted any paid advertising, though we have reviewed new books.*

—J.G.V

The readers of this journal will be interested to know that a book has been written in honor of J. G. Vos, editor of the Blue Banner Faith and Life, entitled **The Book of Books**. It contains articles by J. G. Vos, Cornelius Van Til, Paul Woolley, Richard Gaffin, Wayne Spear, Clark Copeland and others. John H. White has gathered together articles on the Scriptures by many of Dr. Vos' students and colleagues. The articles cover ground from "Approaching the Bible for Study" to "Thoughts on Teaching the Bible"; from "Covenant, the Key to Understanding the Bible" to "The Benedictus: God Remembers His Covenant-Word"; from "The Whole Counsel of God and the Bible" to "The Bible and Counseling." The book also includes a useful bibliography of the published writings of Dr. Vos.

**The Book of Books: Essays on the Scriptures in Honor of Johannes G. Vos** is available from Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 185, Nutley, NJ 07110 for \$7.50.

—John H. White, Geneva College

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Later contributions will be acknowledged in our next issue. Without such generous contributions as these, it would hardly be possible to continue

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J. G. Vos, Manager,  
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**BLUE  
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VOLUME 33

OCTOBER-DECEMBER, 1978

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

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## Important Announcement

It finally had to come. Starting with our next issue (1979) we are forced to raise our subscription rates to \$3.00 per year for all types of subscriptions—domestic, foreign, and congregational club. Creeping inflation is forcing us.

*Blue Banner Faith and Life* began in 1946 with a subscription rate of \$1.00 per year. In 1947 this was changed to \$1.50 per year. We continued at \$1.50 until 1968, when it was found necessary to raise it to \$2.50 per year. We have continued at \$2.50 for ten years, to the present time, and were hoping that we could avoid further raises.

Now everything is costing more. The paper the magazine is printed on costs more than triple what it did in 1946. Printing, postage, envelopes, office help—all have risen drastically in cost to us. Even with many generous gifts and contributions, and some church subsidies, it is impossible for us to continue at the old rates. We will do all we can to get the magazine out at \$3.00 for the indefinite future.

Another radical change: In the past, we have sent out renewal solicitations or reminders year by year. This has become a very costly procedure with increasing costs of postage, envelopes, etc. So we are asking you here to renew your own subscription without waiting to be asked. Send \$2.50 now (or \$3.00 after January 1) to us: *Blue Banner*

*Faith and Life*, 3408 Seventh Avenue, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania 15010 U.S.A. Overseas subscribers should address Mr. Barkley or Dr. Loughridge (see front cover). We may simply discontinue subscriptions that are not renewed within a reasonable time.

Please don't let us down after these many years. Even with these new subscription rates, we will have to depend on generous free-will contributions from readers who are able to help.

Our present circulation is approximately 1250, reaching nearly all parts of the free world. The magazine goes free to some foreign pastors, students, libraries, etc. This again costs money and has to be paid for somehow. We have gone through 33 years and have never been unable to pay our printer or other obligations on time. Please help us in our present time of need. Many thanks to all who help.

—J. G. Vos, Manager

*Postscript:* As this issue is being set up and printed, I have been hospitalized 8 days for a serious health condition. I am recovering (discharged October 18), but I request your prayers for my continued strength to get out the magazine.

—J.G.V.

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 33

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1978

NUMBER 4

## *Studies in the Epistle to the Romans*

### LESSON 79

#### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued

##### **B. The Christian's Civil Obligations. 13:1-7, Cont.**

##### **The Christian's Proper Attitude Toward the Civil Government. 13:5-7, Cont.**

Before leaving the discussion of Romans 13:1-7, the bearing of this passage on the Covenanter principle of political dissent should be considered. The present official position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church on this matter is set forth in the revised form of Chapter 30 of the **Declaration and Testimony**, published in the **Minutes of Synod for 1963**, pages 55-59. This chapter was declared adopted by overture, at the Synod of 1964. (See **Minutes**, 1964, page 66).

The revised Chapter 30 affirms that every Christian citizen is bound to pray and labor for the explicit recognition of the authority and law of Jesus Christ, the Preserver and Ruler of nations. He is to use every civil right available to him in the most effective way, so long as the use of such civil right does not compromise his loyalty to Jesus Christ. On the other hand, the Christian must relinquish every right or privilege which involves him in responsibility for silence about, disregard of, or denial of the kingly rights of Christ.

When such action involves no disloyalty to Christ, the Christian ought to select rulers who fear God, love truth and justice, and are publicly committed to Christian principles of civil government.

It is sinful for a Christian to take an oath of allegiance which compromises his supreme allegiance to Jesus Christ. It is also sinful for a Christian to participate in the selection of officials or civil servants who are required to take an oath which a Christian himself could not take in good conscience.

The only submission which a Christian may promise to any civil government is due submission in the Lord. Anything beyond this is sinful. When an oath is required for public office which goes beyond this, the Christian citizen should refuse such an oath, and it is within the corporate power of the Church, acting through its courts, to declare that facts or cir-

cumstances which may exist in a specific kind of situation render the taking of a civil oath sinful.

It is the duty of the Christian to ascertain whether any prescribed oath of allegiance to the civil authority involves acceptance of unchristian principles stated or implied in its constitution of government. If the oath of allegiance to civil authority explicitly or by necessary implication requires support of anti-Christian, atheistic, or secular principles, then the Christian must refuse on these grounds to take the oath of allegiance.

It is the duty of the Christian Church to testify to the authority of Christ over the nations, against all sinful oaths of allegiance to civil governments, and against all anti-Christian, atheistic, and secular principles of civil government. When the Church by orderly processes in her own courts determines that the oath of allegiance to a civil government compromises the Christian's loyalty to Christ or involves the Christian in the support of sinful principles of civil government, the Church must require her members to refuse such sinful oaths.

In qualifying for any civil position or office, whether by appointment, political election, or employment, the Christian may properly take an oath of allegiance to civil authority only if the Church by orderly processes in her courts has determined that he is promising no more than due submission in the Lord, and that he is not directly or indirectly accepting any un-Christian principle of civil government.

When participating in political elections, the Christian should support and vote only for such men as are publicly committed to Scriptural principles of civil government. Should the Christian seek civil office by political election, he must openly inform those whose support he seeks of his adherence to Christian principles of civil government.

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and the decisions of civil courts cannot determine for the Christian what is morally right and what is sinful. However, since civil government is an institution of

God, it is within the legitimate province of the civil courts of a nation to determine what the nation's law and required oaths of allegiance mean or do not mean. A decision of a civil court cannot legitimize sinful conduct, but it can place before a Christian a factual situation upon which a moral judgment can be made. It cannot be proper for the Christian to assume that an oath of allegiance implies sinful requirements, when the civil courts have explicitly contradicted such implication. Every oath must be understood in the sense intended by the authority requiring the oath. It is for the Christian and the Church to decide whether this sense involves sinful requirements.

The above paragraphs are largely quoted from the revised Chapter 30 of the **Testimony**, though somewhat abridged for the sake of brevity. The student is referred to the complete Chapters 29 and 30 for a full statement of the Church's position, accompanied by Scripture texts cited in support of the various elements of this position.

Coming now to the bearing of Romans 13:1-7 on this subject of political dissent, two errors must be avoided. In the first place, there are some who say that Romans 13:1-7 contradicts our position of political dissent, and requires us to vote, and hold office if elected, under the present Constitution of the United States. Since we are commanded to be subject to the powers that be, it is argued it must be our duty to vote and to hold office if elected.

This argument sounds plausible, but it is not valid, for it is based on confused thinking. It confuses the **duty of citizens** with the **functions of rulers**. To obey the laws, to pay taxes, to "be subject unto the higher powers"—these are the duties of citizens. These matters pertain to the **civil** realm. They are civil matters.

To hold office, or to vote for others to hold office, on the other hand, is not a civil matter. It is a **political** matter. The man who holds office is not being "subject unto the higher powers"—he himself is one of the higher powers. The man who votes for another to hold political office is not being "subject unto the higher powers"—he himself is one of the higher powers. The voter and office-holder are not subject to the government—they **ARE** the government. In a democracy, such as the United States of America, every person who votes is a ruler; every voter is part of the government. It is the voters who determine the character, policies, and acts of the government. Voting is a political function—a function of rulers.

God's Word commands that "every soul be subject unto the higher powers," but this by no means implies that it is the duty of the Christian to become one of the higher powers by voting or holding office. If there are substantial reasons why the Christian

should not vote or hold office, then it is the Christian's duty to refrain from these political acts.

The second error that must be avoided in considering the bearing of Romans 13:1-7 on the Covenanter position of political dissent is the view that this passage of Scripture does not apply to Christians of the present day, but only to those living under an ideal Christian state to be realized at some future time. The argument of those holding this view is that Paul could not command Christians to be subject to an immoral government which fails to give due recognition to God and His Christ. Since Romans 13:1-7 clearly commands subjection to government, it is held that the apostle's meaning must be that Christians are to be subject to such Christian governments as may come to exist. We have already noted the impossibility of this interpretation (see Lesson 74 of this series). Paul is speaking of the **existing powers** (**hal ousai exousial**, present participle), which can only mean the powers in existence at the time he wrote the epistle. We may repeat part of the last paragraph of Lesson 74 here: Paul is not discussing the right of magistrates to rule, nor is he discussing the proper limits of obedience to wicked magistrates. He is teaching only the simple principle that it is the duty of Christian people to obey the existing magistrates. That the magistrates may be wicked men, and that it may be God's plan to overthrow the existing government and set up a better one in its place, is perfectly true. That there are well-defined limits to the obedience which Christian people ought to render to magistrates, is also perfectly true. But what the apostle is teaching is that it is the Christian's duty to obey **the existing authorities** as long as, in God's providence, they continue to exist as authorities.

#### Questions:

1. In what book, and what chapters of the book, is the present official position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church on the principle of political dissent set forth?
2. What duty do the nations of the world owe to Jesus Christ?
3. What is the ultimate source of all authority?
4. How can we answer those who claim that Romans 13:1-7 implies that it is our duty to vote and to hold office if elected?
5. Explain the distinction between civil matters and political matters.
6. Why are voting and holding office not civil duties?
7. Who are the real "higher powers" in a democracy?

8. What is the literal meaning of the phrase "the powers that be"?

9. How can it be shown that Paul in Romans 13:1-7 is not referring to a duty of subjection to a future ideal Christian state, but to the government

existing at the time when he wrote the epistle?

10. What responsibilities do the individual Christian and the Church have concerning oaths of allegiance which Christians may be expected to take?

## LESSON 80

### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued

#### C. The Christian's Social Obligations. 13:8-10.

##### Obligations in Human Society to be Discharged. 13:8.

"Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." The apostle here teaches that it is the Christian's duty to discharge all his social obligations, with the exception of love, a debt that can never be paid off.

Some have regarded this verse as forbidding the Christian to incur debts, or borrow anything. This idea, however, is not contained in the text. It only commands that debts must be duly paid; we must not continue to owe them. It is true, of course, that this implies that we are not to incur debts when we have no certain prospect of repaying them. But the ordinary use of credit in business or personal affairs is not here forbidden, and it is sanctioned in other parts of the Bible. "The command, however, is, 'Acquit yourselves of all obligations, tribute, custom, fear, honor, or whatever else you may owe, but remember that the debt of love is still unpaid, and must remain so'" (Charles Hodge). Even when all debts of money and service have been discharged, there remains a continuing debt of love to our neighbor.

##### The Obligation of Love to our Neighbor. 13:9,10.

"For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (13:9). This verse confirms the truth stated in verse 8, and at the same time reminds us that love for our neighbor is not to be a mere emotion or feeling of good-will toward him, but is to be expressed in our actual conduct toward our neighbor. Of course these commandments are not to be understood only in the negative sense of "Thou shalt not." Rightly understood, they also imply a divine command to practice the contrary virtues. We are not only to refrain from doing harm to our neighbor; we are to do him positive good.

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (13:10). "That is, as love delights in the happiness of its object, it effec-

tually prevents us from injuring those we love, and, consequently, leads us to fulfill all the law requires, because the law requires nothing which is not conducive to the best interests of our fellow-men. He, therefore, who loves his neighbor with the same sincerity that he loves himself, and consequently treats him as he would wish, under similar circumstances, to be treated by him, will fulfill all that the law enjoins; hence the whole law is comprehended in this one command, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Charles Hodge). The whole law, that is, in so far as it concerns our duty to our neighbor, which is the subject under discussion here. There is also the first table of the law, concerning our duty directly to God but that is not the subject here being discussed.

