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## BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

J. G. VOS, Editor and Manager

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**"When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, He freeth him from his natural bondage under sin; and, by His grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so, as that by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil."**

**The Westminster Confession of Faith, IX.4**

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

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J. G. VOS, Editor and Publisher

R. F. D. No. 1

Clay Center, Kansas

## THE ANOINTED REDEEMER

(Based on Psalm 89:19-37)

By J. G. Vos

By revelation Thou hast told  
 Unto Thy Holy Ones of old,  
 "Upon a chosen Mighty One have I laid help to save,  
 Among the people he was found;  
 His honor I have made abound;  
 My servant David with my holy oil anointed have.

"With David shall my hand alway  
 Established firmly be to stay,  
 And pow'r to strengthen him my mighty arm shall interpose.  
 The enemy shall not misuse,  
 Nor son of wickedness abuse;  
 Before his face will I beat down and plague his hating foes.

"To him my faithfulness I'll send,  
 And lovingkindness will extend,  
 And in my holy Name shall David's horn exalted be.  
 His kingly power I will bless  
 In my unchanging faithfulness,  
 His right hand on the rivers set, his hand upon the sea.

"He unto me shall cry aloud  
 'Thou art my Father and my God,  
 The Rock of my salvation trusted in alone art Thou'.  
 My firstborn Son I will him own,  
 More high than every earthly throne;  
 My lovingkindness keep for him for evermore as now.

"With him my covenant shall stay  
 And I will keep his seed for aye,  
 And as the days of heaven shall his royal throne remain.  
 If his posterity shall turn,  
 My judgments and my laws shall spurn,  
 Rejecting my commandments shall my statutes all disdain —

"Then their transgressions I will note,  
 And visit them with chastening rod,  
 And their iniquity with stripes I surely will repay.  
 But yet my lovingkindness great  
 Will I not wholly abrogate,  
 Nor ever let my promised faithfulness be moved away.

"My covenant I will not break,  
 My uttered word to stand will make;  
 To David by my holiness I've sworn and will not lie.  
 For ever shall his seed endure,  
 His throne before me ever sure,  
 Established as the sun and moon bear witness in the sky."

**Note:** The reader should bear in mind that King David was a type of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that many of the statements of Psalm 89 are true in their deepest and fullest sense of Christ alone. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32,33).

—————  
 Though sun and moon and stars be not, the heavens a vanished scroll,  
 The pillars of the earth are His. Be fixed in God, my soul.  
 The waves may roar, the nations rage, and yet at His command  
 At the four corners of the earth the four great angels stand,  
 And swiftly hasteneth the day foretold in His sure Word,  
 The kingdom of the world shall be the kingdom of the Lord.

(Author unknown. Adapted)

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## Sketches from Our History Contending for the Faith Through the Ages

### CHAPTER V

#### REFORMERS BEFORE THE REFORMATION

##### 3. The Hussite Movement

The reformer John Huss was put to death in 1415. No sooner did the news of this shameful deed reach Prague, the capital of Bohemia, than the smoldering resentment of the Czech people against the Roman Catholic hierarchy and the papacy broke into open revolution. Apart from purely doctrinal and religious considerations, there was plenty of ground for resentment against the Church of Rome. At the time approximately one third of the land in Bohemia was possessed by the Church, that is, practically, by the clergy. The revolt that broke out was not exclusively a religious movement, but also an effort to throw off this intolerable economic yoke.

Prague was profoundly shocked by the news of the burning of Huss as a heretic. The nobles and knights of the kingdom at once sent a formal protest to the Council of Constance, which was still in session. This protest, called the "Protestatio Bohemorum", emphatically condemned the burning of Huss. The protest, however, only increased the opposition of the Catholic authorities. From Constance Sigismund, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, sent letters to Prague threatening to "drown all Wycliffites and Hussites", a threat which of course angered the Czechs.

Soon the kingdom of Bohemia was aflame with anti-Catholic agitation. Many Catholic priests were driven from their parishes. The emperor Sigismund persuaded Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, to try to check the spread of the Hussite movement. The people responded to this by holding meetings at which the emperor was denounced, and by preparing for actual war. On July 30, 1419, a Hussite procession was marching through the streets of Prague when suddenly it was attacked by stones hurled from windows of the city hall. The people entered the building, seized the mayor and some members of the city council and threw them out of the windows into the street, where they were instantly killed by the crowd. When king Wenceslaus heard of this he suffered a stroke, and soon died. The death of

the king, however, only increased the troubles of the Czechs. As the Hussite movement spread and gained strength, many Roman Catholics — mostly Germans — were expelled from the cities of the kingdom. In the fall of 1419 serious fighting broke out between the Hussites and the royal troops, and part of the city of Prague was destroyed, though finally a truce was negotiated between the two parties.

The principal leader of the Hussites was John Zizka. Leaving Prague for the southern part of the kingdom, he met and defeated the Catholics in a serious battle at a place called Sudomer. Later he went to a place where the Hussites had founded a settlement, which they called Tabor after the Biblical Tabor. Tabor became the center of the Hussite party known as the Taborites. These were the most extreme of the Hussites, that is, they were the party farthest from the Roman Catholic position and nearest to the faith of evangelical Protestantism.

Very early in the history of their movement the Hussites had become divided into two principal parties, though there were also many minor differences. These two main parties were the Utraquists and the Taborites. Utraquism was a principle which Huss had accepted a short time before his death, though the teaching apparently originated with some of the reformer's followers in Prague. By "Utraquism" was meant the obligation of a Christian to partake of the Lord's supper in both of the elements, bread and wine, or *sub utraque specie* as the Latin phrase stated it. This was opposed to the Roman Catholic practice of denying the cup to the laity, who received only the consecrated bread or wafer, while the officiating priest partook of both the bread and the wine. This principle of partaking of the Lord's Supper in both kinds became the rallying cry of the more moderate party of the Hussites, who were called Utraquists. They were also called Calixtines, from the Latin word *calix* which means chalice or cup.

The more thoroughly reform-minded of the

Hussites were called Taborites, from their center of activity at Tabor. These agreed with the Utraquists about receiving the Lord's Supper in both elements, but they went much farther in challenging the doctrinal and practical corruptions of the Church of Rome. Unlike the Utraquists, the Taborites recognized only two sacraments, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Their form of church organization was also much more democratic in character than the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

On March 17, 1420, Pope Martin V issued a bull or decree proclaiming a crusade "for the destruction of the Wycliffites, Hussites and all heretics in Bohemia." In compliance with the pope's bull, a vast army of "crusaders" was assembled, including Sigismund and many German nobles, as well as many soldiers of fortune whose interest in the expedition was the hope of worldly gain rather than any religious motive. By June 30 of the same year this force reached the outskirts of Prague, and at once besieged the city. Under the leadership of John Zizka, the attack was bravely resisted, and the crusaders gave up the siege. Soon after this the Taborites left the capital and returned to their headquarters at Tabor.

Negotiations were conducted seeking settlement of the doctrinal and religious points at issue. The Hussites presented a statement of their demands, called "Articles of Prague", as follows:

"I. The word of God shall be preached and made known in the kingdom of Bohemia freely and in an orderly manner by the priests of the Lord. . .

"II. The sacrament of the most holy Eucharist shall be freely administered in the two kinds, that is bread and wine, to all the faithful in Christ who are not precluded by mortal sin — according to the word and disposition of Our Saviour.

"III. The secular power over riches and worldly goods which the clergy possesses in contradiction to Christ's precept, to the prejudice of its office and to the detriment of the secular arm, shall be taken and withdrawn from it, and the clergy itself shall be brought back to the evangelical rule and an apostolic life such as that which Christ and his apostles led. . . .

"IV. All mortal sins, and in particular all public and other disorders, which are contrary to God's law, shall in every rank of life be duly and judiciously prohibited and destroyed by those whose office it is."

The emperor Sigismund, influenced by the pope's representatives, rejected these articles, with the result that the hope of peace vanished and warfare continued. As a military leader, Zizka was highly successful. In the course of time, the Hussites gained possession of most of Bohe-

mia, and Sigismund found it expedient to go away for the time being.

But the Hussites, though quite successful in resisting foreign military power, had troubles of their own. At Tabor a fanatical communistic sect called the Adamites arose, which threatened the Christian character of the movement. This fanatical sect was suppressed by drastic action on the part of Zizka.

Soon a new army of German "crusaders" entered Bohemia to attack the Hussites. These "crusaders" hoped that Sigismund would join them, but the emperor was busy elsewhere and did not arrive until considerably later. On January 6, 1422 Sigismund was badly defeated by Zizka at the battle of Nemecky Brod. This put an end to foreign attack for the time being.

Later civil war broke out between the Utraquists and the Taborites. The latter won a victory in April, 1423, which was followed by an armistice. A treaty of peace between the two Hussite parties was finally negotiated in September, 1424. John Zizka, the great Hussite leader, died soon after this, in October, 1424.

Soon the Hussites were again attacked by German forces, but the Hussites won victory after victory, even invading German territory time and again, though they always retired to Bohemia afterwards. It became evident that the Hussites were well able to defend their faith and their liberties, and could not be overcome by military force. The German nobles who had been the pope's instruments in attacking the Hussites began to wish for peace. Moreover many of the Hussites were weary of continued conflict and also wished for peace. A general council of the Church was summoned to meet at Basel, Switzerland, in 1431. Somewhat reluctantly the pope agreed to allow representatives of the Hussites to attend this council. But before definitely promising this, the pope decided to try one more time to overcome the Hussites by force of arms. In the summer of 1431 another army of "crusaders" entered Bohemia, but on coming in contact with the Hussite forces, the invaders fled after a mere token fight.

This "crusade" having ignominiously failed, the Roman Catholic authorities decided that there was no alternative but to negotiate with the despised "heretics". Representatives of the Hussites reached Basel in January, 1433. At first agreement seemed impossible. But a change in the situation in Bohemia opened the way to a settlement. Civil war had again broken out between the Utraquists and the Taborites. This time it was the Taborites that suffered defeat, and the leadership of the movement passed from them to the more moderate Utraquists. The Utraquists party drew up a statement of its demands which, after some slight modifications, was agreed to by

the Church of Rome. This document was called "The Compacts", and was closely dependent on the "Articles of Prague" of 1420. The Compacts provided as follows:

"1. The Holy Sacrament is to be given freely in both kinds to all Christians in Bohemia and Moravia, and to those elsewhere who adhere to the faith of these two countries.

"2. All mortal sins shall be punished and expiated by those whose office it is to do so.

"3. The word of God is to be freely and truthfully preached by the priests of the Lord, and by worthy deacons.

"4. The priests in the time of the law of grace shall claim no ownership of worldly possessions."

On July 5, 1436, "The Compacts" were formally ratified by Sigismund, by the representatives of the Hussites, and by the representatives of the Church of Rome. Thus the platform of the Utraquists became the creed of the national church of Bohemia, a state of affairs which continued for well over a hundred years.

Though very distasteful to the Roman Catholic hierarchy, the "Compacts" of agreement with the Hussites must be regarded as a Roman Catholic victory. For the Utraquists, who had virtually dictated the terms of the settlement, were essentially a compromising party, and except for their principle of receiving the Lord's Supper in both elements, they differed but little from the ordinary faith and practice of the Roman Catholic Church. The Taborites, on the other hand, were the party of the Hussites that approached the

evangelical Protestant position. It was the Taborites, not the Utraquists, that rejected the dogma of transubstantiation, and that regarded the Bible as the supreme authority for faith and life.

Thoroughly defeated in battle, the Taborites were further placed at a disadvantage by the "Compacts". For it was claimed that any who went beyond the "Compacts" in differing from the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome, should not be tolerated. Hence the "Compacts", instead of bringing a real settlement of the issue, only brought peace to the compromising party, and left the real witnesses for the truth of God to suffer continued persecution as fanatics and heretics.

Although greatly reduced in power and influence, the Taborites were not entirely suppressed. Their movement was continued in the Bohemian Brethren, which in the 15th and 16th centuries maintained a faithful witness against the errors and corruptions of the Church of Rome. After the spread of the Protestant Reformation, the Hussites became known as Protestants.

The Taborite leader John Zizka was one of the great warriors for freedom and the rights of Christian people, of all Christian history. Although the truth for which the Taborites witnessed was largely crushed to earth by military defeat and by the Utraquists coming to terms with the Church of Rome, the truth would rise again. The faith of Wycliffe, Huss and Zizka was vindicated and victorious at last in the glorious Protestant Reformation which began under the leadership of Martin Luther in the sixteenth century.

(To be continued)

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## THE SCOTTISH COVENANTERS

### THEIR ORIGINS, HISTORY AND DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES

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

#### PART II

#### THE HISTORY OF THE COVENANTERS

#### CHAPTER III

#### THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIANS SINCE THE REVOLUTION

#### 3. The Division of the Reformed Presbytery, 1753.

In 1749 Thomas Mair, a Seceder minister, published a posthumous book by the Rev. James Fraser, a minister of the Revolution Church who had died in 1698. The book was entitled "A Treatise on Justifying Faith", and sets forth a doctrine of universal atonement which is essentially Ar-

minian or Amyraldian. Mair himself adopted some of the views in the book, and was deposed from the ministry. James Walker, in "The Theology and Theologians of Scotland" (1872) summarizes Fraser's views as follows (pp. 48-49): "He asserts 'that Christ obeyed and died in the room of all as the representative of fallen man;' that 'men are all fundamentally justified in Him and through Him'. 'That Christ died for all'. But,

then, are all men saved? No; God did not mean to save any but His chosen. What, then, was the effect of that one indivisible sacrifice for all which God's Son offered on the cross? Well, first of all, to lay a real foundation for the Gospel offer. For every man was satisfaction rendered, and every man might appropriate it as something subjectively real. Is it simply the old story of a conditional salvation? Not at all. Fraser scorns the notion of conditional redemption and salvation. Men take, he says, low and insufficient views of the Saviour's work when they think it had respect to human happiness alone. The manifestation of God's justice and grace is its last and highest end. And this, according to him, is the glory of His scheme. It lays a basis for the Gospel in which reprobates as well as the elect can be asked to believe, while they are not, as the elect, brought under a divine appointment unto life; and hence, too, it follows that, in their free rejection of what is simple verity, they become liable, not to law, but to Gospel wrath and vengeance; and the same blood which magnifies God's grace exceedingly, magnifies essentially His justice. It comes to this, in short, Fraser plainly states it, that Christ dies for reprobates that they may come under a more tremendous doom; as, on the other hand, he dies for the elect that theirs may be an all-transcendent blessedness".

After the publication of this book, some of the ministers of the Reformed Presbytery adopted part of the views advocated in it. They did not accept all that was taught in the book, but they did accept the doctrine of the universal atonement. The Reformed Presbytery had been organized less than ten years, and now heresy appeared and nearly wrecked the enterprise. Those members of the Reformed Presbytery who accepted the doctrine of the universal atonement maintained that Christ's satisfaction was "clothed with a two-fold divine appointment, the one general, the other special. In the former sense Christ satisfied for the sins of all mankind, so that His satisfaction may be sustained as the legal ground and meritorious cause for which mankind should be admitted into a state of probation, declared capable of receiving an offer of life and of salvation, and upon which they should be authorized to rest and plead for their deliverance from their guilt and misery. On the other hand, the satisfaction of Christ as clothed with a special appointment, is the legal ground and meritorious cause for which a chosen number of mankind shall certainly be saved". These men also "held that common benefits, enjoyed by reprobates as well as by the elect, were the purchase of Christ by his death". The Reformed Presbytery denied the two-fold significance of the atonement, and also the doctrine that Christ by his death purchased common benefits for the reprobate, and held that the benefits enjoyed by the reprobate "are rather to be accounted consequents follow-

ing upon Christ's Purchase than proper Effects thereof as to them".

In 1749 the Reformed Presbytery adopted four propositions against the doctrines of Fraser's book, one of which was "That the Lord Jesus Christ represented and died upon the cross only in the room and stead of a select number of mankind". James Hall, one of the newly ordained ministers, led the party in the Reformed Presbytery that held the novel views of the atonement. Macmillan was ill and unable to attend the meeting of the Reformed Presbytery in the fall of 1752, but sent a letter to the court warning against the doctrines of Fraser's book. It was decided to take the matter up formally at the spring meeting of 1753. When that meeting was held, four ministers and five elders were present. Nairne was under censure, and had left the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and Cuthbertson had gone to America. After considerable debate, a proposition was formulated to be voted on, as follows: "Whether Mr. Fraser's maintaining that the Lord Jesus Christ satisfied for the sins of all mankind, so that His satisfaction may be competent to be proposed to them in the Gospel, and pleaded by them for their justification; and that this satisfaction is the Ground and Formal Reason upon which faith is founded, be a dangerous doctrine?" When the vote was taken, the doctrine was declared dangerous by a vote of five to three. Macmillan and his son and three of the elders voted to condemn the doctrine as dangerous; Hall and the other two elders voted on the other side. Innes, the Moderator, did not vote, but agreed with the minority.

The matter had apparently been settled by a majority vote, but the worst was yet to come. The following day the minority attempted to have the decision reversed, but failed. Hall then handed in a paper in his own name and the name of those who adhered to him, in which he took the ground that the decision was not binding because two members had been absent, and because it was contrary to an important doctrine of the Christian religion. After this the minority asked the presbytery to suspend the majority from the ministry and eldership, which was certainly an astonishing demand. While part of those who had voted with the majority were temporarily away from the meeting, the minority hastily adjourned the court and immediately made their escape, taking with them the minutes and records of the Reformed Presbytery, which from that day to this have never been recovered.

The ministers and elders who had left the Reformed Presbytery in this precipitous fashion constituted a judicatory which they called the Reformed Presbytery of Edinburgh. They issued a pamphlet entitled "A True State of the Difference", which was filled with aspersions upon the character and activities of the senior Macmillan. In 1754 the Reformed Presbytery published a

pamphlet entitled "A Serious Examination", which vindicated Macmillan's name, and was sanctioned by the presbytery. It was supposed to have been written by Macmillan, junior.

The Reformed Presbytery of Edinburgh grew for a time, and ordained a number of ministers. Soon, however, they were torn apart by dissensions among themselves. From the origin of their organization, some of them had rejected parts of the Westminster Confession of Faith and part of the Informatory Vindication. Hall died in 1798. The presbytery continued to hold meetings until 1817, but appears to have dissolved soon after that date.

Hutchison states that there is reason to believe that some of the party which organized the Reformed Presbytery of Edinburgh later became members of the first Unitarian congregation formed in Edinburgh. The Ploughlandhead Testimony of 1761 mentions the division of 1753 and condemns it in the following terms: "Again, the presbytery find themselves in duty obliged to testify against these brethren who some time ago have broken off from their communion, for their unwarrantable separation, and continued opposition to the truth and testimony, in the hands of this presbytery, even to the extent of presuming, in a judicial capacity, to threaten church censure against the presbytery, without alleging so much as any other reason for this strange procedure, than their refusing to approve as truth, a point of doctrine, that stands condemned by the standards of the Reformed Church of Scotland, founded on the authority of divine revelation." The Testimony continues at some length to review the conduct of Hall, Innes and their party after the division, alleging that they adopted "a loose and latitudinarian scheme of principles, on the point of church communion".

This controversy is reflected in the Declaration and Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian

Church of North America, which rejects as an error the doctrine "That Christ purchased any benefit for the reprobate".

In 1761 the Reformed Presbytery adopted its first judicial Testimony, at Ploughlandhead. The full title of the document is Act, Declaration, and Testimony for the Whole of our Covenanted Reformation, as Attained to, and Established in, Britain and Ireland; Particularly Betwixt the Years 1638 and 1649, Inclusive. As, also, Against all the Steps of Defection from said Reformation, Whether in Former or Later Times, since the Overthrow of that Glorious Work, Down to this Present Day: By the Reformed Presbytery. The preparation of this document had been contemplated earlier, but was delayed for several years by the controversy about the doctrine of the atonement. From 1761 on acceptance of the Ploughlandhead Testimony was required as a condition of membership in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, until 1837 when the new Testimony appeared. The 1761 Testimony is an elaborate document of some 75,000 words, of a historical and argumentative nature, to really understand and intelligently accept which must have required a knowledge of history far greater than is common among intelligent Christians today; indeed the requirement that applicants for membership profess acceptance of such a long and complicated document must have been a temptation to many to profess acceptance by an implicit faith. The Testimony was amended and re-printed in 1762, 1777, 1797 and 1818. The new Testimony was composed of two distinct parts, a doctrinal and a historical, the former of which was published in 1837 and the latter in 1839.

In 1810 the Reformed Presbytery was subdivided into three presbyteries, Northern, Southern and Eastern, and in 1811 the first Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland was constituted.

(To be continued)

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## Christianity and the Class Struggle

Review by the Rev. Samuel E. Boyle

**Christianity and the Class Struggle**, by Abraham Kuyper, translated by Dirk Jellema. Piet Hein Publishers, 1113 Alpine Ave., N.W., Grand Rapids, Mich. 1950, pp. 64, \$1.00.

Abraham Kuyper delivered this address in 1891 to the "First Social Congress" in Amsterdam, under the subject: "The Christian Religion and the Social Question". Mr. Jellema and the Piet Hein Publishers have furnished American readers with the only English translation so far of any of Dr. Kuyper's collection of social-political

works. The translator has made no comments, but provided the full text of Kuyper's address with many valuable footnotes from the original Dutch text.

A word about the translator and the Piet Hein Publishers is of interest. In the Christian Reformed Church there has arisen a group of younger men who call themselves the "Youth and Calvinism Group". Of them one writer has said, "Calvinist youth is demanding that its religion be brought to bear upon such a diversity of contemporary problems as the atom bomb, labor

disputes, modern parenthood and family life" (*Calvinism as a Political Principle*, by Justus M. Van der Kroef, Michigan State College).