#### D. The Christian Duty to Live a Holy Life. 13:11-14.

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand . . ." (13:11,12a). We are here taught that it is high time to awake out of sleep. Here "sleep" is a figure for a condition of spiritual indifference or sluggishness. Those who are absorbed in worldly pleasures and business and have little or no concern about God, their souls and eternity, are living in a state of spiritual sleep. Even true Christians may often for a period of time fall into such a condition of spiritual slumber, so that they are not active and alert concerning the things of God.

The person who is spiritually asleep should wake up. Paul says that it is high time to wake up. As a reason, he adds that now our salvation is nearer than when we first became Christians. Here "salvation" may be taken as meaning our complete deliverance from sin at the time of our death, or it may be taken as referring to our complete deliverance from sin and all its consequences at the resurrection day. Or it may include both of these ideas under the general meaning of "complete deliverance from sin." Whether we think of the day of our own going to be with the Lord, or of the day of His coming to earth again, it is true that the great deliverance is nearer to each of us than it was when we first believed on Jesus Christ. We have already covered some ground, we have already passed some time, once for all, and are that

much nearer to our complete deliverance from sin. This thought should be an encouragement to every Christian to keep wide awake in the Christian life.

There are in the churches today many members who are spiritually asleep in the sense spoken of by Paul in this passage. Whether these members have been born again of the Spirit, only God knows with certainty. But church members who cannot find a reference in the Bible, who cannot pray except to repeat a formal little prayer from memory, who attend divine worship only occasionally and sit day-dreaming and gazing around the room when they do attend, and who cannot tell whether David lived before or after John the Baptist—such church members are spiritually asleep, and it is high time for them to wake up. Probably many such nominal church members are not saved; some may be born again, but in a state of long-arrested spiritual development. It is high time for them to awake out of their sleep. The existence of such members is one of the causes of the present powerlessness and ineffectiveness of the churches.

#### Questions:

1. What is meant by the command to "Owe no man anything"?

2. How do we know that this verse does not forbid the ordinary use of credit in business or personal affairs?

3. What kind of debts should a Christian not incur?

4. What debt of the Christian can never be fully discharged?

5. How can our duty to our neighbor be summarized?

6. Why is love the fulfilling of the law concerning our neighbor?

7. Besides our duty to our neighbor, what duty do we have?

8. What is meant by "sleep" in 13:11?

9. Why is it high time to awake out of sleep?

10. What is meant by "salvation" in 13:11?

11. What is the effect of sleeping members on the churches today?

### LESSON 81

#### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued

##### D. The Christian Duty to Live a Holy Life. 13:11-14, Continued.

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand. . . . (13:12a). Here we must consider what is meant by "the night" and "the day." One suggested meaning is that "the night" means the period of time when it was possible for the Jews to persecute Christianity, while "the day" means the new era that would dawn after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. But this is too narrow a meaning to suit the context. Moreover, the cessation of Jewish persecution did not bring real relief to the early Christians; rather, it was followed by the much longer and more severe persecution by the Roman Empire. Another suggested meaning is that "the night" means the present life of every Christian, while "the day" means the life eternal which will soon dawn upon each one. This interpretation is more plausible, and may be the correct one, or it may be part of the correct one. The third possible meaning is that "the night" means the history of this world since man's fall into sin, while "the day" means the new world of eternity which will be absolutely free from sin. In view of the usage of the terms "the day," "the day of the Lord," and "that day," in Paul's epistles and elsewhere in the Bible, this third interpretation would seem to be the correct one. The statement, "The night is far spent,

the day is at hand," would then mean: "The age-long history of this sinful world is nearing its conclusion, and the new age of eternity is about to dawn." This of course does not imply anything concerning the actual time of the Lord's second coming. Of that day and hour knoweth no man; Paul did not know it any more than we do today; it has not been revealed to men. What is meant is not the "nearness" of the second coming in terms of calendar time, but its "nearness" in terms of the Bible philosophy of history.

According to the Bible view of history, when Jesus Christ was crucified and rose from the dead, **the end of the world began**. Everything before that was preparatory for Calvary; everything after that is part of the final winding up and conclusion of this world's affairs in preparation for eternity. Compare 1 Peter 1:19,20; Hebrews 1:1,2; Hebrews 9:26; 1 Corinthians 10:11. All these texts teach that the apostles and early Christians were living in the last days as God counts the days. In our common life of today, we go by calendar time. But if we would understand the Scriptures, we must try to grasp their philosophy of history and see how God reckons time. According to the Bible's view of history, "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet. 4:7), the second coming of Christ is "near"; He is coming "quickly," because His coming is the next great redemptive event in God's pro-

gram of the ages. It looms above and ahead of every one of us as the tremendous miracle which God will surely bring to pass, which will bring the history of this world to a sudden stop.

It is the evening of history. The long, weary day of the world's sin, suffering, and struggle is almost over. We do not know how many years, whether many or few, remain before the Lord shall come on the clouds of heaven, nor does it matter. The world will not continue indefinitely on its present course; it is hastening on to its consummation. Time will issue into eternity, labor into rest, faith into sight, struggle into victory. But it is even later than the evening of history; the evening and the long night have almost passed and a new day is about to break—the morning of eternity. This world and its concerns are “passing away” (1 Cor. 7:31, 1 John 2:17); the world of eternity, in which all things shall be made new, is “at hand.” The serious Christian should live daily in the sobering consciousness of this truth. He should live as one who knows that “the day is at hand.”

Our reluctance to think of the dawn of eternity as “at hand” is one sign of our failure to grasp the Bible's philosophy of history. Many Christians, instead of eagerly anticipating the Lord's second coming, rather tend to hope that it will be deferred until some of their own plans and programs can be carried to completion. Of all things, we hope that the end of human history will not come now, when we have important undertakings in process. But such an attitude is really contrary to the Bible view of history. God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and His ways than our ways. When we let our plans, projects, and programs—even those that concern the Kingdom of God—steal the spotlight of our hope away from God's great redemptive event, the dawn of “the day,” we no longer have a truly religious attitude, we are no longer truly walking by faith. God's next great redemptive act takes precedence over all our activities. We must always do all our planning and working in the light of eternity. Eternity is **absolutely**

important; time is only **relatively** important. When we regard time as more important than eternity we are no longer on Biblical ground.

#### Questions:

1. What possible meanings have been suggested for “the night” and “the day” in 13:12?
2. How do we know that “the night” does not mean the period of Jewish persecution of Christianity?
3. What meaning of “the night” and “the day” is the most probable one, and why?
4. Does the statement: “The day is at hand” imply that the second coming of Christ is near in terms of calendar years?
5. According to the Bible, when did the end of the world begin?
6. Why is it true that “the end of all things is at hand”?
7. What do 1 Corinthians 7:31 and 1 John 2:17 teach concerning the present world?
8. What should be daily in the mind of every Christian?
9. Is it right to hope that the second coming of Christ will be deferred until our own plans and activities can be completed?
10. What can be said about the importance of time and the importance of eternity?
11. Where should our ultimate Christian hope be fixed?
12. How should we always do our planning and working?

## LESSON 82

### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued

#### D. The Christian Duty to Live a Holy Life. 13:11-14, Continued.

“Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” The Christian's belief that the dawn of eternity is “at hand” is not merely a theoretical matter. It is to be a practical matter. If “the night is far spent” and “the day is at hand,” think what a godly, earnest, sober life every one of us ought to live! Think what a desperately serious matter life is! If we really believe that “the day is at hand,” how can we drift through life with

our main thinking and attention riveted to our own ambitions and pleasures?

Paul here urges the truth that “the day is at hand” as a strong reason why the Christian should live a serious, earnest, and holy life. “Night” and “darkness” are associated with sin and sorrow; “day” and “light” with righteousness and joy. The evils of this present life will soon be past, and the morning of eternal joy will soon dawn. Since this is true, we should cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. We should renounce

everything we need to be ashamed of, everything that has to be concealed and kept secret. At the same time we should clothe ourselves with what is suitable to the light of day. The idea of taking off and putting on clothing is suggested by the Greek words used. "We are to cast off one set of garments and put on another. The clothes which belong to the night are to be cast aside, and we are to array ourselves in those suited to the day" (Charles Hodge).

"Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying . . ." (13:13). This continues the thought of the preceding verse, specifying what kinds of works are to be put off by the Christian, as the next verse states what is to be put on in place thereof. The word here translated "honestly" does not mean exactly what we mean today by "honestly"; in modern English the word "honest" has come to mean "truthful" or "upright in dealings concerning property." But as used here the word "honestly" means rather "becomingly," "properly," "legitimately."

Next, Paul specifies three kinds of sins to be cast aside, and he uses two words for each kind: (1) rioting and drunkenness; (2) chambering and wantonness; (3) strife and envying. The first of these classes is sins of **intemperance**; the second, sins of **impurity**; and the third, sins of **discord**. It will be observed what a wide range of sins is spoken of here. Some people's sins are of one kind, and some of another. Some who would never be involved in rioting and drunkenness may be guilty of sins of impurity which the apostle calls "chambering and wantonness"; others, who would not commit sins of either of these classes, may be keeping the Church of God in constant problems and troubles by their sins of discord—their sins of strife and envying. What is the real profit, in God's sight, of being clear of sins of intemperance and impurity, if we are constantly provoking God and disheartening His people by our endless sins of discord?

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh," to fulfill the lusts thereof" (13:14). Here we come to the positive side of the matter. The Christian is not merely to put off the works of darkness; he must also put on the armor of light. He is not only to cast off intemperance, impurity, and discord; he is also to put on, in their place, the Lord Jesus Christ.

To "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" means to have such an intimate union with Christ that people will see Christ living in us. It means to be so filled with His Spirit and so controlled by His will that our lives will manifest Him to the world around us.

"And make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill

the lusts thereof." In this sentence, some have understood "the flesh" to mean "the body." But it is unlikely that that is the true meaning. This expression, "the flesh," must include not only the sins of intemperance and impurity which the apostle has just mentioned, but also those of strife and envying. But strife and envying are sins of the mind, not of the body. And elsewhere in Paul's epistles he uses the term "the flesh" to mean everything that is corrupt in the human personality, that is, to mean our sinful nature. See Galatians 5:19-21, where Paul lists 17 "works of the flesh," of which ten are sins of the mind rather than of the body, namely: idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings. If these sins of the mind are included in "the works of the flesh," then "the flesh," as Paul uses the term, cannot mean simply the human body; it must mean our whole corrupt or sinful nature. The true meaning of Paul's admonition, then, is, "Do not indulge the desires of your corrupt nature" (Charles Hodge). The Christian has these desires; he has not yet been wholly freed of them; they constitute a burden and a temptation to him; but he is not to yield to them; he is not to allow them to dictate the course of his life. They are to be subdued, kept under control, crucified.

#### Questions:

1. What practical lessons are to be drawn from the truth that "the day is at hand"?
2. What are associated with "night" and "darkness," and what with "day" and "light"?
3. What idea is suggested by the words "cast off" and "put on"?
4. What is the meaning of "honestly" in 13:13, and how does this differ from the common meaning of the word today?
5. What three classes of sins are we commanded to cast off?
6. Which of these classes of sins constitutes the greatest temptation to Christian people at the present day?
7. What does it mean to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ"?
8. What is meant by "the flesh" in 13:14?
9. How can it be shown that "the flesh" does not mean simply the human body?
10. How is the Christian to deal with his sinful desires?

## LESSON 83

## PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued

**E. The Christian's Duty Toward Weak Brethren. 14:1-13.**

In this section of the epistle, Paul sets forth the treatment to be accorded weak brethren, who have doubts and scruples about various matters which are not really, in themselves, moral questions at all. We cannot tell with certainty just who the weak brethren were whom Paul discusses in this chapter. Various theories have been proposed. But it seems very probable that some of these weak brethren, at least, were Jewish Christians who not only continued to observe the precepts of the ceremonial law about foods, but who even went far beyond the requirements of the law, in their effort to avoid possible violations of that law. Many of the early Christians had a Jewish background. Even after becoming Christians, some of them continued to feel that they ought to obey various precepts of the Old Testament ceremonial law, such as the regulations about clean and unclean foods, and the ordinances about special festival days. This apparently created a problem in the churches, and specifically in the church at Rome. If this problem were not carefully handled, serious consequences might result.

In order to understand this section of the epistle, we must realize that those who felt they must obey the precepts of the ceremonial law were wrong. Paul does not treat this as a matter about which both sides were right, nor even as a matter about which both sides were partly right. He treats it as a matter about which one side was right and the other side was wrong, and he is concerned that those who were right should be considerate of those who were wrong.

The Apostolic Council of Acts, chapter 15, settled for all time the question of whether the ceremonial law is binding on Christians, by decreeing that it is not. Paul in Romans 14 regards those who felt they ought to obey the ceremonial regulations as the exception in the Church. He is concerned that these weak brethren be treated with love, sympathy, and forbearance. But at the same time he makes it clear that these brethren's special ideas are wrong, they are the result of being "weak in the faith." Since the weak brother's ideas are wrong, they must not be made into a creed or rule to be imposed upon this church as a whole.

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations" (14:1). This verse is not very clear in the King James Version. The American Revision (1901) is clearer: "But him that is weak in faith receive ye, yet not for decision of scruples." The Revised Standard Version (1946) reads: "As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not

for disputes over opinions." Williams' translation reads: "Make it your practice to receive into full Christian fellowship people who are over-scrupulous, but not to criticize their views". Here Paul states that weak and scrupulous brethren are to be received into Christian fellowship in spite of their weak faith. "Faith here means, persuasion of the truth; a man may have a strong persuasion as to certain truths, and a very weak one as to others. Some of the early Christians were, no doubt, fully convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, and yet felt great doubts whether the distinction between clean and unclean meats was entirely done away. This was certainly a great defect of Christian character, and rose from the want of an intelligent and firm conviction of the gratuitous nature of justification, and of the spirituality of the gospel. Since, however, this weakness was not inconsistent with sincere devotion to Christ, such persons were to be received" (Charles Hodge).

"But not to doubtful disputation" ("not for decision of scruples", ARV). Two Greek words are involved here. The first (*diakriseis*) means scruples, worries or doubts in a person's thinking. In view of the context (verse 2), Hodge gives the meaning of verse 1 as: "Him that is weak in faith, take to yourselves as a Christian brother, treat him kindly, not presuming to sit in judgment on the opinions of your brethren."

"For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs" (14:2). One man has confidence, as far as religious principle is concerned, to eat anything; another man, who is weak in his faith, limits himself to a vegetarian diet. This does not mean, of course, that all foods are equally wholesome, nor that the normal Christian eats just anything, regardless of considerations of health and hygiene. Paul is not discussing the wholesomeness or harmfulness of foods; he is only discussing the matter of religious scruples about foods. As far as religious principle is concerned, the normal Christian is convinced that he may eat anything; no kind of food is to be refused on religious grounds, as religiously defiling or unclean.

The Old Testament ceremonial law did not require a vegetarian diet; it did not forbid the eating of all kinds of flesh. Certain kinds were permitted, while other kinds were forbidden. But the scrupulous Jews, especially when living in a pagan environment, sometimes became afraid to eat any kind of flesh, or indeed any prepared food, lest they defile themselves by eating something forbidden in the law. They would eat only that which they could personally trace from its natural condition to its entrance into their own mouth, and so restricted themselves to a diet of

“herbs”, that is, to a vegetarian diet. To make sure of avoiding all unclean meats, and all foods that might have been offered to idols, they limited themselves to vegetables.

#### Questions:

1. What new subject does Paul take up in this section of the epistle?
2. What was the religious background of many of the early Christians?
3. How did many Jewish Christians feel about the precepts of the ceremonial law?
4. Were these Jewish Christians right or wrong in their attitude toward the precepts of the ceremonial law?
5. What great question was settled for all time at the Apostolic Council in Acts chapter 15?
6. How does Paul in Romans 14 regard those who felt that they should obey the ceremonial law?

7. Why are the weak brother's ideas not to be made into a creed or rule to be imposed on the church as a whole?

8. How is 14:1 translated in the American Revised Version?

9. What duty is taught in 14:1?

10. What is the meaning of the second part of verse 1?

11. Does 14:2 mean that a Christian can eat anything he feels like eating regardless of considerations of health?

12. What is the true meaning of the statement, “One believeth that he may eat all things”?

13. What is meant by “eateth herbs” in 14:2?

14. Did the Old Testament ceremonial law require a vegetarian diet?

15. Why did some scrupulous Jews limit themselves to a vegetarian diet?

### LESSON 84

#### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued

##### E. The Christian's Duty toward Weak Brethren. 14:1-13. Cont.

“Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him” (14:3) “There is mutual forbearance to be exercised in relation to this subject. The strong are not to despise the weak as superstitious and imbecile; nor the weak to condemn those who disregard their scruples. Points of indifference are not to be allowed to disturb the harmony of Christian fellowship” (Charles Hodge). There were these two classes of people in the churches; one was strong and correct in faith, the other was weak and erroneous in faith. Yet both classes existed, and Paul commands mutual forbearance. “For God hath received him”—that is, God has received the weak brother to His Kingdom, in spite of the weak brother's errors. The exhortation to forbearance applies to both classes, the strong and the weak. “The Jewish converts were perhaps quite as much disposed to condemn the Gentile Christians, as the latter were to despise the Christian Jews; Paul therefore frames his admonition so as to reach both classes. It appears, however, from the first verse, and from the whole context, that the Gentiles were principally intended” (Charles Hodge).

While the particular question of eating meats,

which Paul is discussing, is not an important issue in most Christian circles today, still the principle which the apostle enunciates remains valid for all time. Divergent views about things which are indifferent in themselves—things which are not required nor forbidden by Scripture—are not to be allowed to disrupt Christian fellowship. It is easy to think of modern examples. The use of communion tokens is indifferent in itself. So is the question of whether the Sabbath morning service is to be held at 11 o'clock or at some other hour. So is the particular method or system of Bible reading to be used in the practice of family worship. So, also, is the frequency of observance of the Lord's Supper, and the number and time and place of the preparatory services. We could easily think of many more examples. Matters of this kind, which do not involve a clear-cut issue of right and wrong, are not to be allowed to destroy Christian unity and fellowship. The strong are not to despise the weak and scrupulous, nor are the weak and scrupulous to sit in judgment on the strong and condemn them.

“Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth” (14:4a). God has not appointed the strong Christian, who is correct in his faith, to pronounce judgment on the weak Christian, who is erroneous and over-scrupulous in his faith. After all, the weak brother is a Christian; therefore he belongs to Christ; he is Christ's servant; Christ is the one who has the right

to pronounce judgment on him.

As in Paul's day, so at the present day, there are many self-appointed judges in the churches, who do not hesitate to pronounce a condemning judgment on some of the opinions, scruples or practices of their Christian brethren. And in our day, we have not only the strong judging the weak, but also the opposite situation, where the weak pronounce judgment on the strong. Those who have scruples about some particular matter, often are not satisfied with having their scruples sympathetically tolerated by the majority; they demand that the whole church conform to their scruples, and constantly disturb the peace of the church by carrying on a propaganda along that line. All such, whether "strong" or "weak", should pay heed to the apostle's question: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?"

"To his own master he standeth or falleth" (14:4b). It is the Lord Jesus Christ who has jurisdiction over him, not some self-appointed critic in the church. "Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (14:4c). God is able to save this weak Christian to the uttermost, in spite of his weak and erroneous faith. Here is an added reason for forbearance toward our Christian brethren. No matter how weak a man may be in his Christian faith, still if he is a Christian, we may not disregard this and treat him as if he were a non-Christian, an outsider. "The brethren are not responsible to each other, or the church, for their scruples. God is the Lord of the conscience. To him they must answer. Before him they stand or fall" (Charles Hodge).

#### Questions:

1. What is meant by "mutual forbearance"?

2. What wrong attitude toward the weak Christian must the strong Christian avoid?

3. What wrong attitude or action toward the strong Christian must the weak Christian avoid?

4. On what ground does Paul command mutual forbearance in 14:3?

5. Is the question of eating meats an important question in most Christian circles today?

6. What permanent principle can be discerned in 14:3?

7. What is meant by "things which are indifferent in themselves"?

8. Give some present-day examples of practices which are indifferent in themselves.

9. Whose servant is the weak Christian?

10. Who has the right to pronounce judgment on Christian people?

11. Is the warning of 14:4 still necessary at the present day?

12. How do weak Christians sometimes pronounce judgment on strong Christians?

13. Why may we never treat a Christian as a non-Christian or outsider?

14. Who is the Lord of the conscience?

15. What is the meaning of the statement: "God is able to make him stand"?

## LESSON 85

### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued

#### E. The Christian's Duty toward Weak Brethren. 14:1-13, Cont.

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (14:5). The reference here is apparently to the various festival days of the Old Testament ceremonial law. Just as that law distinguished between clean and unclean meats, so it distinguished between days. Evidently some Jewish Christians felt that they should continue to observe these days in a special manner. This belief was wrong; it was a weakness. But as it was not a vital matter, it was not to be allowed to disrupt the unity of the church.

This verse has been used by some people as a proof

that the observance of the Sabbath day is not a Christian duty, but an optional matter to be left to every individual's preference. This is however a very strained interpretation of the verse. "It is obvious from the context, and from such parallel passages as Gal. 4:10 . . . and Col. 2:16 . . . that Paul has reference to the Jewish festivals, and therefore his language cannot properly be applied to the Christian Sabbath. The sentiment of the passage is this: 'One man observes the Jewish festivals, another man does not.' Such we know was the fact in the apostolic church, even among those who agreed in the observance of the first day of the week" (Charles Hodge).

"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (14:5b). Here Paul states the principle that one man's conscience cannot control another man's

actions. Each one must act according to his own conscience, and avoid doing what he believes to be wrong. It is strange, but true, that even at the present day there are people in the churches who seem to think that God has made **their** conscientious convictions the standard for **other people's** conduct. By their attitude, if not in spoken word, they say, "You must do this because I believe it is your duty", or "You must abstain from this practice because I feel it is wrong". It is evident that this same spirit existed in the church at Rome in Paul's day, and that to oppose this wrong tendency, the apostle wrote, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind". Of course, a person's conscience may err, and need correction. But it is to be corrected by the Word of God, not by the conscience of some fellow-Christian. We cannot solve our moral problems by making some other person's convictions our guide; we must be convinced in our own conscience of what God requires of us. This idea which some church members have, that God has somehow appointed them as keeper of their brethren's conscience, is a great evil, and also (if they could only realize it!) a great presumption and sign of egotism.

"He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks" (14:6). This does not mean that the person who observes the Jewish festival days and the person who eats only vegetables are equally right; on the contrary, the one class is right and the other wrong; the one class is "strong" and the other "weak". In this verse Paul merely states that both classes of Christians are acting conscientiously as they believe they ought to act, from motives of devotion and thankfulness to God. The strong Christian, who disregards the observance of the Jewish festival days and who eats common food without religious scruples, shows by the fact that he gives God thanks, that he is acting conscientiously. Clearly, a person could not give God thanks for something which he believed to be sinful or forbidden to use. And in the same way, the brother who observes days and abstains from meats, weak and mistaken though he be, still believes that he is acting according to the will of God, for he, too, gives God thanks.

"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (14:7). That is, no real Christian will regard himself as his own master, nor hold that he is free to do as he pleases. He will realize that both in his life and death, his chief end is to glorify God.

He will acknowledge that he is not his own, but has been bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ; therefore he is Christ's servant, to live according to the will of God and for God's glory. Paul clearly means to imply that all who accept this principle are to be treated as true Christians, whatever errors or weaknesses they may have about interpretation of the will of God concerning particular matters. Those who recognize and admit that they belong wholly to Christ, having no authority over their own life or death, are to be received as our Christian brethren.

#### Questions:

1. What kind of "days" does Paul mean in 14:5?
2. What was the attitude of some Jewish Christians toward these special days?
3. Why were differences about observance of days not to be allowed to disrupt Christian fellowship?
4. How can it be shown that 14:5 does not refer to the Christian Sabbath?
5. What principle is involved in Paul's statement: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind"?
6. How is this principle violated by some people today?
7. How is an erring conscience to be corrected?
8. Has God appointed some people as keepers of other people's conscience?
9. How do we know that 14:6 does not mean that both the classes mentioned were equally right?
10. What is the real meaning of 14:6?
11. In 14:6, what is shown by the fact that both classes of Christians give God thanks?
12. What truth is taught by 14:7?
13. Why is a Christian not free to do as he pleases?
14. Who are to be received as our Christian brethren?

## LESSON 86

## PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued

**E. The Christian's Duty toward Weak Brethren. 14:1-13, Cont.**

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's (14:8). This verse repeats the thought of verse 7, in a more explicit form. The word "Lord" in this verse clearly means Jesus Christ, as is evident from the context, verse 9.

The devotion specified in verse 8 is that which the creature owes to the Creator; and since this devotion is to be rendered to the Lord (Jesus Christ), this proves the deity of Christ—it proves that Christ is God. Note how the terms "God" and "Lord" are used interchangeably in verses 6-9. This forms a strong evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ.

"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (14:9). In this verse the word "revived" is a poor translation of the Greek, because in our common English speech the word "revived" is used of the recovery of someone who was only in danger of death, but not actually dead. The Greek verb here translated "revived" really means simply "lived"; the word "again" which is added in some versions is not found in the Greek text.