There seems to be an unusual ferment among leaders of thought in the Christian Reformed Church now. Recent articles in *The Calvin Forum* and *The Banner*, as well as some vigorous protests in a mimeographed newsletter put out by the Youth and Calvinism Group, show a great interest in the question of Christian social and political action. Certainly the ministers and elders of the Covenant Church ought to read these discussions in our fraternal neighbor's published magazines. The intense disagreement between two viewpoints, as represented by the Rev. H. J. Kuiper (editor of *The Banner*) on the "right", and the Youth and Calvinism Group on the "left", make interesting and profitable reading. This new translation of Abraham Kuyper's address given in 1891 is obviously for support of the position maintained by the young Calvinists in the Christian Reformed Church. On the dust jacket of "Christianity and the Class Struggle" are these words by the Piet Hein Publishers: ". . . Calvinism lost its dynamic in the 18th century. This book, a translation from the great Dutch Calvinist Abraham Kuyper, who called for a return to the earlier dynamism of Calvinism, should help correct the stereotype of Calvinism which exists in the popular mind; it should also serve as a call to action for modern Calvinists."

Kuyper laid down the theme for the "First Social Congress" in these words: "what we as confessors of the Christ should do about the social needs of our time." That Christianity has a valid and vital relation to the social needs of the world all members of this First Social Congress would naturally have agreed. Kuyper sought, therefore, to make clear to them "the fibres by which these two life-phenomena, the Christian religion and the social question, are intertwined. The conviction that such a relation exists is not enough. It must also take on form and shape for us. Only so can it speak to our consciousness" (page 18).

Dutch theologians love their "antithesis", so Kuyper starts out by setting forth the antithesis between "nature" as it exists independent of our will, and human "art" which is man's conscious will acting on nature. He insists that as we carry forth God's mandate in physical nature, in our personal spiritual lives, and in our family circle, by applying "art" to "nature", "so, too, it is naught but primitive barbarism whenever human society, without higher control, is left to the course of nature" (pp. 19, 20).

This sets forth clearly the position of Kuyper as opposed to one-sided individualism or economic laissez-faire. Free enterprise in any absolute sense is immoral, for it allows money to be-

come the highest good, and drives society into all manner of injustice and concentration of wealth in the "luxurious bourgeoisie".

### The Social Question

Because this expression is one which Kuyper uses in a particular sense it will be wise to let him define his own term.

"Obviously whenever one uses the term **social question** one means thereby, in the most general sense, that serious doubt has arisen about the **soundness of the social structure in which we live**, that in consequence public opinion is divided as to the type of foundation on which a more appropriate and more liveable social order may be built. In itself, therefore, the mere posing of the question in no way implies that it must be solved in the **socialistic** sense. The solution at which one arrives can also be a totally different one. Only this one thing is necessary if a social question is to exist for you: that you realize the **untenability** of the present situation, and that you realize this untenability to be one not of incidental causes, but one involving the very **basis** of our social association. For one who does **not** acknowledge this and who thinks that the evil can be exorcised through an increase in piety, through friendlier treatment or kindlier charity, there exists possibly a religious question and possibly a philanthropic question, but not a **social** question. This does not exist for you until you exercise an **architectonic** critique of human society itself and hence desire and think possible a different arrangement of the social structure" (pp.39,40).

Kuyper's ideal for society rests on such texts as Proverbs 30:8, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me"; or as Paul wrote in 1 Tim. 6:10, "Nothing hast thou brought into the world, and so at your dying thou canst carry nothing away. If then thou but hast food and raiment thou shouldest therewith be content. But if thou wilt be rich, thou wilt fall into temptation and the snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition; for **the love of money is a root of all evil; thou, O man of God, flee these things.**" Christ is held up as the personification of the social ideal, both in His teaching and practice. Jesus testified against sin and then shed His blood to break the power of sin. He not only taught and lived a practical example, but He also **organized** a continuing brotherhood which through the Ministry of the Word was to carry on the fight against human error and sin through the ages. With this was the ministry of charity, carrying on the tradition of Jesus' kindness and pity.

In his closing portion Dr. Kuyper stressed several concrete points which give direction to Christian **study** and **action**. What attitude should we who profess the Christian religion assume toward the socialist movement in the world about

us? These are the primary problems facing us: (1) First of all in importance is the **problem of the majesty of God**. "Does there not lie here the lesson for us, that we as Christians must place, precisely in the social question, the strongest possible stress on the majesty of God's authority and the absolute claim of His ordinances, in order that, with all our condemnation of the mouldering structure in which today we live together socially, we may yet never help erect any structure but such a one as continues to rest on the foundation laid by God?" (p. 52).

Other concrete problems are: (2) We must insist on a proper duality between the rival claims of State and Society, Authority and free initiative. (3) We must stand against the false individualism of Liberalism and favor a social view of society as an organic body. "For, as you know, God's Word teaches us that we are all of one blood and all joined in a single Covenant through God." (4) Against pessimistic fatalism which tells us that the course of history, miserable and fatal though it is, cannot be broken, "it is our duty that we Christians, with God's Word in hand, oppose this false theory of destiny as this false system of guilty passivity; that we, through the power of our confession of God's providence, which also operates in the social sphere to separate good from evil, and further girded with the sword and with trowel in hand, simultaneously fight that which is found unbearable and build up that which is obviously good. (p. 53). (5) "Or if, fighting in direct opposition to this passive pessimism, the furious zealot seeks to set fire to the building and through wild revolution obtain the bare ground upon which the new structure will presently arise; then it is just as definitely our calling as Christians, with the apostolic word on our lips, to warn against all violation of authority, bravely oppose every deed of violence or lawfulness, and make resound loudly and clearly the demand that the thread of our historic growth be altered only through gradual change and in a lawful way" (p. 53).

(6) Correction of the popular, but mistaken ideas of **property**, as taught on one extreme by collective ownership and on the other by absolute claims to property rights. ". . . the man who lives by God's Word will here interpose the one true theory that God gave in His ordinances, and in His name witness that absolute property can be spoken of only by God; that all our property is only **loaned**; that our management is only **stewardship**; . . . an absolute community of goods is excluded everywhere in Scripture; but Scripture also excludes just as completely every illusion of a property right by which you would dispose of it absolutely, as if you were God, without reckoning with the needs of others" (p. 54).

(7) Of nationalization of the land, Kuyper warns: ". . . here we as Christians should neither

arrogantly ridicule such ideas nor, as though God's Word gives no guidance here, shrug our shoulders at such a knotty problem. Such an attitude is condemned in the first place by our conscience. . . . The fruitful acre is given by God to **all the people**, so that every tribe in Israel might dwell on it and live by it; and every agrarian regulation which does **not** reckon with this positive ordinance ruins 'land and people'" (p. 54). In a footnote here Kuyper adds, ". . . it does not follow from this that our salvation lies in nationalization of the land. . . but whoever superciliously mocks all such plans and ideas and brands them as socialistic is guilty of superficiality and unbelief. . ." (p. 54).

Other paragraphs deal with the family, with colonization, with work, and finally with state intervention. Drawing to the end of his address the speaker says: "So then, there is no need of further argument to show that the outlook on human life which is furnished by the Christian religion establishes, even for all the subdivisions of the social question, an **unwavering starting point** from which the solution of each problem must be attempted. The principles by which we are under obligations to test the existing situation and the existing juridical relations lie clearly expressed in the Word of God. And we fall short in the holy duty which rests upon us as Christian citizens, if we shirk the serious task of reconstructing in accord with His plan that which is manifestly in conflict with the ordinance of God" (p. 59).

A closing warning is given with this fine appeal, however, as Kuyper exhorts his listeners to "place in the foreground, with a gripping earnestness and a soul-penetrating emphasis, on every occasion, for rich and poor alike, **the life eternal**" (p. 59).

#### Comments by the Reviewer

This book is short and low-priced, but exceedingly important and profound. It ought to be available to all our ministers and educated laymen. Covenanters were engaged in a heresy trial in 1891 over the question of political dissent as an obligatory Christian duty. Perhaps we have let our special emphasis narrow our vision until we have failed to keep in touch with the broad vision of social application of Christianity in other fields, such as labor, journalism, education or commerce. Abraham Kuyper's stalwart loyalty to the Truth of God, his fame as a religious teacher and a Christian statesman, will make him an acceptable teacher. We should study his book carefully and search the Scriptures to see if these things be so.

Since Kuyper spoke, many developments have grown out of the situation sixty years ago which might somewhat modify his viewpoint, though I think his main principles would stand

secure even now. For example, the rise of Protestant modernism with its social gospel has led many churches into a sterile, inane program of dog-good-ism and useless propaganda. Fundamentalism has arisen in jealousy of the Good News of individual salvation, and swung completely away from all social thought and action. Eschatological teaching has made it almost heretical to mention such high ideals for society as Abraham Kuyper teaches. His book, if first written today, might be classed with the socialism of the Federal Council of Churches by some fundamentalists.

More serious still is the world-wide victory of communism. In Kuyper's day the Marxian Internationale was a negligible factor. Socialism was still the pet hobby of middle class clergymen and professors. Communism was defeated in Paris and had to retire to the dark and bloody alley of intrigue and violence. It was in this 19th century environment that Kuyper lived and the spirit of optimism and respectability which breathes through his address of 1891 reflects the parlor-type of advanced social thought in Europe at that time. Today all this has changed to a world crisis.

The recent debacle of Western capitalism and Western missions in China has shown us the stark alternatives now facing the Christian world. Distorted cries from even orthodox leaders in China, such as Marcus Ch'en of Szechuan, or from the modernist crowd around Wu Yao-tung and T. C. Chao, reveal a shocking adaptation to communism which we find incredible. Here is a translation of a prayer by Marcus Ch'en, published in Chinese in the "Heavenly Wind" (T'ien Feng) Christian Weekly of Shanghai (September 9, 1950, No. 230). Only the final paragraph is quoted here:

"Saviour Jesus . . . As for communism, many are atheists. But the leaders of communism, Marx, Engels, and the man that has put communism into practice — Stalin; these three originally were Christians, and they studied theology, and might have become Christian Pauls. But, they changed and became Sauls, opposing the Christian Church. Lord Jesus! They didn't oppose YOU! To the contrary, they have obeyed many of your injunctions. They (oppose) the disciples of Jesus who say, 'Lord, Lord', but do not fulfil your desire by following your instructions, and who cannot work together or unite. But they leave Thee, and go out of the Church. Lord Jesus! After all, you know those who are your disciples. Are they these Three? Or are they the lords of the Church, the Pope, and those who traffic in cattle, goats, and doves in the Temple? Father God! Open my eyes, that I may know the truth, divide between right and wrong, severely examine and reprimand myself, and (let me) have a broad and forgiving spirit. And let me not with the beam in my own eye seek to remove the mote that is in my brother's eye. Keep me from magnifying trivialities. In the Name of the Lord Jesus, Amen."

Surely there is urgent need now for the Christians in America to study God's Word on social questions in the light of today's communistic revolt. Kuyper wrote against the French Revolution, but described it **simultaneously in its appalling necessity and its deeply sinful character . . .**" (p. 22, footnote). This sentence has stayed with me. It sums up my personal opinion of the Chinese revolution — **"its appalling necessity and its deeply sinful character."** Let us in the West never think that this atheistic revolution will leave us at peace. We shall not escape. In view of that peril, Abraham Kuyper's little book is an excellent handbook. Buy it.

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## The Forty-Seventh Psalm

By the Rev. Frank D. Frazer

**The Joyful Sound for All People to Hear and Repeat**

1. All peoples clap your hands;  
Shout unto God with the voice of great rejoicing,

(Make a **loud noise** that may be heard throughout the world),

2. For Jehovah, the Most High, is to be feared;  
A great King over all the earth.

He is God, the Infinite, infinite in all perfection; He is Jehovah, the Self-existent, the Eternal, the Unchangeable One; He is the Exalted One,

THE MOST HIGH, Higher than the highest; He is the great King whose unshared sovereignty extends over all the earth with all its inhabitants.

This grouping of His names helps to a truer conception of God's transcendent majesty. He is above the earth, outside of it, independent of it; in no way limited by His creation; in no way hampered by the will or strength of man. "He doeth his pleasure among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand." He is Jehovah, the God of the Everlasting Covenant, and His administration of affairs on earth is in faithfulness thereto.

Here is the call of His covenant people who acknowledge Him to be "our King", that is, our covenant King, declaring that He is, at the same time, "King of the whole earth". He is to be feared for He rules in righteousness.

3. He subjecteth peoples under us,  
And nations under our feet.
4. He chooseth for us our inheritance, —  
The excellency of Jacob whom he loved.

Here is the call of the recipients of the covenant inheritance, according to promises given to Jacob. The word translated "excellency" refers not only to the good land, but to all that makes a person and a nation great.

Should defeated peoples be expected to sing for joy with those who possess their possessions? Yes, and they are doing it wherever God destroys wickedness and turns hearts to do His will. There is Rahab, the Canaanitess, Ruth, the Moabitess, and how many more the Book of Life will tell.

Here is the call of those who know God, not by distorted imagination, or wishful thinking, but as He has revealed Himself in His Word and by His fulfilment of His Word. He is known by the judgments which He executes, but there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared, not in fright, but in love.

He is the Redeemer-King who delivered His people from the bondage of the Egyptians and gave them the land of the Canaanites, as He had promised to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Even before that, "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When he separated the children of men, He set the bounds of the peoples According to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut. 32:8). For His purpose was "That they might keep his statutes, and observe his laws" (Psalm 105:45), that they might be a holy nation in the midst of the nations to teach in all the earth the way of salvation, which they knew by experience of God's faithfulness and power. Such was the type, and the glorious fulfilment is not dimly visioned in Isaiah 35:10, when they keep coming from the north and south and east and west, when "the ransomed of Jehovah return and come with singing unto Zion and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Israel did not choose Jehovah; Jehovah chose Israel. Israel did not choose the land of the covenant promise; Jehovah chose it for them; but not for them only. All who come to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, all who take refuge under His wings may say "He chooseth for us our heritage". It is to be recognized that the goodness of God in giving Israel the land of Canaan was not favoritism, nor one-sided mercy; it was because God so loved the world.

5. God is ascended with a shout,  
Jehovah with the trumpet sound.

If the Most High ascended, it must be that He previously had descended. He came down not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to confirm His covenant for men that were sinners. When He had finished His service of love He ascended where He was before. And the men that were with Him saw Him going up into heaven. "Then returned they to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God", — the joy and the praise that are still making themselves heard far and near.

The noun here rendered "a shout" (as also the verb of the same root in verse 1) is a word that can express the whole gamut of human fear and joy. We have no single word in English of like compass, so it appears in our version as "an alarm", signal of danger; "a loud noise", to startle and to alert; "shouting"; "blowing of trumpets", the clear, far-reaching call of the trumpet, or the ringing clash of cymbals; "rejoicing", "the joyful sound", etc. It is the word that fully describes the gospel message meant to be heard around the world, to move men to "rejoice with trembling" (Psalm 2:1). The Gospel tells the truth; it tells of unchangeable justice as well as of unchangeable mercy; it is not for compromise or appeasement; it is not a matter of indifference, for there is immediate urgency. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts". "This gospel of the Kingdom must first be preached in all the world for a testimony unto all nations, and then shall the end come."

In the prophetic calendar of Redemption given to Israel, this word is the name given to one of the "Set-times of Jehovah". Our version has it, "the Day of the Blowing of Trumpets" (Num. 29:1). With the blowing of trumpets by the priests, it was to be a memorial of the joyous proclamation to the ends of the earth of the Offered Sacrifice. It was set for the first day of the seventh (last) month of the redemptive period, which coincided with the first day of the first month of the common civil calendar. Accordingly, this Psalm has always been the New Year's Psalm of the Synagogue. It is even more fully appropriate to be the New Year's Psalm of the Christian Church, rejoicing in the full Gospel of the Kingdom. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound", not only by hearing it, but by understanding and repeating it.

6. Sing praises to God, sing praises;  
Sing praises to our King, sing praises.
7. For King of all the earth is God;  
Sing praises with the maschil.
8. God rules over the nations;  
God is seated on the throne of his holiness.

The noun rendered "psalm" is of the same root as the verb here rendered "sing praises", so we may properly have it, "Sing psalms to God, sing psalms". And "Sing praises with a psalm, a maschil". A Psalm is a song tuned to express praise, thanksgiving, testimony, and willing obedience to God. The word "maschil" will be recognized as occurring in the headings of at least thirteen of the Psalms. It seems to be a notation calling attention to the fact that the Psalms are "skillfully" phrased to give true and acceptable praise. Their artistry and accuracy make them well-pleasing to God, and "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness", and so for preaching the Gospel to all men.

The Psalms provide a true conception of God in His being, character and relationships to the earth and its people. He rules over the nations from a throne that is high and lifted up, because it is the throne of His holiness, which guarantees the absolute truth of His every word and the perfect justice of His every act. And, by His holiness, His all-comprehensive attribute, God is completely free, independent of the help or hindrance of men.

How we do need this Psalm in these days of Liberalism's finite god; Humanism's god that is man; the imprisoned god of Pantheism; the helpless god of a presumptive Evangelism that changes the message to make it acceptable to men, and thinks it has to create the atmosphere, and the machinery, and turn the switches so that God can accomplish His will.

This Psalm is the voice of true evangelism which tells the truth about God; not half-truths, but the truth as God has revealed it. And, while the thoughts and ways of God are higher than those of men, as the heavens are higher than the earth, yet the earth, together with its every inhabitant, is overshadowed and surrounded and sustained in the immensity of His power and love, and subject every moment to His holy will.

9. The nobles of the peoples are gathered together

(To be) the people of the God of Abraham;  
For the shields of the earth belong to God:  
Very high hath he been lifted up.

The word translated "nobles" has reference to character rather than to official position. They are the more noble ones who, when they heard the Gospel, "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so. Many of them, therefore, believed." Those who believed were added to the number. For, there is one God, one covenant, one people of the God of Abraham.

In this we see "the purpose of the ages" in process of being fulfilled — "the mystery of Christ", to wit, "that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Yes, that Gospel which "is to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers, in the heavenly order of things, might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:1-13).

And the church, as the depository of the truth of God, is the arsenal of the shields, the defences of the earth, all which belong to God who placed them according to His will.

It is the glory of the Covenanter Church that, when it was set for the defence of the Gospel, it was furnished with the shield of the Psalms in its public worship and evangelistic work. The truth that the Psalms are to be sung so that the whole earth can hear is part of the inheritance God chose for us. A great responsibility rests upon us that we be faithful to our trust. Especially is this true today when the Psalms are so generally discarded by the churches in slavish fear of the devil's lie that they are unChristian in their theology and ethics. This is a direct assault upon the whole system of Scriptural faith given to the church, and wherever yielded to has left a breach for the entrance of the errors so many man-made hymns contain.

By their very words and phrasing, the Psalms are plainly meant, by the Holy Spirit, for the defence and promotion of the truth of God among all people, that they may know their danger, and be alerted to the presence of hidden, cruel and relentless enemies; that they may know of One who is Mighty to Save; One who in wrath remembers mercy. The sacrifices and other types and symbols of the Psalms, so fully explained in the New Testament Scriptures, are no harder for us to understand than for Israel of old, if only we will read the whole Word of God. The great truths they stand for are of essential, eternal importance.

"Very high hath he been lifted up", even He who said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself", that is, will draw all people before mine own presence, face to face. For, "When he shall come in his glory . . . then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats." How we do need to know Him before that day, that we be not ashamed before Him at His coming! To know Him as He is, we need to know the Psalms.

# The "Imprecatory" Psalms

By J. G. Vos

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Of the hundred and fifty Psalms in the Psalter, six are commonly classed as "imprecatory" Psalms. These are the 55th, 59th, 69th, 79th, 109th and 137th. The 137th is not ascribed to a particular author; the scene pictured in it is "by the rivers of Babylon". The 79th is ascribed to Asaph, and the remaining four to David.

It must be admitted that the designation "imprecatory" is open to objection on the ground that as applied to these Psalms it is not merely descriptive of the content of the Psalms but also commonly conveys a certain impression of reproach, a certain element of disapproval on the part of the person using the term. These Psalms are indeed imprecatory, if this term be understood in its proper sense of invoking a judgment, calamity or curse, and the objection is not to the term itself so much as to the manner of its use by many persons, as if to designate a Psalm as "imprecatory" were almost the same as calling it "wicked" or "immoral". Though various other designations, such as "Psalms of Justice", have been suggested, these are not satisfactory because they fail to designate that which differentiates these Psalms from the other parts of the Psalter. Consequently in the present article we shall avail ourselves of the common designation of "Imprecatory Psalms".

Certain expressions in these Psalms have caused a great deal of abuse to be heaped upon them, some persons even going so far as to say that they breathe a savage spirit and are totally unfit for Christian devotional use. The Imprecatory Psalms contain prayers for the destruction of certain persons. A prayer implies a sincere desire for the thing prayed for. Objectors to the Imprecatory Psalms assert that a desire for the destruction of another is immoral, and therefore that the Psalms which express such a desire are immoral and their use in worship improper and sinful.

The ethical problem of the Imprecatory Psalms may be formulated with respect to these Psalms regarded as compositions or prayers of the Psalmists, or it may be formulated with respect to these Psalms regarded in relation to the Christian of the new dispensation. In the former case we shall ask the question: How can it be right to wish or pray for the destruction or doom

of others as is done in the Imprecatory Psalms? In the latter case the question will be: Is it right for a Christian to use the Imprecatory Psalms in the worship of God, and if so, in what sense can he make the language of these Psalms his own? It will be perceived that these two formulations do not represent two distinct problems but rather two aspects of what is basically one problem, and also that the second aspect of the problem is subordinate to the first. Whether it is right for a Christian to use these Psalms in the worship of God depends upon whether it can be right to wish or pray for the destruction or doom of others. The question concerning the legitimacy of the practical use of these Psalms is thus inseparable from, and subordinate to, the question concerning the ethical principles involved in the Psalms themselves. The major portion of the present article will be devoted to the consideration of this prior ethical question, after which an answer to the question concerning the legitimacy of the use of these Psalms will be attempted.