By His death, Christ purchased His people for His own. By His resurrection, He attained to His present glory as King and Lord of all. His present exaltation and glory and dominion are represented in the Bible as the reward of His sufferings and death. (Compare Phil. 2:8,9). Here in Romans 14:9 Paul teaches that Christ's authority as Saviour and King is not limited to this present world; it extends to the life after death, for He is the Lord both of the dead and the living.

We should realize how different this idea of Christ is from the common view of Jesus in liberal Protestant circles today. The common liberal view denies that Jesus is truly God, but holds that He was a great and good man. He is regarded as a teacher and example rather than as Redeemer and Lord. But the Christ that Paul believed in was and is Lord both of the dead and the living. He is truly God.

"But why doest thou judge thy brother? or why thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (14:10). (In this verse, the most reliable Greek manuscripts read "the judgment seat of God" instead of "the judgment seat of Christ", and for this reason the American Standard Version (1901), the Revised Standard Version (1946), and most other modern version read

"God" instead of "Christ". As Christ is God, and Paul has been using the terms "God" and "Lord" (Christ) interchangeably in this chapter, this difference in the Greek manuscripts is not important).

"If a man is our brother, if God has received him, if he acts from a sincere desire to do the divine will, he should not be condemned, though he may think certain things right, which we think wrong; nor should he be despised if he trammels his conscience with unnecessary scruples. The former of these clauses relates to scrupulous Jewish Christians; the latter to the Gentile converts. The last member of the verse applies to both classes. As we are all to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, as he is our sole and final judge, we should not usurp his prerogative, or presume to condemn those whom he has received" (Charles Hodge).

"For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (14:11). This is a quotation from Isaiah 45:23. It will be noted that Paul does not quote the exact words of Isaiah; he varies them somewhat, while giving the same sense. This is to be explained by the fact that the Holy Spirit is the real Author of both Isaiah and Romans. When an author is quoting from his own writings, he is at liberty to make any changes he may see fit, which would not be proper in quoting the writings of another. Romans 14:11 is just as truly inspired as Isaiah 45:23, the Holy Spirit being the real source of both. "As I live" gives the correct meaning of the phrase "I have sworn by myself" which occurs in Isaiah 45:23. "The apostle evidently considers the recognition of the authority of Christ as being tantamount to submission to God, and he applies without hesitation the declaration of the Old Testament in relation to the universal dominion of Jehovah, in proof of the Redeemer's sovereignty. In Paul's estimation, therefore, Jesus Christ was God" (Charles Hodge).

Verse 11 confirms the truth stated in the last part of verse 10, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ". The Old Testament prediction, "To me every knee shall bow", confirms this. Here as so often in his epistles, Paul takes pains to show the harmony of his doctrine with that of the Old Testament Scriptures. What the apostle was teaching was not some strange novelty, but truth fully in harmony with and indeed revealed in the Old Testament.

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (14:12). This verse summarizes the truth of individual personal responsibility to God which Paul has been teaching. Every one of us shall give account OF HIMSELF to God. We are not to

give account of our brother, but of ourself. As each Christian is to render his own account to God, we can see how presumptuous and improper it is for some to undertake to pass judgment on others.

“Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (14:13). “let us not judge one another any more” is an admonition that Christian people of the present day, as of Paul’s day, would do well to heed. Almost every church has some people who are living in constant violation of this divine precept. They may be the strictest of the strict about many other matters, but about this precept of Romans 14:13 they are completely neglectful. With sharp tongues they pass censorious judgment on other Christians whom God has not placed under their jurisdiction. This is one of the great sins which mar the peace, holiness and edification of the Church.

#### Questions:

1. Who is meant by the word “Lord” in 14:8?
2. What kind of devotion is specified in 14:8?
3. What does 14:8 show concerning Jesus Christ?
4. What inference can be drawn from Paul’s interchangeable usage of the terms “God” and “Lord” in 14:6-9?

5. Why is the word “revived” in 14:9 a poor translation?

6. What is the literal meaning of the word translated “revived” in 14:9?

7. What is the relation between Christ’s sufferings and His exaltation?

8. Besides this present world, what does Christ’s authority include according to 14:9?

9. How does the Christ of Paul differ from the Jesus of liberal Protestantism?

10. What variation exists among Greek manuscripts in the wording of 14:10?

11. From what Old Testament book is 14:11 quoted?

12. How can we explain the fact that Paul did not quote the exact words of the Old Testament?

13. What is shown by Paul’s frequent quoting of the Old Testament?

14. Of what shall every Christian give account to God?

15. Why is the admonition of 14:13, “Let us not judge one another any more”, suited to the churches of the present day?

### LESSON 87

#### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued

##### F. How the Strong in Faith should use their Christian Liberty. 14:13-23

“But judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (14:13b). The apostle now proceeds to a new topic, though it is one related to that which he has just been discussing. This new topic is, How the strong in faith ought to use their Christian liberty. It is not enough that a Christian be “fully persuaded in his own mind” that certain conduct is right. Something more needs to be considered, namely, the effect of one’s conduct on others. A Christian must not only be fully persuaded that what he proposes to do is right, but he must also take care that he does not injure some brother by what he does. So Paul now takes up the question of Christian liberty and how it is to be exercised.

We take verse 13b as addressed to the strong Christian, who is admonished not to put a “stumblingblock” in the way of the weak Christian. We

must therefore consider, what is the “stumblingblock” to which Paul refers. “Stumblingblock” and “occasion to fall” clearly mean practically the same thing: some object or obstacle in one’s path which occasions stumbling and falling. But to what in the Christian’s conduct do these terms refer?

In order to understand Paul’s meaning, we must realize what kind of weakness it was that characterized the weak brethren about whom he is speaking in this chapter. This particular point has often been missed in discussions of this chapter and applications of it to modern problems. It has often been alleged that the “weakness” of the weak brethren was a readiness to indulge in sinful practices, such as intemperance. According to this idea, the weak brethren were “weak” because they were ready victims of temptation, and found it very difficult to let certain things alone; in other words, their weakness was a weakness of **indulgence** or **excess**.

But this idea will not fit Paul’s statements in this

chapter at all. The weak brethren he is describing were not people who were ready at the slightest suggestion to fall into intemperance. They were not guilty of any intemperance whatever. On the contrary, they were total abstainers from certain things. They would not eat flesh at all, but confined themselves to a diet of herbs. The weakness of the weak brethren, therefore, was not the weakness of a tendency to indulgence or intemperance; on the contrary, it was the weakness of religious scruples about the use of certain things. It was their NOT eating flesh that was their weakness. Those who were strong were able to eat it without any scruples; the weak had scruples about it.

What, then is the “stumblingblock” which the strong are not to place in the way of the weak? In view of what follows (verses 14-23) it is evident that the “stumblingblock” to which the apostle refers is some action on the part of the strong Christian which encourages or prompts the weak Christian to do what he, the weak Christian, believes to be wrong. The “falling” on the part of the weak Christian is not the sin of falling into intemperance of any kind; it is the sin of daring to do something about which he is not “fully persuaded in his own mind”, something about which he still has doubts or scruples. (Note verse 23, “And he that doubteth is dammed if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin”. Here it is clear that the sin is not the sin of eating, but the sin of eating in spite of his doubts, the sin of eating without faith that it was right for him to do so).

We shall study verses 14-23 in more detail in the following lessons. We have only glanced at them to learn the true meaning of the “stumblingblock” and the “fall” mentioned in verse 13. It has been shown that the “fall” of the weak Christian was not a fall into intemperance or sinful indulgence of any kind, but a daring to do something about which he had

doubts—something which was not wrong in itself, and about which the strong Christian did not have any scruples. And the “stumblingblock” was an action on the part of the strong Christian which would encourage the weak Christian to do something about which he had scruples.

#### Questions:

1. What new topic does Paul take up at this point in the epistle?
2. Why is it not enough that a Christian be “fully persuaded in his own mind” that something he intends to do is right?
3. Is the second part of verse 13 addressed to the strong Christian or to the weak Christian?
4. Was the weakness of the “weak brethren” in this chapter a tendency to intemperance?
5. What was the real nature of the weakness of the “weak brethren”? What verses in the chapter show this?
6. What is the “stumblingblock” to which Paul refers?
7. What was the “falling” that the weak brother was in danger of?
8. What does verse 23 show about the nature of the sin the weak brother was in danger of committing?
9. Why should Christians avoid putting stumblingblocks in the way of weak brethren?
10. Does the strong Christian have a right to act as he pleases regardless of spiritual danger to the weak brother?

### LESSON 88

#### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued

##### F. How the Strong in Faith should use their Christian Liberty. 14:13-23, Cont.

“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean” (14:14). “The distinction between clean and unclean meats is no longer valid. So far the Gentile converts are right. But they should remember that those who consider the law of the Old Testament on this subject as still binding, cannot, with a good conscience, disregard it. The strong should not, therefore, do anything which would be likely to lead such persons to violate their own sense of duty” (Charles Hodge).

“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus”. The means that what Paul is about to say is not a conclusion which he has arrived at by his own reasonings, but something which he knows by divine revelation. There is a possible allusion here to the words of Christ in Mark 7:14-23. “There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him . . .” Our Lord is speaking here, of course, of religious defilement. And Paul in Romans 14:14 is speaking of religious uncleanness. The old distinctions and prohibitions of unclean foods, in the ceremonial law of the Old Testament, have been abrogated; they are no longer binding. Nothing is therefore to be regarded as “unclean of itself”. Compare Acts 10:9-15, where the same teaching is given. Although the truth is that

nothing is “unclean of itself”, still there were members in the Church of Rome in Paul’s day who did not grasp this simple truth; in their thinking, there were many things that were “unclean of themselves”. And so the apostle adds: “To him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean” (14:14b). That is, the Christian who still believes that something is “unclean” cannot safely partake of it; to him it is still unclean, because in eating of it, he would be doing something which he believes to be sinful; thus he would violate his own conscience. It is a sin to act against one’s conscience, even when that conscience is ignorant and misguided. It is not a sin to eat “unclean” meats, but it is a sin to do anything which a person believes to be forbidden by God. The sin is not the sin of eating meats, but the sin of disregarding one’s conscience.

“But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably” (14:15a). The phrase “now walkest thou not charitably”, is better translated “thou walkest no longer in love”, as in the American Standard Version (1901). If the strong Christian insists on his freedom to eat any kind of meat under all circumstances and in any company, then he is in danger of having a bad effect on the weak brother. And to insist on one’s own rights and freedom, while disregarding the spiritual condition of others, is contrary to the duty of Christian love. The strong Christian must therefore take care, that he does not by his use of meats injure the weak brother, who is burdened by scruples about meats.

“Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died” (14:15b). Here we see the soul-destroying nature of any disregard of conscience. How could the strong Christian’s eating meats destroy the weak Christian? Meats themselves are of course not harmful, nor are they religiously defiling. But the strong Christian must be on his guard lest by eating of meats he **destroy** the weak Christian. Destroy is, clearly, a very strong word; it is much stronger than merely to injure, offend or grieve the weak brother. The word “destroy” involves the destructive nature and tendency of sin, its tendency to destroy the soul and alienate it from God. Of course it is perfectly true that God is able to make the weak Christian stand (14:4) and that those whom God has foreknown and predestinated shall certainly be glorified (8:30)—these things are true, certainly, but Paul is not speaking of the keeping power of God; he is speaking of the destructive tendency of sin. When he uses the word “destroy” in 14:15, he refers to what sin will do if it is not restrained or removed by the grace of God.

Sin, apart from God’s grace, will certainly destroy the sinner eternally. And the weak Christian commits a sin when he acts contrary to his own (misguided) conscience. The strong Christian should therefore stop and think; he should realize what a terribly dangerous, destructive thing sin is, before he uses his

own freedom in any way that might lead the weak Christian to commit a sin.

While the question of clean and unclean meats is no longer a debated question in most Christian circles at the present day, the principle which is embodied in verse 15 remains permanently valid. The strong Christian must never use his freedom in such a way as to destroy the weak Christian; he must never use his freedom in such a way as to lead the weak Christian to do something which the weak Christian believes to be wrong. There are many applications of this principle at the present day. Many people today, as in Paul’s day, have conscientious scruples about various matters which are not really forbidden by God. For example, there are sincere Christians who believe that life insurance is sinful. The great majority of Christian people hold that life insurance is morally legitimate. They have a right to take out life insurance, but they must not try to persuade or encourage those who have scruples about it to do so, lest these “weak brethren” act against their conscience and so fall victim to the destructive power of sin.

#### Questions:

1. What does Paul mean by saying “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus”?
2. What passage in the Gospels may be alluded to in 14:14? What is the teaching of Christ in that Gospel passage?
3. What kind of uncleanness was Christ speaking about in Mark 7?
4. What kind of uncleanness was Paul speaking of in Romans 14:14?
5. What incident in the book of Acts teaches that nothing is unclean of itself? Where is it found?
6. What truth did some members of the Church at Rome fail to grasp?
7. What is the meaning of the statement: “To him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean”?
8. Why is it a sin to act against one’s conscience, even when that conscience is misguided?
9. What is the true meaning of “not charitably” in 14:15?
10. Why may not the strong Christian insist on his freedom to eat any kind of meat at any time and place?

11. What is the effect of any disregard of conscience?

12. How could the strong Christian's eating of meats "destroy" the weak Christian?

13. Does 14:15 imply that a saved Christian can fall away from God and perish in his sins? If not, how can we explain the use of the word "destroy" in this verse?

14. What will sin certainly do apart from God's grace?

15. What should the strong Christian realize before exercising his own freedom?

16. What permanently valid principle is embodied in 14:15?

17. What applications does this principle have today?

## LESSON 89

### PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued

#### F. How the Strong in Faith should use their Christian Liberty. 14:13-23, Cont.

"Let not then your good be evil spoken of" (14:16). This is presumably addressed to the strong Christian, and the "good" is the strong Christian's freedom to eat meats. The meaning then is, "Do not use your liberty, which is good, in such a way that it will occasion evil, and bring censure upon you".

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (14:17). "This is a new reason for forbearance. No principle of duty is sacrificed; nothing essential to religion is disregarded, for religion does not consist in external observances, but in the inward graces of the Spirit . . . There is no sin in abstaining from certain meats, and therefore, if the good of others requires this abstinence, we are bound to exercise it" (Charles Hodge).

While in the Old Testament, under the ceremonial law, there was an emphasis on external things, Christianity is different. The Kingdom of God—the reign of God over His people—does not consist in such external matters as "meat and drink", but in the spiritual things: righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit. "These words are to be taken in their Scriptural sense. Paul does not mean to say, that Christianity consists in morality; that the man who is just, peaceful and cheerful, is a true Christian. This would be to contradict the whole argument of this epistle. The righteousness, peace, and joy intended, are those of which the Holy Spirit is the author. Righteousness is that which enables us to stand before God, because it satisfies the demands of the law. It is the righteousness of faith, both objective and subjective; peace is the concord between God and the soul, between reason and conscience, between the heart and our fellow-men. And the joy is the joy of salvation; that joy which only those who are in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost can ever experience" (Charles Hodge).

"For he that in these things serveth Christ is

acceptable to God, and approved of men" (14:18). This verse confirms the preceding one. By "these things", the apostle clearly means "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost". Where these exist, differences about meats and drinks should not be permitted to disrupt the bonds of Christian fellowship. The person who has the genuine "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" is not only acceptable to God (who is the Author and Giver of these spiritual graces), but is also "approved of men". This does not mean that the faithful spiritual Christian will always be "approved of men", nor that he will ever be approved of **all** men. Sometimes the faithful, spiritual Christian will find himself in a small and despised minority, while the majority applauds more popular and man-pleasing teachings. And the faithful Christian will always find some people opposed to him and his principles. Moreover he will nearly always find some within the visible church who are opposed to him and his principles. But eventually the faithful Christian will be "approved of men". His testimony for truth and right may be ignored and it may be despised, but the day will come when God will bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noonday. It has happened many a time in the history of the Christian Church that those who faithfully witnessed to the truth of God were reproached and persecuted for a long time, but eventually recognized as having stood for truth and righteousness.

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (14:19). Here Paul places before the Christians at Rome the obligation to seek peace and mutual edification. Clearly this was much more important than the right of the strong Christians to exercise their liberty on any and all occasions. "Since Christian love, the example of Christ, the comparative insignificance of the matters in dispute, the honor of the truth, the nature of real religion, all conspire to urge us to mutual forbearance, let us endeavor to promote peace and mutual edification" (Charles Hodge).

**Questions:**

1. Is 14:16 addressed to the strong Christian or to the weak Christian?
2. What is the "good" mentioned in 14:16?
3. What is the meaning of 14:16?
4. What does Paul mean by saying, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink"?
5. What kind of righteousness is meant in 14:17?
6. What kind of peace is meant in 14:17?
7. What kind of joy is meant in 14:17?
8. What does the apostle mean by "these things" in 14:18?

9. Why is the person who has genuine righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit acceptable to God?

10. Will the faithful Christian always be "approved of men"?

11. Can the faithful Christian expect that all in the visible church will approve of him?

12. What experience have many in the history of the Church had?

13. What obligation is placed before Christians in 14:19?

14. Why should Christians seek for peace and mutual edification?

15. What is more important than the exercise of the strong Christian's liberty?

**LESSON 90****PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued****F. How the Strong in Faith Should Use Their Christian Liberty. 14:13-23, Continued.**

"For meat destroy not the work of God" (14:20a). This clause is somewhat similar to 14:15b. There is some question as to the precise meaning of the phrase "the work of God." Some take this as meaning "a Christian brother," or "the Christian status of a brother." But perhaps the most probable meaning is the edification mentioned at the close of the preceding verse. "Thus it will mean, thy fellow-Christian, as a plant of God's planting, a building of God's raising" (Henry Alford). Obviously there is no comparison of importance between this "work of God" and the strong Christian's right to eat certain kinds of foods. The one so far transcends the other in importance that no truly spiritual Christian should have any hesitation whatever as to how to act when the weak brother's edification is at stake.

"All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offense" (14:20b). Here "all things" evidently means "all kinds of food," "all articles of diet." The Greek word for "pure" may also be translated "clean" (*kathara*). The statement that "all things are pure" means, of course, pure from the religious point of view; that is, not involving spiritual or religious contamination or defilement. We must remember that Paul is not discussing the wholesomeness of foods, but the matter of religious scruples about certain foods. Obviously not all kinds of food are pure from the hygienic standpoint. A loaf of bread may have arsenic in it, and be not only injurious but lethal. Paul, however, is not discussing such matters. He is discussing how the strong Christian should exercise his Christian liberty, or refrain

from exercising it, in view of the religious scruples of the weak Christian concerning the use of certain articles of diet. We are not interpreting the apostle aright if we introduce into his statements modern hygienic considerations about the wholesomeness or harmfulness of particular kinds of food or drink.

"But it is evil for that man who eateth with offense" (14:20c). The Greek word here translated "evil" is *kakon*, which means not merely harmful or injurious, but sinful, that is, morally evil. The question about this clause is, does "that man who eateth with offense" mean the strong Christian who eats in such a way as to lead the weak brother to offend; or does it mean the weak brother, who eats when his conscience does not approve? Both of these interpretations have been advocated, but the former is the one that has commonly been held and is probably the correct one. According to this view, the clause is a warning to the strong Christian to avoid eating in such a way as to cause his weak brother to offend, that is, so do what his conscience disapproves. In favor of this interpretation is the fact that the sentence stands between two others, both of which are addressed to the strong Christian who is in danger of offending the weak brother (Henry Alford).

"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (14:21). "That is, abstaining from flesh, wine, or anything else which is injurious to our brethren, is right, i.e., morally obligatory; . . . The words stumbleth, offended, made weak, do not, in this connection, differ much from each other. Calvin supposes they differ in force, the first being stronger than the second, and

the second than the third. The sense then is, 'We should abstain from every thing whereby our brother is cast down, or even offended, or in the slightest degree injured.' This, however, is urging the terms beyond their natural import. It is very common with the apostle to use several nearly synonymous words for the sake of expressing one idea strongly" (Charles Hodge).

It will be noted that in our English Bible, the words *any thing* in this verse are printed in italics, showing that they are not found in the Greek text, but have been added by the translators for the sake of making the meaning clear in English. The Greek text may be literally translated: "Good (it is) not to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor in which thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." (The most important Greek manuscripts omit the words "or is offended, or is made weak"). As will be seen from the above literal translation, something must be supplied to complete the meaning of this verse. Various suggestions have been made. Alford supplies the words "to do any thing," making the verse read: "It is good not to eat meats nor to drink wine, nor (to do any thing) in which thy brother stumbles, or is offended, or is weak." Another suggested form is: "It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor (to drink anything) in which thy brother stumbleth," etc. Charles Hodge prefers the form suggested by Alford. So understood, the verse asserts that we should do nothing which injures others.

We have already noted that the weakness of the "weak brethren" in this chapter is not the weakness of a tendency to indulgence or intemperance, but the weakness of religious scruple which induced the "weak brethren" to refrain absolutely from the use of certain things which the strong Christians knew they were free to use. Inasmuch as 14:21 occurs in this context and is a part of this discussion of a specific subject (How the strong in faith should use their Christian liberty), this verse must be understood as dealing with matters concerning which the "weak brethren" had religious scruples. Out of a consideration for the "weak brethren," the strong ought to be willing to forgo the exercise of their liberty insofar as the spiritual interests of the "weak brethren" require this. It is not of the essence of Christian liberty that it must be exercised in the sight of men. Scripture teaches, rather, that it is to be exercised in the sight of God and that God holds the Christian responsible for his use or abuse of this freedom.

#### Questions:

1. What is the probable meaning of the phrase "the work of God" in 14:20a?
2. What is the relative importance of "the work of God" and the Christian's right to eat certain foods?
3. What is meant by "all things" in 14:20b?
4. What does Paul mean by saying that "all things are pure"?
5. In 14:20 is Paul speaking of the harmfulness or wholesomeness of foods from the hygienic standpoint?
6. What is the meaning of the word translated "evil" in 14:20?
7. What problem exists as to the interpretation of the phrase "that man who eateth with offense" in 14:20?
8. What is the probable reference of the phrase "that man who eateth with offense" in 14:20? What argument can be given to support this view?
9. Why are the words "any thing" printed in italics in 14:21?
10. What suggestions have been offered as to the words to be supplied to complete the grammar of 14:21?
11. What form probably sets forth most correctly the complete thought of the verse (14:21)?
12. What was Calvin's opinion as to the meaning of the expression: ". . . stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak"?
13. What was Charles Hodge's opinion of the same matter?
14. What is the teaching of the verse according to Charles Hodge?
15. What personal sacrifice ought strong Christians to be willing to make for the sake of the spiritual interests of their weaker brethren?
16. Who will hold the Christian responsible for his use or abuse of his freedom?

**LESSON 91**  
**PRACTICAL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 12:1 to 15:13, Continued**

**F. How the Strong in Faith Should Use Their Christian Liberty. 14:13-23, Continued.**

“Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God” (14:22). “Paul presents in this verse, more distinctly than he had before done, the idea that he required no concession of principles or renunciation of truth. He did not wish them to believe a thing to be sinful which was not sinful, or to trammel their own consciences with the scruples of their weaker brethren. He simply required them to use their liberty in a considerate and charitable manner. He, therefore, here says, ‘Hast thou faith? (i.e., a firm persuasion, e.g., of the lawfulness of all kinds of meat) It is well, do not renounce it, but retain it and use it piously, as in the sight of God’ ” (Charles Hodge).

“Have it to thyself” (14:22). This clause involves, first of all, an admonition to retain our faith, that is, our conviction of the lawfulness of those matters concerning which the weak brethren had scruples. The strong Christian is to “have” his faith—he is not to renounce it and accept in exchange the scruples of the weak. Secondly, this clause, “Have it to thyself,” teaches that the strong Christian is not to insist on exercising his conviction publicly; he is not to make an issue of it before weak brethren who cannot imitate his conduct without committing the sin of disregarding their own conscientious scruples. The strong Christian can “have” his faith, his convictions, as a matter of principle, without insisting on exercising them to the spiritual harm of the weak brethren.

“Before God” (14:22). This means “in God’s presence” or “in God’s sight.” “As God sees and recognizes it, it need not be exhibited before men. It is to be cherished in our hearts, and used in a manner acceptable to God. Being right in itself, it is to be (used) piously, and not ostentatiously or injuriously paraded and employed” (Charles Hodge).

“Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth” (14:22b). A clear conscience is a great blessing, and the man who has a clear conscience is a happy man. And the man who does not allow himself to do something of which he secretly disapproves, will have a clear conscience. Since a clear conscience is a source of happiness, the “faith” spoken of in the first part of verse 22, to which the strong Christians at Rome had attained, was a valuable possession and not to be surrendered or renounced. “It is a blessed thing to have no scruples (the strong in faith is in a situation to be envied) about things in which we allow ourselves” (Henry Alford).