A number of unsatisfactory, or only partially satisfactory, solutions of the problem have been proposed. Perhaps the most prevalent of these today — in America, at least — is the purported solution associated with the system of Scripture interpretation known as Modern Dispensationalism (*Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 599; Hull, *Two Thousand Hours in the Psalms*, p. 523). According to this scheme of interpretation, the Psalter belongs primarily to the dispensation of law, not to the dispensation of grace. Any connection which it may have with the dispensation of grace or the so-called "Church age" is therefore purely prophetic. Some of the Psalms contain prophecies of the coming of the Messiah, but it is held that their ethical concepts belong to the dispensation of law and cannot be transferred or applied to the dispensation of grace. This eliminates the ethical problem of the Imprecatory Psalms by maintaining that while it was right for the Old Testament saints, living under the dispensation of law, to invoke divine judgment upon their enemies, still it would be wrong for Christian people, living under the dispensation of grace, to do the same.

This dispensational treatment of the Imprecatory Psalms must be rejected for two reasons. First, because it is based upon a false and unwarranted scheme of Scripture interpretation; there is no evidence in the Bible itself for the system, so popular today, of dividing history into seven distinct dispensations during each of which man is tested by God with respect to some specific principle; the whole dispensational scheme, as

set forth, for example, in the Scofield notes, is not something derived from the Bible itself but something imposed on the Bible from outside sources. Second, because the attempted solution of the problem of the Imprecatory Psalms virtually makes Scripture contradict Scripture. According to this interpretation, a thing which was right for David is wrong for us today since the moral law as such is held to be applicable only to the dispensation of law, while during the dispensation of grace it gives way to a different principle. Thus one part of Scripture is set over against another part of Scripture in such a way that the different parts virtually contradict each other. A considerable portion of the Psalter is vitiated for Christian devotional use by the claim that it belongs to the dispensation of law, and is therefore dominated by an entirely different principle from that under which the Christian believer lives, although Scofield himself does not draw this inference.

Another unsatisfactory solution of the problem of the Imprecatory Psalms that has been suggested is the assertion that these Psalms do not express a desire for the doom of the wicked, but merely predict that doom. They do not seek the destruction or condemnation of any man, it is said, but merely predict, in graphic terms, the ruin which is sure to overtake the impenitent sinner, according to the principle that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). In support of this contention it has been urged that the Hebrew language, unlike the Greek, does not have a special mood to express the optative. While it is of course true that Hebrew differs from Greek in this respect, it by no means follows that it is impossible to express a wish in the Hebrew language; we may be quite confident that there is no human speech in which a wish or prayer cannot be expressed. This explanation breaks down when the actual words of the Imprecatory Psalms are examined, since, while it is possible that some expressions in these Psalms are to be understood as predictions of fact rather than as prayers, it is nevertheless certain that most of the expressions must be regarded as prayers and that many of them are prayers in form and definitely addressed to God. Psalm 55:9 may be cited as an example: "Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongue; for I have seen violence and strife in the city". Psalm 59 throughout is definitely a prayer to God, beginning with the words "Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God", and ending with the words "Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing praises: for God is my high tower, the God of my mercy". Six times in seventeen verses the Psalmist definitely addresses God. The same thing is true to a greater or less extent of the other Imprecatory Psalms. We are forced to conclude that the Imprecatory Psalms are prayers for the doom of the wicked, and not merely predictions of that doom. The suggested explanation must therefore be rejected

as contrary to the language used in the Psalms themselves.

A third suggested explanation of the Imprecatory Psalms asserts that the imprecations contained in them are to be understood only in a spiritual or figurative sense. According to this explanation, when David, for example, prays for the destruction of his enemies, we are to understand that his spiritual enemies are meant, and not human beings in the flesh. This amounts to an attempt to find an easy way out of the difficulty by boldly explaining away the statements of Scripture. It is perfectly obvious that the wicked persons whose doom is prayed for in the Imprecatory Psalms are not temptations, sinful tendencies in human nature, nor even demonic powers. They are human beings, who may, indeed, have been under the influence of demonic powers, but who were none the less human. In Psalm 109:6 the person whose doom is sought is clearly human and distinguished from demonic powers: "Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand". The same Psalm continues: "Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow" (Psalm 109:8,9). Part of this is quoted in Acts 1:20 and there stated to have been prophetic of, and fulfilled in, Judas Iscariot. While it is no doubt true that the reference of the Imprecatory Psalms cannot be limited to the particular persons concerning whom these prayers were first offered to God, still the fact remains that these Psalms do, as is clearly indicated by the way in which the New Testament interprets Psalm 109 of Judas Iscariot, refer to particular human persons, known or unknown to us, and that therefore their meaning cannot be spiritualized to make them refer to purely spiritual or non-human powers or persons.

A fourth suggested explanation proceeds chiefly from those who do not accept the divine inspiration and authority of the Psalter, and asserts, in effect, that the Imprecatory Psalms are to be taken in their plain and obvious meaning, that they refer to definite persons living at the time when the Psalms were composed, but that they proceed not from divine inspiration but simply from personal vindictiveness on the part of David and the other writers. In other words, David prayed for the doom of his enemies; in doing so, David did wrong, at least as judged by Christian standards. There is really no problem involved, for the knot is cut in this fashion: to pray for the doom of another is sinful; David prayed for the doom of others; therefore David sinned. We should simply recognize that this was the sin of David, and although we may condone the sin on the ground that ethical standards were lower in David's time than now, still we in this Christian age ought to cultivate a milder and kindlier spirit.

This purported explanation is open to two

serious objections. First it is contrary to the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures. In addition to all the evidence that might be cited to show that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16), attention may be called here to 2 Samuel 23:1,2 where divine inspiration is definitely claimed for the Psalms of David: "Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse saith, and the man who was raised on high saith, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel: the Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and his word was upon my tongue". Any attempted solution of the ethical problem of the Imprecatory Psalms which regards these Psalms as merely human compositions must be rejected as contrary to a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, as well as to the claim made by the Scripture itself for the inspiration of the Psalter. Second, this explanation is contrary to the known history of David, who wrote four of the six Psalms commonly classified as imprecatory. Everything that is known of David shows that he was not a person of a vengeful or vindictive character. At En-gedi (1 Sam. 24:1-15) and again at Ziph (1 Sam. 26:1-25) David had Saul in his power and could easily have taken his life, but refused to do so. When Shimei came out and cursed David, and Abishai wished to cross over and take off his head David replied, "What have I to do with you ye sons of Zeruah? . . . Let him alone, and let him curse; for Jehovah hath bidden him" (2 Sam. 16:10,11). Again, we find David inquiring: "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?" (2 Sam. 9:3). Some might see an element of personal vindictiveness in David's dying charge to Solomon to execute the death penalty on Joab and Shimei (1 Kings 2:5,6,8,9), but the fact that David refrained from putting these men to death during his own lifetime indicates rather that it was not personal vindictiveness but concern for public justice that motivated his instructions to Solomon. While David was of course not without sin, yet there is nothing in his recorded history that in any way corresponds to such an interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms, and there is much recorded of his relations to his enemies which shows that he was not a vindictive person but a man of a mild and even a forbearing spirit. The explanation which would ascribe the expressions of the Imprecatory Psalms to a desire on the part of the Psalmist for personal revenge must therefore be rejected as contrary to the Biblical data.

A fifth suggested explanation of the Imprecatory Psalms regards them as outbursts of the moral feeling of humanity called forth by unusually brutal or inhuman crimes. When some extraordinarily brutal or atrocious crime has been committed, there is a universal demand that the guilty persons be punished, and this demand is not a demand for personal vengeance but a kind of indignation springing from the outraged moral sense of humanity. In the same way, it is alleged, the Imprecatory Psalms are not prayers for personal revenge upon adversaries, but cries to the all-just God to judge and condemn the wicked. It must be admitted that this explanation is less unsatisfactory than the others which have been enumerated. It is true that the Imprecatory Psalms are not prayers for personal revenge. It is also true that they are prayers to the all-just God to judge and condemn the wicked. But it is not true that the Imprecatory Psalms proceed wholly, or even primarily, from the outraged moral feeling of humanity. To assert that they do, is to overlook their divine inspiration and authority and to regard them as merely human compositions, the product of human religious experience and moral life. And it must be added that the Imprecatory Psalms contain some petitions which can hardly be justified simply on the basis of the outraged moral feeling of humanity, such, for example, as Psalm 109:12 ("Neither let there be any to have pity on his fatherless children") and Psalm 137:9 ("Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock"). If these words are simply the expression of an outraged sense of justice, shocked by violent crimes, it is difficult to see how they can be reconciled with Deuteronomy 24:16, which commands that "the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin". The outraged moral feeling of humanity may cry out and demand the death of the person who has broken the law, but the prayer for the destruction of his infant children cannot be justified simply on the basis of the moral feeling of mankind. This explanation, while it recognizes certain essential features of the Imprecatory Psalms, cannot be regarded as satisfactory or adequate because it fails to recognize the divine character of the Imprecatory Psalms and to justify all of the expressions used in them.

(To be continued)

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## A MISUNDERSTOOD SCRIPTURE

"And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). This text, and a number of others similar to it, are often quoted as a complete contradiction and refutation of the Re-

formed or Calvinistic doctrine of election. It is taken for granted that if the Gospel offers the water of life freely to "whosoever will", then it cannot be true that God has "from all eternity elected some to everlasting life".

Of course it is entirely true that "whosoever will" is invited to come to Christ. Believers in the Reformed doctrine of election have never so much as thought of denying or questioning this truth, which is so plainly taught in Rev. 22:17 and many other places in the Bible. Calvinism preaches "a whosoever Gospel" just as plainly and emphatically as it can be preached. Indeed, Calvinism goes far beyond many Arminians in preaching "a whosoever Gospel". For Calvinism preaches that sinners are not merely invited, but actually **COMMANDED**, to repent and believe on Christ. The Calvinist preacher, in the name of the sovereign, almighty God, not merely invites men to come to Christ, but **COMMANDS** them to do so. No one believes in the universal offer and command of the Gospel more firmly than the Calvinist.

But there is not a shadow of conflict between this universal offer of the Gospel, and God's eternal election of particular persons to everlasting life. That these two truths involve a paradox, or apparent contradiction which human reason cannot solve, cannot be denied. But as both are clearly revealed in the Bible, the Calvinist believes both, on the authority of God, and reverently refrains from trying to remove the paradox by human reason. It is the strength, not the weakness, of Calvinism or the Reformed Faith that it insists that this paradox, and other similar paradoxes, be allowed to stand, and not be tampered with by human reasonings or speculations. That there is a paradox, we freely admit. That there is a real contradiction or conflict, we emphatically deny. God is the source of both of these apparently contradictory truths; therefore there cannot be any **REAL** conflict between them.

"Whosoever will" may come, but the real question lies much deeper. What makes people, whose whole nature is sinful and entirely alienated from God, "will" to come to Christ for salvation? The nature of all men is alike, sinful and evil, totally corrupted and depraved. "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalm 53:3). God's Gospel invitation is the same to all: "Whosoever will, let him come". Then why does one person accept and another reject the offer? The Arminian answers, Because of free will. But this would be an effect without any cause; the human will never acts without a motive, and what motive can actuate a person who is by nature wholly sinful, to choose to come to God, who is holy and hates sin with an absolute hatred? If salvation depended simply upon "free will", then no human being would ever be saved, for all have a totally sinful nature, and the will always chooses according to the person's nature.

Why, then, do some choose to come to Christ for salvation? The Calvinist answers: Because of God's sovereign decree of election, and the particular, almighty work of the Holy Spirit (known as "effectual calling") which follows up

God's decree in the case of every elect person. "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel" (The Shorter Catechism, 31).

"Whosoever will" is invited to come, but only the special, almighty work of the Holy Spirit can make a person who is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) "will" to come. The reason why some come while others remain in unbelief is, that this work of the Holy Spirit is not given to all men indiscriminately, but to some only, namely, the elect of God. If it were given to all, all would surely come, for it is an **ALMIGHTY** work of the Spirit of God. Those to whom it is given, the elect of God, are so changed by this almighty work of the Holy Spirit that they **WANT** to come to Christ, and they **DO** come to Christ.

Some Arminians are so jealous for the free will of sinful man that they do not hesitate to say that God Himself stands helpless before the will of man; that God's hands are tied; that God's power is limited. They are so jealous for the free will of sinful man that they would regard the sovereignty and power of God as limited, rather than admit that the will of the sinner is in bondage to a corrupted, sinful nature. The Calvinist holds that this representation of the matter is very dishonoring to God, and moreover, it is thoroughly unscriptural. Sinners are not merely influenced by sin, they are actually **enslaved** by sin, they are **in bondage** to sin, they are **dead** in sin (John 8:34; Eph. 2:1). And if they are bond-servants to sin, as Christ said, then they are not free, and their will is not free; it is enslaved to the power of sin.

A certain professor was once asked to lecture to an audience on the subject of "Free Will". The audience expected to hear a lecture extolling the power of the human will, and making it the decisive factor in a person's salvation. But the professor was a Calvinist, and he believed that the will of the sinner is enslaved to evil, and that the unsaved person is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). So he announced as his theme, "The Free Will of a Corpse". And that is indeed the kind of "Free Will" that the unsaved sinner has. But the Christian is no longer a dead man; he is "quicken" or made alive by the work of God's Holy Spirit. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; . . . God . . . hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" (Eph. 1:1-5). Who "quicken" the Ephesian Christians, or made them alive from their state of being dead in sin? Was it their own "Free Will" that accomplished this? No, it was **GOD**, and because it was God, not themselves, the apostle could add "by grace ye are saved". If salvation depends on God, then it is "by grace"; if it depends on "Free Will", then it is not by grace, but by works.

## Religious Terms Defined

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

**ETERNITY OF GOD.** God's mode of existence without beginning, without end, and independent of all limitations of time, so that all events in the history of the created universe are equally present to Him at once.

**EUCCHARIST.** A name for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; literally, "giving thanks".

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

**EXCOMMUNICATION.** The final censure of church discipline, by which the offending person is solemnly excluded from the visible Church until he gives evidence of repentance.

**EXHORTATION.** The act of presenting to a person motives calculated to move him to action in the performance of duty. Christian doctrine is to be accompanied and followed by Christian exhortation, that the hearers may be stirred up to a practical profession of Christianity.

**EXTREME UNCTION.** One of the non-Biblical sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, in which those about to die are anointed with oil and prayed for by the priest.

**FAITH.** The dependence of a person on the truthfulness and reliability of another person.

**OBJECT OF FAITH.** That on which faith terminates and rests. All faith has an object, and this object is, ultimately, a person. The immediate object of faith may be a proposition or a doctrine (Heb. 11:3), but the ultimate object of faith is the person on whose testimony we believe the proposition or doctrine. Thus faith in the

Bible is ultimately faith in God whose revelation the Bible is.

**FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.** "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel" (S.C. 86).

**HISTORICAL FAITH.** A mere assent to the facts of the Gospel as a matter of history, as that Christ was born in Bethlehem, crucified on Calvary, etc., without personal trust in Christ for salvation. Historical faith is necessary for salvation, but not sufficient without personal trust.

**TEMPORARY FAITH.** A faith which superficially resembles saving faith, but which does not proceed from a heart renewed by the Holy Spirit, and which therefore cannot endure persecution or tribulation for Christ's sake. Such temporary faith often results from artificial "high pressure" methods of evangelism, which induce many to profess faith in Christ who later fall away from this profession to their former worldly life.

**FALL OF MAN.** The lapse of the human race from its original state of moral perfection to a state of sin and misery, which took place by the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in eating the forbidden fruit.

**FATE.** The heathen notion that all events are determined by a blind, impersonal, irresistible force which operates regardless of the free agency of men. This is very different from the Calvinistic doctrine of foreordination, which teaches that the infinitely wise, loving, righteous, personal God has determined all that comes to pass, including the motives, decisions and acts of all free agents such as angels and men.

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## Some Noteworthy Quotations

"The real center of the Bible is redemption; and to create the impression that other things in the Bible contain any hope for humanity apart from that is to contradict the Bible at its root."

J. Gresham Machen

"Modern liberalism. . . has lost sight of the two great presuppositions of the Christian message — the living God, and the fact of sin. The

liberal doctrine of God and the liberal doctrine of man are both diametrically opposed to the Christian view."

J. Gresham Machen

"Of the making of gods, as of the making of books, there is no end. But, as for us Christians, with our Bibles before us, we turn from all such little gods of man's making, out toward the dread

mystery of the infinite and eternal, and say, as Augustine said, with a holy fear: 'Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.'

J. Gresham Machen

"Many people come to hear preaching and read the Bible, but those that are not convinced of sin have never come to Christ. They cannot hear them that are free in telling them their faults. It is true they will hear of sin in general, but how hard it is to get folk to particularise their sins! There is not a man amongst a thousand that will take freely and fully with sin; and to all such our Lord is saying, 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.'"

Richard Cameron

"There are many who think that religion consists in setting about duties, and so they have their duties for their Saviour. But I will tell you what your duties may do: they may gain you the testimony of ministers and professors, but they will never take you to heaven. They will not take you by the pit of destruction, for many will say, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and done many wonderful things?' And He will say, 'Depart from me, I know you not.' Many will say, 'Have we not preached, have we not heard, and have we not suffered many things in thy name?' But our Lord will say, 'Ye trusted too much to these duties, and never saw

your own righteousness to be but as filthy rags; ye took Me not for justification, sanctification, righteousness, and all things.' O Sirs, beware of your souls, and save yourselves from this unto-ward generation. If ye will not come to Christ, we shall be free of your blood, and if ye perish we shall not perish with you."

Richard Cameron

"The work of redemption is God's most glorious work. Creation sprung up at the word of his power, but redemption required a sacrifice, the richest and greatest that could be made; a sacrifice which no creature could offer; a ransom not of silver and gold, but of blood — of blood divine. God must become manifest in the flesh. The God-man must make atonement for sin by giving himself to death — to the accursed death of the cross! O what wonders cluster around the cross! God forbid, that we should glory, save in the cross of Christ."

Archibald Alexander

"When all the ransomed children of God shall be gathered together from every region under heaven, and shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and shall surround the throne of God and the Lamb, their song shall ever be, 'TO HIM WHO LOVED US, AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD.'"

Archibald Alexander

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## THE END OF THE AGES

### A Study of Scripture Truth Concerning the Last Things

#### LESSON VI

##### THE SIGNS PRECEDING THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST (Continued)

While the nature of the various signs is for the most part quite clear, one or two require special mention. The Antichrist or "abomination of desolation" is also called in Scripture "the lawless one," "the beast" and "the man of sin." At the time of the Reformation it was common to hold that the papacy, or some one of the popes, was the Antichrist. Four hundred years have passed since Martin Luther publicly burned the pope's decree calling it "the execrable bull of antichrist," and it has become increasingly clear that while the papal system is certainly antichristian, nevertheless the prophecies point to some individual person, or possibly some collective person or institution, which has not yet appeared upon the scene of human affairs. In 2 Thess. 2:1-12 we learn concerning the "man of sin" that he is to appear before the second coming of Christ; that he will usurp to himself divine honors and wor-

ship, setting himself forth as God; that a restraining power existed in Paul's time which prevented his appearing on the scene until that power should be taken out of the way, at which time the lawless one would be revealed; that this person will work miracles by Satanic power; and finally that he will be destroyed by the Lord Jesus at his coming. No doubt Antiochus Epiphanes and Nero, as well as other persons, have foreshadowed the coming of the Antichrist and have partially fulfilled the Old and New Testament prophecies concerning him, but the final and complete fulfilment is certainly still future. From Revelation 13 it appears that the Antichrist will rule over the entire world and will persecute Christians (verse 7) and that all except the elect will worship him (verse 8); also that his power will be of relatively short duration (verse 5). In Rev. 19:19-21 we read, in highly symbolic language, of the conflict

between the Antichrist and Christ at his second coming, the end being that the Antichrist is **cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone**. It is probable that from the appearance of the Antichrist, events will move with great rapidity toward the climax of the Lord's second coming. The appearance of the Antichrist will indicate to watchful Christians that the Lord's coming is very near. It will be noted that many of the signs in the first two groups are of a very general nature and capable of occurring repeatedly over long periods of time: wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilences, persecutions, for example. There is however one sign in these two groups which is of a more specific nature, and which must be fulfilled before the end can come: the Gospel must be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations. This work has already been largely, though not entirely, accomplished through the extensive missionary work of the past 150 years. Christ did not say, of course, that the whole world would be converted to Christianity through the preaching of the Gospel, but that the Gospel must be preached throughout all the world for a witness to all the nations. As there are still some nations and tribes of people to whom the Gospel has never been preached, it is evident that this sign is not yet fully accomplished, and therefore that we are still in the period of the second group of signs. But in the nature of the case it will be impossible to say precisely when the Gospel has been fully preached for a testimony to all the nations (though we can definitely say that such is not the case yet), so that it will never be possible to predict the exact time when the events of the third group will appear on the horizon.

There has been much speculation as to the meaning of the appearance of the sign of the Son of man in heaven (Matt. 24:30). It is probable that this means some very striking sign among the heavenly bodies, the exact nature of which we do not know now but which will be understood when it occurs, and which is to appear immediately before the coming of the Lord on the clouds of heaven. In this connection we should remember that a star heralded the first coming of Christ (Matt. 2:1-12).