“And he that doubteth is damned if he eat,

because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (14:23). “That is, however sure a man may be that what he does is right, he cannot expect others to act on his faith. If a man thinks a thing to be wrong, to him it is wrong. He, therefore, who is uncertain whether God has commanded him to abstain from certain meats, and who notwithstanding indulges in them, evidently sins; he brings himself under condemnation. Because whatsoever is not of faith is sin; i.e., whatever we do which we are not certain is right, to us is wrong” (Charles Hodge). Note the similarity of the teachings here with that of 14:14.

The word “damned” should be translated “condemned” as in the American Standard Version (1901). It does not necessarily imply eternal damnation, but “convicted” or “found guilty of sin” in that particular matter. Obviously a weak Christian might eat meats concerning which he had scruples, thus committing the sin of violating his conscience, and still he might repent of this sin and be forgiven. Paul by no means implies that the person who, doubting, partakes of meats, is beyond the hope of salvation.

“For whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (14:23b). Henry Alford interprets this: “All that is not from (grounded in, and therefore consonant with) faith (the great element in which the Christian lives and moves and desires and hopes), is sin.” Whatever a Christian does that does not proceed from the principle of faith, is sin.

**Questions:**

1. What idea does the apostle present in the first part of verse 22?
2. What is meant by “faith” in 14:22?
3. What is included in the admonition “Have it to thyself”?
4. What is involved in the phrase “before God,” 14:22?
5. What is the meaning of the statement: “Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth”?
6. What great source of happiness is referred to in 14:22?
7. What is meant by the statement: “He that doubteth is damned if he eat”?
8. How should the word “damned” in 14:23 be

translated? What does it involve in this verse?

9. What is meant by the statement: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin"?

10. How can a Christian be sure that what he is doing is right?

*(To be continued)*

## Reviews of Religious Books

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

**NOT READY TO WALK ALONE**, by Judith Fabisch. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1978, hardbound. Pp. 122. \$5.95.

I would like to say that this book would be a fine gift for a bride, but maybe she should wait a few weeks or months to read it. As the writer says, "The best preparations for widowhood begin on the wedding day." Statistics prove that three out of four girls who marry will some day be left as widows, many of them still young. "Swimming lessons prove their worth only when the boat is tipped over."

Mrs. Fabisch's advice for the married woman is to see, first, that she has committed her life to God, then to decide that she will not allow her husband to pamper her by sparing her from all the concerns about "money matters."

The writer cites all the pitfalls that await a new widow who has allowed her husband to keep her "on a pedestal" to spare her from such worry. She shows how any woman who does this will have multiple, almost unbearable, worries when she has to "walk alone."

As a young widow who was "prepared" by a loving husband, I can testify to this book's great value.

—Lois Marshall

**NATURE AND MIRACLE**, by Johann H. Diemer. Wedge Publishing Foundation, 229 College St., Toronto, Ont. M5T 1R5, Canada. 1977. pp. 37, paper cover. \$1.95 plus 75 cents for "handling."

Translated from Dutch, this monograph or essay is by a Dutch biologist and student of the philosophy of science who was arrested by the Nazis, liberated by the British army at the end of World War II, and died

in a British hospital in 1948. Quite evidently, he knew and loved the Lord, and was a witnessing Christian. He adhered to the "Reformational" school of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. In the present reviewer's opinion it does not commend the book to American readers to have a foreword by Hendrik Hart and another by Herman Dooyeweerd. The former is still living, the latter deceased. Both of these men are regarded by orthodox American Calvinists as being heretics or cultists.

It seems excessive to charge \$1.95 for a 37-page book (really only a booklet or pamphlet), plus 75 cents for "handling." The book arrived in a ten-cent jiffy mailer with 33 cents postage on it. Who is trying to "rip off" the Christian public?

The author seems totally unaware of C. S. Lewis's **Miracles** (1948, hardbound, pp. 200, The Macmillan Company). Possibly Diemer died before Lewis's book appeared. In fact he cites hardly any but Dutch and German authors. Sir James Jeans (**The Mysterious Universe**) is one of the very few exceptions.

Numerous times—the reviewer gave up counting—the proper noun or adjective "Christian" is printed with a small "c." On page 7 occurs the term **sciolists**. I was unable to find it in an up-to-date two thousand page English dictionary. On page 12 occurs as a sub-title, "The Miracles of Providence." This should at least have an explanatory note. To orthodox British and American Reformed writers the terms "miracle" and "providence" are antithetical.

I am reluctant to say anything derogatory about Diemer, now that he is with the Lord. But about this book as a whole, it impresses me as provincial, strictly Dutch and German (mostly Dutch), and likely to have little appeal to British and American readers. In the reviewer's opinion, C. S. Lewis's **Miracles** is by far the best book on this subject, and is likely to en-

dure long after Diemer's work has been all but forgotten.

—J. G. Vos

**LIFE AFTER DEATH?** by Spiros Zodhiates. 1977, pp. 256, paperback, \$1.75. AMG Publishers, Ridgefield, N.J. 07657.

A brief, popular type account of evangelical Christian eschatology, especially as it concerns personal immortality and the resurrection of the body. Recommended.

—J. G. Vos

**CHRISTIANITY—NOT JUST A RELIGION**, by Spiros Zodhiates. 1977, pp. 166, paperback. \$1.75. AMG Publishers, Ridgefield, N.J. 07657.

Christianity is not just "a" religion—one among many options. It is the one and only true religion and involves a distinctive world-and-life view. Much instruction and comfort in these pages.

—J. G. Vos

**WHAT THIS COUNTRY NEEDS**, by Paul A. Kienel. 1976. Beta Books, 10857 Valiente Court, San Diego, CA 92124. Paperback, pp. 125. \$1.95.

Foreword by Tim LaHaye. A reprint of a book originally published under the title "America needs Bible centered families and schools." Recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**THE KOREAN PENTECOST AND THE SUFFERINGS WHICH FOLLOWED**, by William Blair and Bruce Hunt. Banner of Truth Trust, P.O. Box 621, Carlisle, Pa. 17013. Britain: 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh EH12 6EL, Scotland. Paperback, pp. 162. In U.S.A., \$1.95.

Illustrated with a number of striking photographs. The great Christian revival in Korea, including the early days of the Gospel in that country, troubles and bitter persecution under the Japanese occupation, and later problems. Shows what God can do when His people take Him at His Word. Highly recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**THE UNLISTED LEGION: PART OF ITS WITNESS IN THE KARAKORAM AND THE KHYBER**, by Jock Purves. 1977, paperback, pp. 195. U.S.A. price \$2.25. The Banner of Truth Trust, P.O. Box 621, Carlisle, Pa. 17013. Britain: 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh, EH12 6EL, Scotland.

Karakoram and the Khyber are almost as unknown to American Christians as the surface of the moon. Near the "roof of the world," it has been a very hard region for Christianity to penetrate. This little book tells a story of heroism and faith and blessing in a little known area. Recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**PURPLE VIOLET SQUISH: AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE 'DROPPED OUT' GENERATION**, by David Wilkerson. 1972, reprint of 1969. Paperback, pp. 139. 75 cents. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506.

By the author of "The Cross and the Switchblade." Reformed orthodoxy cannot be assumed in writings of this author. However what he has to say is worth our reading and consideration.

—J.G. Vos

**GUIDE TO EVANGELISM**, by Paul E. Little et al. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1977, paperback, pp. 157. \$2.50

Consistently evangelical, not necessarily Reformed in viewpoint. Various types of evangelism and evangelistic opportunity are discussed. Worth studying.

—J.G. Vos

**THE PROBLEM OF WINESKINS: STUDY GUIDE: CHURCH STRUCTURE IN A TECHNOLOGICAL AGE**, by Howard A. Snyder. 1977, paperback, pp. 32. 95 cents. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515.

This brief monograph discusses the proper structure of the Visible Church, changes in the concept of church structure, fellowship, church and culture. Too brief to be definitive on any of these matters, but interesting and worth reading.

—J.G. Vos

**CHRISTIANS & SOCIOLOGY**, David Lyon. Paperback, pp. 89, pocket size, 1975. \$1.95. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F. Downers Grove, Ill. 60515.

It has been said that there can be a Christian interpretation of sociology but not a sociological interpretation of Christianity. The sub-title of this book is "A Christian response to the challenge of sociology." As everything in the universe is connected with God in some way, there is clearly a need for such a book as this, written by a competent evangelical Christian sociologist.

—J.G. Vos

**THE SONG**, by Calvin Miller. 1977, paperback, p. 170. \$3.95. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515.

A sequel to *The Singer*. An unusual combination of prose and verse. "In the middle of the faithless sky there hangs a small dark world that once was green and blue. Some say it killed itself by stabbing all its lovely lands with deep atomic wounds. Some say it took an overdose of hate."

—J.G. Vos

**WANTED: RICHARD DAVID COSS**, with Jo Ann Summers. 1975, 1977, paperback, pp. 132. \$2.95. Beta Books, 10857 Valiente Court, San Diego, CA 92124.

The study of a convict, born again while in prison, today active in Christian service and ministry. Well worth reading and pondering.

—J.G. Vos

**THE WIND IS HOWLING**, by Ayako Mura. 1977, paperback, pp. 190. \$3.95. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515.

"An autobiographical journey from nihilism to Christianity." By an outstanding Japanese Christian. Good reading for missionary societies and others too.

—J.G. Vos

**DECLARE HIS GLORY AMONG THE NATIONS**, ed. by David M. Howard. 1977, paperback, pp. 262. \$3.95. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515.

A wise and competently written philosophy of Christian missions. The hardships are brought out as well as the triumphs and joys.

—J.G. Vos

**GETTING THE MOST OUT OF LIFE**, by Spiros Zodhiates. AMG Publishers, Ridgefield, N.J. 07657. 1976, paperback, pp. 379. \$4.45.

An exposition of 1 Corinthians chapter 3. An earnest plea for seriousness in the Christian life.

—J.G. Vos

**KNOW YOUR SELF**, by David Hugh Freeman. The Craig Press, Nutley, N.J. Paperback, 1976, pp. 100. \$3.95.

"A united self is the key to inner harmony" (sub-title). A worthy production by a Christian psychologist of note. Seeks to present a distinctly Christian view of practical psychology.

—J.G. Vos

**ISSUES OF LIFE AND DEATH**, by Norman Anderson. Paperback, 1977, pp. 130. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. \$2.95.

This book deals with life issues of the present day, including abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering and birth control. The author discusses these important issues in depth and seeks at every point to reach a Scriptural answer to problems.

—J.G. Vos

**THE SALVATION OF ZACHARY BAUMKLETTERER**, by George L. Mavrodes. 1976, paperback, pocket size, pp. b31. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 25 cents.

Those of our readers who know some German will recognize at once from the title that this is a study of "Zacchaeus the Tree-climber." Recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**STUDIES IN EPHESIANS**, by H.C.G. Moule. 1977, reprint of 1893. Paperback, pp. 175. \$2.95. Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49501.

Another good commentary by the noted evangelical bishop of the 19th century Church of England. Moule takes the Bible seriously, holds it inerrant, and insists on obedience to its commands and belief of its teachings. Recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**LETTERS OF JOHN NEWTON**. The Banner of Truth Trust, 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh EH12

6EL, Scotland; P.O. Box 621. Carlisle, Pa. 17013, U.S.A. Paperback, pp. 191. 60 pence. U.S. \$1.95.

John Newton was remarkably converted from a notoriously wicked life, back in the 1700's. He became an outstanding Christian leader and influenced many to turn to Jesus Christ for salvation. This is worth-while reading for any Christian. Recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**STUDIES IN ROMAN**, by H.C.G. Moule. Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49501. Paperback, pp. 270. \$3.50. 1977, reprint of 1892.

This is a reprint of a book originally published in 1892. The author was an evangelical of the Church of England. A worthy addition to the commentaries of Charles Hodge, Steele and Thomas, and Haldane. Recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**STUDIES IN PHILIPPIANS**, by H.C.G. Moule. 1977, reprint of 1893. Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich., 49501. Paperback, pp. 136. \$2.45.

Another reprint of a book by Bishop Moule. True to the Bible. Recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM**, by Ernest Green. 1977, paperback, pp. 86. \$1.95. Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49501.

The author has served as a pastor in America and as a missionary in Africa. He seeks to present a distinctly Scriptural view of male-female relations, and insists on obedience to the commands of God. Recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**WHAT ABOUT NOUTHETIC COUNSELING?** by Jay E. Adams. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 185, Nutley, N.J. 07110. 1976, paperback, pp. 91. \$2.50.

The sub-title is: A Question and Answer book with History, Help and Hope for the Christian Counselor. While shorter and simpler than Dr. Adams' larger works, this sets forth the same basic approach. Recommended to ministers and all in counseling situations.