What answer shall we give to the question: May the Lord's return take place at any time? Although many Christians believe that the Lord may come at any moment, still we feel that in the light of the Scriptures we must answer this question with a qualified No. Inasmuch as the preaching of the Gospel for a witness to all the nations is not yet completed, and the Antichrist has not yet appeared, it would seem that we are not justified in regarding the Lord's coming as imminent in the sense that it may take place at any moment. Those who believe that the Lord may come at any time distinguish between Christ's coming "for his saints" (the "Rapture") and his coming "with his saints" (the "Revelation"),

holding that the first of these events will be secret so far as the world is concerned, only the Christians rising to meet the Lord in the air together with the righteous dead who have just been resurrected, and holding that these two comings are separated by a period of seven years during which time the Antichrist is in power. Believing that the "Rapture" and the "Revelation" are two aspects of one and the same event and will be contemporaneous or nearly so, we believe that the doctrine of a secret "Rapture" is without Scriptural foundation. When the Antichrist appears on the scene, however, the situation will be different. From that time on events will move rapidly (Matt. 24:34) and it will then be possible to say that the Lord will return in glory at any time, for he is to slay the Antichrist **with the breath of his mouth** and bring him to **nought by the manifestation of his coming**. But even then it will be impossible to predict the exact time of the coming.

But if it is not possible for the Lord's return to take place at any moment, then why did he command his disciples to watch and lay so much stress on the fact that they could not know the day nor the hour? It is true that the day and the hour will remain unknown to men until they actually see the Lord appearing in glory upon the clouds of heaven. But when he commanded the disciples to watch, surely he did not mean to gaze at the heavens as the disciples were rebuked for doing in Acts 1:11, but to watch for the signs of which he had told them, because when they should see ALL these things, then they could know that he was near, even at the doors; and also to be watchful as to their conduct and spiritual state.

The question has been raised, how could Paul and the other inspired apostles look forward to the second coming as something which might take place in their lifetime, when in reality at least 1900 years were to elapse before the Lord's return. That the apostles so regarded the second coming is evident from Hebrews 10:37, James 5:7-8, 1 Thess. 4:17, 5:4, 1 Cor. 15:51-52. In answer to the above question, it may be said, first, that the apostles looked forward to the second coming as something which might take place in their lifetime, not as something which must take place in their lifetime. In the second place, that while the apostles were inspired in writing the Scriptures, they were not omniscient; some things were not revealed to them, including the time of the second coming. In the third place, while the Lord's coming could not take place until all of the signs had appeared, nevertheless the signs were of such a nature that they might all appear in any one generation of the world's history. If the Church had been faithful to Christ's Great Commission, the world would have been evangelized many centuries ago, and then the way would have been clear for the appearance of the

Antichrist and the other signs of the third group. Paul in fact warned the Thessalonian Christians (2 Thess. 2:1-5) that they must not think that the **day of the Lord is just at hand because it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed.** So we see that the appearance of the Antichrist will be the sign that the Lord's coming is very near.

We should remember that these signs were given to us for our study in order that the day of the Lord should not overtake us as a thief (1 Thess. 5:1-5). The Lord's coming is sure, and we need to study current events in the light of the Scriptures in order to discern the signs of the times, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus **Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away** (Matt. 24:35.)

#### Questions:

1. What was the common Protestant belief concerning the Antichrist at the time of the Reformation?
2. What is predicted concerning the "man of sin" in 2 Thess. 2:1-12?
3. What historical characters may have foreshadowed the coming of the Antichrist?
4. What is predicted concerning "the beast" in Revelation 13?
5. What does Rev. 19:19-21 say concerning the destiny of "the beast"?

6. What particular sign must be fulfilled before the Lord's second coming can take place?

7. To what extent has this sign already been fulfilled?

8. What is the probable or possible meaning of the "sign of the Son of man in heaven" (Matt. 24:30)?

9. Why is it not correct to say that the Lord's second coming may take place at any moment?

10. What is the doctrine of the "secret Rapture" held by those who believe that the Lord may return at any moment?

11. How does 2 Thess. 2:8 show that after the appearance of the Antichrist events will move very rapidly toward the end?

12. If the Lord's return cannot take place at any moment, why did He command His disciples to watch?

13. What was the attitude of the apostles toward Christ's second coming? Did they teach that it would take place during their lifetime, and were they mistaken in what they taught?

14. What warning did the apostle Paul give the Thessalonian Christians with reference to the time of the Lord's return?

15. Why were the signs in Matt. 24 and Luke 21 revealed to us?

## LESSON VII

### THE EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

The second coming of Christ will be immediately followed by certain events of supreme importance to all humanity of all ages. The first of these events is the resurrection of the dead. By the term "resurrection" is here meant not merely the immortality of the soul but the resurrection of the body. This doctrine is foreshadowed in the Old Testament, perhaps the clearest reference being Daniel 12:2, **And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.** In Psalm 16:10 the bodily resurrection of the Messiah is predicted, **For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.** What is only dimly foreshadowed in the Old Testament is very clearly revealed in the New. Jesus repeatedly predicted his own resurrection from the dead, and his resurrection, now a thoroughly attested historical fact, is the pledge of ours. The general resurrection is prophesied by Christ in John 5; 28-29: **Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.**

That both the saved and the lost are to rise from the dead is also shown by Paul's words in Acts 24:15, **Having hope toward God. . . that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust.** The classic passage on the resurrection of believers is 1 Cor. 15, where proof of the certainty of the resurrection is given, followed by a discussion of the nature of the resurrection body. The resurrection is definitely connected with the second coming of Christ in verse 23, **But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming.** It may be said in passing that this text does not prove the Premillenarian contention that there are to be two resurrections, one of the righteous at Christ's coming, and another later of the wicked. The text deals with the resurrection of Christ and that of Christians only. Nothing is said about the resurrection of the wicked in the entire chapter, and of course nothing can be proved by silence.

Immediately after the resurrection, all living believers will be transformed, receiving incorruptible and glorious bodies. A whole generation of Christians, that generation living when the Lord returns, will never have to pass through the experience of death, but will be "changed"

without dying. This is taught in 1 Cor. 15:51-52: **Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.** So also in 1 Thess. 4:16-17 we read: **For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.** Note that the "change" includes all believers still living at the time of the Lord's return, that it follows the resurrection, that it is instantaneous, and that it does not involve death. Of course the words **The dead in Christ shall rise first** mean that the dead shall rise before the living rise in the air, not that the Christian dead will rise before the wicked dead. The comparison is between dead and living Christians, not between the righteous and the wicked.

Rev. 20:11-15 connects the resurrection with the judgment. The order of events is thus as follows: 1. The second coming of Christ. 2. The resurrection. 3. The transformation of living believers. 4. The judgment. It will be seen from Rev. 20:11-15 that the judgment is of both the righteous and the wicked. Books are opened and the dead are judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works. Judged by this standard every human being would be condemned, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But there is another book, the Book of Life, in which no works are recorded, but only names, the names of God's elect and redeemed people. The principle of the judgment is indeed "according to their works" but God's elect have a substitute, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, for their names have been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain (Rev. 13:8). The result of the judgment is that the wicked will be cast into the lake

of fire, also called hell or the second death, and the righteous shall enter into the eternal kingdom of glory: **And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life** (Matt. 25:46).

#### Questions:

1. What is the first great event which will be associated with the second coming of Christ?
2. What Old Testament passage very clearly predicts the resurrection?
3. Where in the Gospel of John is the general resurrection very clearly predicted by Jesus?
4. What chapter in Paul's Epistles gives the fullest discussion of the doctrine of the resurrection?
5. What is the order of the resurrection as given in 1 Cor. 15:23?
6. Why does 1 Cor. 15:23 not prove anything concerning a doctrine of two separate resurrections, one of the righteous and the other of the wicked?
7. What great event will take place immediately after the resurrection of the dead? What two chapters in Paul's Epistles tell of this event?
8. What will happen to those Christians still living in the world when Christ comes again?
9. What is the meaning of the expression "The dead in Christ shall rise first" in 1 Thess. 4:16?
10. What event is connected with the resurrection in Rev. 20:11-15?
11. What two kinds of "books" are involved in the Great Judgment?
12. What is the principle of the Judgment?
13. Why are Christian believers not to be condemned in the Judgment?

### LESSON VIII

#### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

That the kingdom of God has both present and future aspects is apparent on even a superficial reading of the New Testament. When Christ said **The kingdom of God is within you** (Luke 17:21), he spoke of the present, spiritual aspect of the kingdom, as also when he said, **There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom** (Matt. 16:28). When we read that **the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit** (Rom. 14:17), we understand that this re-

fers to a kingdom now existing in the world, that kingdom of which God's redeemed people are the citizens. But it is equally true that the kingdom of God has a future aspect, as is shown in Dan. 2:44, **And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.** It is plain that the kingdom here spoken of is not merely one which exists contemporaneously with and among the kingdoms

of the world, but one which is eventually to supplant them completely and bring about their total destruction. As these events have not yet taken place, this is a still unfulfilled prophecy of the future kingdom of God. In Rev. 11:15 we read: **And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.** This is a prophecy of the final supplanting of the nations by the eternal kingdom of God. So 2 Tim. 4:18, **The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom,** clearly refers to the future. When Jesus said that to sit on his right hand and on his left in his kingdom would be given to those for whom it was prepared, it is obvious that a future kingdom is meant. Failure to recognize that the kingdom of God has both present and future aspects results in serious doctrinal perversions and errors. Perhaps the most concise statement of the matter ever made is found in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 102: **What do we pray for in the second petition? Answer, In the second petition (which is, Thy kingdom come) we pray, that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.** When we speak of the kingdom of God in relation to the second coming of Christ, it is the future kingdom of glory that is meant. The kingdom of grace is temporary (because the need for salvation from sin will cease when man is confirmed in holiness at the resurrection); the kingdom of glory will be eternal. The kingdom of grace is partial (as only a part of humanity are citizens of it); the kingdom of glory will be universal, **for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea** (Isa. 11:9). The kingdom of grace is in the world but not of the world (John 18:36). The kingdom of grace belongs to the present age, the kingdom of glory to the age to come. The second

coming of Christ is the dividing line between the two.

It can be clearly shown from the Scriptures that the future kingdom of God will be eternal in duration. In addition to Dan. 2:44 and Rev. 11:15, quoted above (**It shall stand for ever . . . and he shall reign for ever and ever**), reference may be made to Luke 1:33. **And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end; Dan. 7:14, His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.**

#### Questions:

1. What two aspects of the Kingdom of God, with respect to time, does the New Testament present?
2. Give some examples of texts which concern the present or spiritual aspect of the Kingdom of God.
3. What passage in the book of Daniel speaks very clearly of the future aspect of the Kingdom of God?
4. How do Rev. 11:15 and 2 Tim. 4:18 speak of a future kingdom of God?
5. How does the Westminster Shorter Catechism designate the present and future aspects of the Kingdom of God (S.C. 102)?
6. In what respects do the "kingdom of grace" and the "kingdom of glory" differ?
7. Give two texts from the book of Daniel which prove that the future Kingdom of God will be eternal in duration.
8. Give a text from Revelation and one from Luke which prove that the future Kingdom of God will be eternal in duration.