—J.G. Vos

**COPING WITH COUNSELING CRISIS**, by Jay E. Adams. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Box 185, Nutley, N.J. 07110. Paperback, pp. 91. \$1.95.

"First aid for Christian Counselors." Much sound and Scriptural direction. Recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**THE TRINITY: the Truth about God in an age of Confusion**, by Robert Crosley. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. 1977, pp. 46, pocket size. \$1.25.

An exposition and defense of the basic Christian doctrine of the tri-unity of God. Some problems and difficulties are also faced. Much needed today. Recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**DARING TO DRAW NEAR: PEOPLE IN PRAYER**, by John White. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. Paperback, pp. 162. \$3.95. 1977.

A worthy study of Biblical characters in relation to the matter of prayer. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Daniel, Hannah, Job, David (again), Paul and Jesus are discussed. Recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**COME PRAY WITH ME: THE POWER OF PRAYING TOGETHER**, by Carolyn Rhea. Zonder-van Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 1977, paperback, pp. 128. \$2.95.

An earnest presentation of the importance of believing, united prayer on the part of Christians. Many practical suggestions of value are included.

—J.G. Vos

**HOW DO YOU SAY, "I LOVE YOU"?** by Judson J. Swihart. 1977. Inter-Varsity Press, Box F, Downers Grove, Ill. 60515. Paperback, pp. 96. \$1.95.

The sub-title is "Expressing Love in Marriage". Much good counsel is given here. Love is expressed by deeds and attitudes, as well as by words. Bishop Leighton wrote, "Love will stammer rather than be dumb". Recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY**, by Charles Bridges. 1830 (original publication). Reprint 1976. Hardbound, pp. 390. The Banner of Truth Trust, P.O. Box 621, Carlisle, Pa. 17013. Britain: 3 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh EH12 6EL, Scotland, U.S. \$7.95.

A reprint of an old but valuable standard book on the Christian ministry. Bridges is at great pains to present a Biblical *view* of the ministry, its functions and responsibilities. Not quick reading for a passing half-hour, but substantial and truly edifying.

—J.G. Vos

**HALLEY'S BIBLE HANDBOOK**, by Henry H. Halley. Large print edition, 6x9 inches, pp. 864, Kivar binding, \$8.95. Regular edition \$5.95. De Luxe edition \$6.95. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. 24th edition, 1978.

This well-known work used to be called *Halley's Pocket Bible Handbook*. The large print edition, which we are reviewing, would not fit in any pocket, even of an overcoat! Among the contents are a wealth of maps and illustrations. Especially profuse are pictures showing archaeological discoveries. Counting the previous edition, more than three and a half million copies have been sold.

Thoroughly true to supernatural, Biblical Christianity, author Hally defends the miracles, virgin birth of Christ, resurrection, etc.

In discussing Revelation chapter 20, the author frankly admits that there are various interpretations of the thousand years. For himself, he seems to hold a premillennial view (page 735). Dispensational interpretations are mentioned here and there (e.g., page 349) but not emphasized or insisted upon. The author everywhere maintains the truth and integrity of the Scriptures over against modern "higher criticism." His discussion of Predestination in Romans 9-11 is not fully clear, but he affirms the sovereignty of God and man's freedom and responsibility (in a relation of paradox).

It is a pleasure to recommend this book heartily to our readers. The style is clear and simple. Much can be learned from it for your spiritual profit.

—J.G. Vos

**FOLLOWING JOEY HOME**, by Meg Woodson. 1978, pp. 160, cloth, \$6.95. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

A very sensitively written and touching true story of the life of a Christian boy in a Christian family

who agonized through cystic fibrosis (and medical efforts to alleviate it) and died at the age of twelve years. Joey had a real assurance of salvation and faced certain death without resentment or fear. A very good book for a Sabbath School or Church library. All cloth-bound books are expensive these days, but this one is more than worth the price.

—J.G. Vos

**THE CHILD'S STORY BIBLE**, by Catherine F. Vos. Revised edition, 1978. Paperback, 436 pages, illustrated. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 49502. \$9.95.

This work was originally published in 1935. It has been repeatedly reprinted and the illustrations changed. The present edition has been revised by the author's daughter (and the reviewer's sister) Mrs. Marianne Vos Radius. The format has been changed to two columns to the page, a decided aid to reading, especially for children.

Our mother wrote this book over several years, in lead pencil in dime store notebooks. Nobody in the family believed that anything would ever come of it. But the National Union of Christian Schools backed it and Eerdmans published it as a venture. It has now been translated into a number of foreign languages and had a wide circulation. To mention just two: French and South African Dutch.

The viewpoint throughout is that of faith, accepting the Bible as both true and of vital importance for the reader's salvation now and hereafter. If the price seems a bit high, I believe it is worth the money. The pages are large and the print large and clear. This book bears an unfailing witness to the truth of the Bible and the orthodox Christian Faith.

—J.G. Vos

**CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION** by Fred H. Klooster. 2nd edition. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1977. Paperback. 98 pp. \$3.95.

This is a clear presentation of the subject announced by the title. Klooster cites Calvin at crucial points verifying the latter's adherence to the doctrine of double predestination as traditionally understood. This lays to rest the current neo-orthodox distortion of the reformer's position. Klooster carefully and repeatedly notes Calvin's doctrines rest upon his exegesis of Scripture, that Calvin encouraged the careful but persistent declaration of this doctrine, and that his doctrine echoes not only the Bible but Augustine. The book is a treasure. Highly recommended.

—J.G. Vos

**IS ADAM A "TEACHING MODEL" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, AN EXAMINATION OF ONE OF THE CENTRAL POINTS IN THE VIEWS OF H.M. KUITERT AND OTHERS**, by J.P. Versteeg, translated by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Nutley, New Jersey, 1978. Paperback. 67 pp. \$1.75.

Professor Gaffin has rendered a great service to the English speaking world. The name and position of "Kuitert and others" is more and more present in discussions within reformed circles. Too many students returning from studying in Holland espouse such views. Versteeg cogently argues that to accept Kuitert's position regarding Adam as a teaching model seriously effects the nature of the faith. It destroys the "one after another" (time and space sequence) of the creation and fall. This in turn effects the nature of sin for sin becomes the natural state of man. It resides in man by virtue of his existence, and as such is an unavoidable aspect of that existence. Hence, there is no real guilt for sin. Man can hardly be guilty for doing what his created nature demands. This, in turn, affects the nature of the redemption: it becomes something very close to the idea of progress. Christ, the Redeemer, becomes the image of man as God intends him to be and some day will be. This book certainly warrants careful reading by all and especially by those responsible for safeguarding the faith.

—Leonard J. Coppes

**A KEY TO DOOYEWEERD** BY Samuel T. Wolfe. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Nutley, New Jersey. 1978. Paperback. 121 pp. \$2.95.

Mr. Wolfe writes as a discipline of the system Dooyeweerd initiated. His book seeks to further simplify a simplification of Dooyeweerd's position, viz., J.M. Spier, **Introduction to Christian Philosophy**. Mr. Wolfe succeeds in simplifying some of the terminology, but there is much in his work that remains esoteric to any one that has not put a lot of time into studying the position. Therefore, one should plan to work hard if he intends to get a grasp of Dooyeweerd from this book. Mr. Wolfe gives no credit to other modern thinkers who have challenged the whole superstructure and presuppositional framework of the thinking of autonomous man. He talks as though Dooyeweerd is the only one who has entered the fray. Finally, there is no mention of the serious, if not disastrous, criticisms being leveled against Dooyeweerd and his followers.

—Leonard J. Coppes

**PRESBYTERIAN INVOLVEMENT IN INDEPENDENCY**, By Malcolm R. Mackay. Published

by the author at 240 Albert St., New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, Canada. Paperback, pp. 51. No price stated. 1975.

For many years Malcolm R. Mackay has been a theological "shin kicker" in the great Protestant soccer game, aiming many well-guided kicks at the legs of unsuspecting Calvinists who are presumably on his own team. This book should be read along with **Questions on Church and State** (see next review) for their mild shock effect, as well as any edification received after the pain. Our own "trily Reformed" zealots need these booklets to see how short they fall of their own *Sola Scriptura* principle.

In showing how Calvinists and Presbyterians in North America have seriously compromised the great Biblical principles of church government as the only divinely authorized form of church government, Mackay goes after the Scottish commissioners of the Westminster Assembly for selling out to the Independent party. He shows how B.B. Warfield and old Princeton, and Westminster Theological Seminary as well, have sabotaged their own Presbyterianism by their charitable toleration of Baptist alterations in the Confession of Faith. Unkind words are richly bestowed in John Bunyan, Charles H. Spurgeon, B.B. Warfield, Carl McIntire and T.T. Shields of the American Council of Christian Churches. The late professors Robert Dick Wilson and Oswald T. Allis are scolded for contributing articles to the Anabaptist, Arminian, Dispensational **Sunday School Times**. Presbyterians should stand on the Bible and refuse to tolerate in any way the evil spirit of Independency, for it is the principal source of today's confusion in the Fundamentalist world of North America. Independents "despise government" (2 Peter 2:10; Jude 8).

—Samuel E. Boyle

**QUESTIONS ON CHURCH AND STATE**, by Malcolm R. Mackay. 1977, paperback, pp. 82. Price not stated. Advocate Printing and Publishing Co., Ltd., Pictou, Nova Scotia, Canada.

In this book Mackay answers six questions put to him by a Reformed minister. He appeals to the Scottish Covenanters often as the heroic example for us to follow, but his position in this book is a strange combination of 1) the Cameronian denial (18 century) that sinners and heretics have any rights before God, with 2) the Seceder position that any providentially established government is *ipso facto* an ordinance of God.

What Mackay contends most vigorously against in his writings is the modern adjustment by Presbyterians (and since 1946 by Covenanters) to atheistic, humanistic, secular toleration as written in our U.S.

Constitution. To deny the duty of all nations to establish the one true Biblical religion, and to support and defend it, is a tragic surrender by Presbyterians to the old anabaptist and sectarian error. That error was to eliminate the Old Testament date on civil rulers and national responsibility to God, taking only the New Testament in a purely individualistic sense as our guide today in matters of Church and State.

Mackay on the old Seceder premise that all providentially established governments are ordinances of God rebukes those who, like the Covenanters, will not accept a civil government as "moral" until it is Christian. He even scolds the United States for refusing to recognize the Communist government in Peking as the *de facto* government of China, God's pro-

vidential ordinance! On this question I think Mackay is a mountain which labored and brought forth a mouse.

—Samuel E. Boyle

**TO GOD'S GLORY.** An excellent periodical booklet devoted to helping Christian ministry in home, church and school. Published every other month. The Shield and Sword, Inc., P.O. Box 2691, Las Cruces, New Mexico 80001. To individuals (tax deductible) \$12.00 per years. Write to publishers for terms on quantity orders.

—J. B. Vos

## Asking the Right Questions About Isaiah 7:14

J. Barton Payne

When the OT portion of the Revised Standard Version was published in 1952, conservative opposition immediately surfaced because of its rendering of Isaiah 7:14. The wording, "Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son," was clearly unacceptable. But what was not so clear, and still is not clear, is what does constitute an acceptable evangelical understanding of this difficult verse. Clarification may, however, be aided if we can gain perspective, if we can distinguish the relevant concerns from those that are irrelevant, or at least, less relevant. The goal, one might say, is to ask the right questions.

### I. THE PRIMARY QUESTION

Basic to all the evangelical discussions of Isaiah 7:14 is the fundamental inquiry: **DOES THE VERSE PREDICT JESUS CHRIST?** The following sub-questions suggest, and seemingly require, the answer to be, Yes.

A. Since the NT states that some of the prophecies in Isaiah 9-11 are definite predictions of Jesus (cf. Rom. 15:12, on Isa. 11:1, 10), we should first ask: **IS 7:14 INTEGRAL WITH 9:6-7 AND 11:1?** The fact that the newborn son who is called Immanuel in 7:14 seems to be lord of the whole land of Israel (8:8), does correspond to the proclamation that the child called "Mighty God," in 9:6, has no end to the increase of His government on the throne of David (9:7). Indeed, Isaiah 7-12 in its entirety has been named "The Volume of Immanuel."

B. From the NT viewpoint, **MUST 7:14 PREDICT A VIRGIN BIRTH IF ITS USE IN MATTHEW 1:23 IS TO REMAIN VALID?** Kenneth Taylor, in the

notes to his popular **Living Bible**, insists on keeping the translation **virgin**, because "otherwise the Matthew account loses its significance." Furthermore, no one holds to a virgin birth in the time of Isaiah. So, when evangelicals sometimes find this verse descriptive of an 8th century **B.C.** woman, they are necessarily forced to conclude that Matthew's use differed considerably from the primary message. But if Isaiah did not mean Mary, and if there is no other known virgin mother, then Matthew must have erred; for it simply is not right to use a verse that is **not** about a virgin birth to substantiate a virgin birth.

### II. SOME WRONG QUESTIONS

A. While Matthew's total argument does seem to demand an Isaianic prophecy of the virgin birth, some may go further and ask, **DOES MATTHEW 1:23'S FORMULA OF CITATION REQUIRE ISIAIAH 7:14 TO FORETELL JESUS?** But here the answer appears to be, No. For even though the evangelist's introductory phrase is often rendered, "that it might be fulfilled," this may suggest merely new applications for thoughts and phraseologies (cf. Matt. 2:15 or 17 on Hos. 1:11 and Jer. 31:15). James 2:23 thus says that by Abraham's willingness to offer up his son Isaac, "the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness' . . ." But these words that the NT quotes from Genesis 15:6 were not originally predictive at all; Abraham's actions in Genesis 22 simply gave them further illustration. Even so, the formula in Matthew 1:22 need not, in itself, imply anything more than a verbal illusion.

B. **DOES ISIAIAH 7:14 HAVE A DOUBLE**

**MEANING, ONE FOR ISAIAH'S DAY AND ONE FOR JESUS'?** But this sounds like "trying to have your cake and eat it too." Over a century ago J.A. Alexander's *Commentary* cautioned:

"It seems to be a feeling common to learned and unlearned readers, that a double sense . . . is unreasonable to assume . . . The improbability in this case is increased by the want of similarity between the two events, supposed to be predicted by the very same words."

C. Another wrong question—though many may not have realized it—is this: **DOES THE WORD 'ALMA IN 7:14 MEAN VIRGIN?** It does, no doubt about that; cf. the RSV's marginal reading, "Or virgin". And, so far as is known, *alma* never meant "young married woman." But it is not the meaning of 'alma that lies at the heart of the issue (see Sec. III, below).

D. Some of today's evangelicals may ask: **IS THE 'ALMA IN 7:14 "THE PROPHETESS" OF 8:3?** This, however, still appears to be a wrong question. The prophetess of chap. 8 is Isaiah's wife, and mother of his children—seemingly both of Shear-jashub in 7:3 and of Maher-shalal-hash-baz in 8:3. But subordinate questions appear:

1) Corresponding to the word "virgin" in 7:14, **DID NOT SOME WOMAN** (still in her virginity when the prophet spoke 7:14) **MARRY ISAIAH BEFORE 8:1 AND SO BECOME "THE NEW PROPHETESS" OF 8:3?** Probably not: for nothing suggests that Isaiah's allegedly "earlier" wife suffered death or displacement. Or again,

2) Corresponding to the clause that commences, "For before the boy knows . . ." in 7:16, **IS NOT MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ** (cf. his knowing how to make certain distinctions in 8:4) **THE SAME BOY AS IMMANUEL?** But this similarity in phraseology seems to have risen out of a deliberate design on Isaiah's part to relate two different prophecies to each other. That is, the immediate verifiability of his prophecy about the Assyrian devastations, which was conveyed by the birth and naming of Maher-shalal-hash-baz, "would [as E. J. Young's *Commentary* has said] thus become as it were a pledge or earnest of the prophecy of the virgin's son." Maher-shalal-hash-baz differs from Immanuel, not only in his name, but also in its significance, in his parentage (1, above) in what he is foreseen as knowing (how to cry out, "My father") and in his status (cf. 8:8, on Immanuel's possession of the land).

E. A final inquiry arises: **WAS ISAIAH 7:14 RELEVANT TO AHAZ?** But this question too is "wrong," because it is misleading. Of course, the verse was relevant to him! But many uncritically identify relevance in meaning with immediacy of

fulfillment. The proper methodology is rather to inquire, from the king's own context, just how 7:14 was relevant.

### III. THE SIGNIFICANT QUESTION

The crucial issue is this: **MUST ISAIAH 7:14 HAVE HAD AN IMMEDIATE ACCOMPLISHMENT?** A series of events occurred in 734-732 B.C. that delivered Ahaz from his foes; but these do not require a correspondingly immediate fulfillment to the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14; nor do they satisfy its broader context; nor do they determine its relevance in regard to the faithless king, as the following subordinate questions bring into focus.

A. Looking first at a matter of long-range dates in the context of chap. 7 we ask: **DOES EPHRAIM'S CEASING "FROM BEING A PEOPLE" (v. 8) PRECEDE IMMANUEL (v. 14)?** The sequence of the chapter would suggest so. But this then moves us a full 65 years (v. 8) beyond 734 B.C., down to 669 (through the reign and the deportations of Esarhaddon, which are noted in Ezra 4:2). It seems clear that Isaiah's horizon is not limited to the next couple of years after 734's crisis with Ephraim.

B. Turning now to the nature of the Immanuel event itself, as this bears on the immediacy of its fulfillment, one may next ask: **ARE THE OT'S, "SIGNS," THAT ARE OFFERED TO AHAZ NON-MIRACULOUS**, like the children mentioned in 8:18, **OR MIRACULOUS**, like the shadow discussed in 38:7, 22 (or like Mary in Matt. 1:18)? The supernatural alternatives with which Isaiah accompanies his proposal to Ahaz—"Make it as deep as hell or as high as heaven" (Isa. 7:11)—seem to favor the latter, i.e., a miracle.

C. A crux for understanding, is this question: **IS 7:14 A THREAT (per 7:13) OR A PROMISE** (as in 8:10)? Answer: The closer context, of threat, must be preferred. Isaiah 7:13's condemnation of Ahaz's faithlessness specifically introduces the Immanuel prophecy, and chap. 7's whole latter portion threatens him by predicting invasion by the king of Assyria (7:17). Furthermore, at least five subordinate questions arise from the immediate context of vv 14-16.

1) **IS THE MEANING OF IMMANUEL PROVIDENTIAL** (God's help will be with us) **OR INCARNATIONAL** (God's Person will be with us)? Matthew 1:20-23 cites the prophecy because it is seen as teaching the latter, that Jesus in His Person was "conceived of the Holy Spirit." Then too, Isaiah's violent condemnation of Ahaz disfavors the former interpretation, of alleged immediate, providential consolation.

**2) ARE THE CURDS AND HONEY IN 7:15 A SIGN OF PLENTY OR POVERTY?** The prophet's own explanation in vv. 22-23 establishes the latter, that Immanuel's birth will occur under impoverished circumstances. As Micah would soon elaborate, God "will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne her child" (8:3), even though this child is "to be ruler in Israel."

**3) IS 7:16 AN ENCOURAGING PARENTHESIS BETWEEN THE THREATS OF 15 AND 17?** Many feel that it is, that Isaiah is here assuring Ahaz of a speedy removal of the foes that he so dreads (cf. 8:4). Yet at this point, such a promise on the part of Isaiah seems unlikely; and it need not be entertained, if the "removal" of which v. 16 speaks includes a divine threat against the apostate Ahaz. This possibility is connected then with two other sub-questions on two particular terms that appear in the verse:

**4) DOES THE VERB QUS in v 16 MEAN WHAT IT DOES IN v 6,** namely, "to cut off, tear, vex," rather than what its Hebrew homonym connotes in the earlier OT books, "to abhor, feel a sickening dread"? If one chooses the latter meaning, then the "two kings" of v 16 become the objects of Ahaz's dread (RV; i.e., his Ephraimite and Damascene foes, Pekah and Rezin); if one prefers the former, the kings are then the objects of which "the land shall be forsaken" (KJV), i.e., that land which Ahaz vexes. The identity, in turn, of the kings depends on one last sub-question:

**5) WHAT IS THE LAND, 7:16, THAT IS TO BE FORSAKEN?** Many would propose the combined territories of Ephraim and Damascus, but more likely would be the one Palestinian territory, which was the home of both Ephraim and Judah, whom Isaiah does combine, in this immediate context (8:14), under the title, "both the houses of Israel." Their abandonments occurred, respectively, under Hoshea in the land's north (722 B.C.) and Zedekiah in its south (586). The relevance of the latter as a threat to Ahaz is obvious, whether in actual history it was of immediate fulfillment, or not.

A final two questions then seek to relate the king's crisis to the prophecy's non-immediate (i.e., Messianic) fulfillment,—though the first should probably be answered negatively and the second positively.

**D. WAS MESSIAH'S TIME-SPAN IN MATURING, 7:16, INTENDED AS AN INDICATOR TO AHAZ OF SPEEDY (contemporary) DELIVERANCE?** The idea often proposed is that in

a short time, i.e., in a period no longer than the maturing Messiah would need before He could tell right from wrong, Ahaz would be rescued. This kind of an approach does provide contemporaneous relevance, but it suffers both from the unlikelihood of Isaiah's predicting deliverance for such an evil king (as above) and from the charge that if Immanuel's infancy measures the years immediately following 734 B.C., it seems incongruous to postpone His presence for over seven centuries. Yet however chronologically distant this time of His maturing may actually be, Ahaz is warned that **before** it happens, his land will be devastated (v 16). But no other time-span, particularly one immediately after 734, seems to be needed.

E. Then **WOULD MESSIAH'S COMING, IN POVERTY** (caused by devastations, 7:17, even His coming centuries later), **CONSTITUTE A RELEVANT MOTIVATION TO AHAZ IN 734 B.C.?** A positive answer makes good sense. The Assyrian devastations were immediately impending, about the threat of which Isaiah left the king in no doubt at all. The Roman domination, under which Immanuel historically became incarnate, lay centuries in the future; but of course neither Ahaz nor Isaiah were aware of the actual time interval involved. Furthermore, a threat of any date remains valid as a force in motivating conduct so long as its contemporaries continue to look for it. Our Lord's undatable second coming provides similar motivation for us today (e.g., I Thess. 5:2-6). Finally, the very anticipation of Israel's Messiah as the heaven-sent climax to the house of David constituted a standing threat to Ahaz's own status: he could be replaced! As Skinner in his **Cambridge Bible Commentary** has summed up the Isaianic situation:

The sign given to Ahaz is, in short, the birth of the Messiah, the ideal King of the future, born to His people in the hour of their adversity, sharing their afflictions in His youth, and waiting the time when "the government shall be upon His shoulder," and the perfect kingdom of God shall be established. In His presence with His people Isaiah sees the pledge at once of judgment on the existing nation and dynasty and of final redemption for the repentant and believing remnant.

Herein then are acceptable answers to the right kinds of questions, both to the primary one, "Does Isaiah 7:14 predict Jesus Christ?" (Yes) and to the one that is most significant for its understanding by today's evangelicals, "Must it have had an immediate accomplishment?" (No).

## Religious Terms Defined

**BAPTISM.** "Baptism is 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 94.

**BARTHIANISM** (also called "Theology of Crisis", Dialectical Theology, Neo-orthodoxy, Neo-supernaturalism, with approximately the same meaning.) A new variety of theology developed by the Swiss theologians Karl Barth and Emil Brunner and their disciples. Barthianism is a reaction against Modernism, but it is based on modern philosophy rather than on the Bible as the infallible Word of God. It denies the possibility of a real, direct revelation from God in human history, accepts the conclusions of the "higher critics" concerning the Bible, rejects the true doctrine of the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, and teaches that the Bible provides no ethical principles of universal applicability. According to Barthianism, Christianity is essentially a tension between the realm of being (or pure fact) and the realm of thought (or pure logic).

**BISHOP.** An overseer; one of the titles used in the New Testament for the pastor of a Christian congregation. In the history of the church the title "bishop" came to be used for an officer higher than pastors and elders, having jurisdiction over many congregations—something unknown in the New Testament.

**BLASPHEMY.** The sin of speaking or writing reproachfully or slanderously against God or the things of God, such as the Bible, the sacraments, the Sabbath, divine worship, etc.

**BUCHMANISM.** A modern religious movement initiated by the late Rev. Frank Buchman, variously called "A First Century Christian Fellowship", "The Oxford Group Movement", "Moral Rearmement." It has been characterized by an unbiblical form of mysticism, emphasis on personal confession of sins to other "Group" members, fellowship between Bible-believers and liberals or modernists, and lack of concern about Biblically sound doctrine and theology.

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

**CALVINISM, FIVE POINTS OF.** Five truths of the Calvinistic system of theology which were affirmed by the Synod of Dort (Netherlands, A.D. 1618-1619), in contradiction of the five articles of the Remonstrants or Arminians. The "Five Points of Calvinism" are 1. Unconditional election; 2. Limited or particular atonement; 3. The total depravity of the sinner; 4. The irresistibility of saving grace; and 5. The final perseverance of the saints. These "five points are NOT a brief summary of Calvinism, as they are often wrongly said to be; they are merely five truths by which Calvinism is distinguished from Arminianism.

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