### LESSON IX

#### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD, Continued

Rev. 20:1-6 is held by premillennarian interpreters to mean a reign of Christ on earth for 1000 years after his second coming. This 1000 years' reign is called the Millennium, and the doctrine that Christ will reign on earth for 1000 years after his second coming is known as Premillennialism or Chiliasm. It is impossible to undertake a detailed interpretation of Rev. 20:1-6 here but it may be said that this passage cannot mean an earthly kingdom of 1000 years after the second coming, because: 1. John saw the souls of people, not their resurrected bodies. The "first resurrection," mentioned only here in the Bible, therefore is not the resurrection of the body, but a spiritual resurrection. It is said that they lived

and that **over these the second death hath no power**, both of which things are true of the spirits of the saved in heaven; but it not said that their bodies rose from their graves. In the Greek text, "lived" and "reigned" are both the same tense (aorist), and both are qualified by the phrase "a thousand years" — they LIVED a thousand years, and they REIGNED a thousand years. "Lived" cannot mean "began to live" (i.e., were raised), any more than "reigned" can mean "began to reign". 2. What John saw was a vision of thrones and souls in heaven not anything on the earth. 3. The term "a thousand years" is as certainly a symbolic number as the seven spirits of God (Rev. 1:4, 3:1, 5:6), the number 666 (Rev. 13:

18), a crown of twelve stars (Rev. 12:1), 144,000 Israelites (Rev. 7:4), twice ten thousand times ten thousand (Rev. 9:16), a thousand and six hundred furlongs (Rev. 14:20), not to mention other symbolic numbers in the Book of Revelation. For these reasons we believe that Rev. 20:1-6 speaks of the reign of the saints in heaven with Christ during the present age, and that the 1000 years is a symbolic number covering the period from the triumph of Christianity over Roman persecution (about A. D. 325) to the time when the Antichrist will gather the nations together to persecute Christians. The rise of the Antichrist will come when Satan shall be loosed for a little time. Note well that the passage does not say that Satan will be bound in respect to all his activities, but only that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be fulfilled. Of course Satan is a bodiless spirit, and cannot be bound by keys, chains and seals. God will greatly restrict his activities for a long period of time. What is meant by Satan deceiving the nations is made clear by the prophecy of what Satan will do as soon as he shall be loosed out of his prison: he will gather the nations from the four corners of the earth, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea, to make war against Christianity. A world wide persecution of Christians! It is obvious that such a thing has never yet taken place, the nearest approach to it being the Roman persecution from the apostolic age to the time when the emperor Constantine issued his Edict of Toleration (A. D. 311). Remember that the Book of Revelation was written just as the Roman persecution was beginning. Chapter 20 prophesies 1. The cessation of this persecution; 2. A long time of freedom from world wide attack on Christianity; 3. The resumption of the persecution on a world wide scale for a little time in the evening of the world's history. The reasonableness of this interpretation will be more apparent if we try to look at the prophecy through the eyes of the early Christians who faced the bloody persecution of Rome. Truly Satan is bound today as to that sort of thing. Minor persecutions there have been, here and there, but nothing like that of ancient Rome since Constantine. The attack prophesied in Rev. 20 will be far more extensive, though briefer, than that of ancient Rome. It is this

fierce, world wide attack on Christianity which Satan is now restrained from making, but which will come in the days of the Antichrist. For these reasons we do not believe that Rev. 20:1-6 prophesies a millennial kingdom on earth, and therefore are constrained to reject Premillennialism as an unscriptural error.

#### Questions:

1. How is Revelation 20:1-6 interpreted by premillennial scholars?
2. What is the meaning of the term "Millennium"?
3. What is meant by Premillennialism or Chiliasm?
4. What does the word "souls" in Rev. 20:4 imply concerning the nature of "the first resurrection"?
5. What can be learned from the tense of the Greek words for "lived" and "reigned" in Rev. 20:4?
6. Why is it reasonable to believe that the expression "a thousand years" in Rev. 20:1-5 is a symbolic number?
7. What probable meaning can be assigned to the symbolic expression "a thousand years" in Rev. 20:1-5?
8. What is probably meant by the binding of Satan and his being locked in the bottomless pit during the "thousand years"?
9. What will Satan do when he is released from the bottomless pit? What does this imply concerning the meaning of his being bound during the "thousand years"?
10. What terrible ordeal was appearing on the horizon of the early Christians at the time when the Book of Revelation was written?
11. What is the probable meaning of Rev. 20:1-10 with reference to the persecution of Christianity on a world-wide scale?
12. What will be the comparative duration of Satan's final attack on the Christian Church?

### LESSON X

#### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD, Continued

At the same time we feel equally constrained to reject Postmillennialism, or the doctrine that Christ will return after a millennial kingdom, for the following reasons: 1. The signs which Christ predicted as to precede his second coming are such as could all occur in any generation of the world's history, and therefore he commanded his disciples to watch; but if Christ's second coming is to take place after a still future millennium, then he can-

not come for 1000 years or a long period of time, and there is no reason for watchfulness. 2. Postmillennialism represents the kingdom of God as coming gradually through the operation of forces now at work in the world, whereas the Scriptures represent it as coming in its final form suddenly and at a definite time, the second coming of Christ. 3. Postmillennialism ignores or minimizes the prophecies of the increase of evil and

wickedness during the present age. 4. The kingdom of Postmillennialism, being before the resurrection, is bound to be imperfect and marred by sin and suffering, groaning and travailing in pain. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:50, **Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**; Postmillennialism teaches a kingdom in which men are still in their natural bodies and still capable of committing sin.

Another text which seems difficult to reconcile with the doctrine of Postmillennialism is Rom. 8:22-23: **For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.** Creation's groaning will be silenced not by the gradual growth and extension of Christ's spiritual kingdom, but by a miracle, sudden, visible, transforming, namely the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of living believers, which will take place at the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing short of the resurrection of the dead will ever make this earth anything other than a place of groaning and travailing in pain. The whole creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, but this will not be accomplished by forces now operating in the world, but by a sudden, supernatural intervention of God himself in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ at his glorious appearing. Biblical Christianity always has its eyes fastened on eternity because of the consciousness that only the miraculous intervention of God can bring about the hoped for consummation. Postmillennialism teaches that agencies now operating in the world, namely the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, will gradually bring about such an extension of Christ's present spiritual kingdom and such a Christianizing of society that there will be a golden age on this earth during which the world will be filled with righteousness, and sin and evil will be reduced to relatively negligible proportions. Some Postmillennarians hold that the millennium will be a literal 1000 years and others believe that the 1000 years are symbolic of a long period of time. We believe the doctrine is an error and a perversion of the Scriptural teaching about the kingdom of God.

At the same time, we wish to make it perfectly clear that the doctrine of Postmillennialism has been held and is held today by many Bible-believing Christians, and has been advocated by some outstanding scholars, including John Bunyan, Charles Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield. The doctrine of Postmillennialism has had a long and honorable history and there is no real reason why it should be regarded as rationalistic, modernistic or incompatible with faith in the inspiration and authority of the Bible. While the author of the present series of studies personally be-

lieves that Postmillennialism is an error, and that it is based upon faulty interpretation of the Scriptures, still it is freely and gladly recognized that many faithful Christians have held the Postmillennial view, just as it is undoubtedly true that many faithful Christians have held the Premillennial view (which the present writer also believes to be erroneous). To differ with some of our Christian brethren about particular points of Bible interpretation of course does not imply that we regard them as "modernistic" or unfaithful to Christ, nor that we in any way challenge or deny their right to hold the Postmillennial view.

In "liberal" or modernistic circles there has arisen a view which denies that Christ will ever come again in person, in bodily form, to this earth. For a sample of this type of unbelief, the student is referred to Lesson II of the present series, in "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Volume 5 Number 4, October-December 1950, page 170, where the "Christian Century" is quoted on the subject of the second coming of Christ. It will be evident to every Bible-believing Christian that such a view is radically contrary to real Christianity, and is justly called "modernistic", "rationalistic" and "unbelieving". Many modernists who hold a similar view of the future, which reduces the second coming of Christ to a program of human progress, call their belief "Postmillennialism", though they have no real right to use this term. Because of this use of the term "Postmillennialism" to designate a view which is radically anti-Christian, some Bible-believing Christians have jumped to the conclusion that Postmillennialism is modernism and that all Postmillennialists are modernists. This is entirely unwarranted and unjust, but, like many other evils, it must be attributed to the unethical double-talk of modernists who say one thing while they mean another. This modernistic belief in human progress is not really "Postmillennialism". It would be more accurate to call it **evolutionism**; or at any rate, **Pseudo-Postmillennialism** (False Postmillennialism).

We should, therefore, be careful to make a clear distinction between the Postmillennialism of Bible-believing scholars such as Hodge and Warfield, and the Pseudo-Postmillennialism of the modernists of our day. Every genuine Postmillennialist believes that Christ will come again on the clouds of heaven in like manner as the disciples saw Him ascending into heaven. The Pseudo-Postmillennialist, on the other hand, believes that the second coming of Christ "is not a momentary episode, but a continuous experience . . . in individual life, in social transformation, in industrial and commercial response to his ideals. . .", etc., (as stated by "The Christian Century").

Whether Postmillennialism is TRUE is a question to be decided by careful study of the Bible. But we should realize that there has long been difference of opinion on the question of the

Millennium among the most earnest and faithful Bible-believing Christians. Historically the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches have never attempted to make particular beliefs about the Millennium a "term of communion" or condition of membership in good standing. We believe that there must be some room for differences of view concerning details of Biblical prophecy, and that the main truth is that Christ is coming again in person on the clouds of heaven. We can rejoice together with those who cherish "that blessed hope", though we may differ with them concerning the doctrine of the Millennium. In this series of studies we are presenting what we believe to be the truth as taught in the Bible, and which we believe also to be the scheme of prophetic interpretation most in harmony with the Westminster Confession of Faith and other doctrinal standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. This of course must not be taken to imply that we deny to others their right to hold a different interpretation and to defend it on the basis of the Bible and the standards of the Church. We believe that Christian brethren should be able to discuss these differences freely and patiently without any unchristian attitudes toward each other.

#### Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the term "Postmillennialism"?
2. What is the bearing of Christ's command to watch on the doctrine of Postmillennialism?
3. What class of Bible prophecies are often ignored or minimized by Postmillennial scholars?
4. What is the bearing of 1 Cor. 15:50 on the doctrine of a Millennium before Christ's second coming?
5. What is the bearing of Romans 8:22,23 on the doctrine of a Millennium before the resurrection of the dead?
6. According to Rom. 8:22,23 what event will put a stop to the whole creation's groaning and travailing in pain?
7. According to Postmillennialism, what agencies will bring about the coming of the future Kingdom of God?
8. According to Postmillennialism, what conditions will exist on this earth during the Millennium?
9. Name some outstanding orthodox scholars that have held the doctrine of Postmillennialism.
10. Should differences of interpretation concerning the Millennium be allowed to interfere with Christian fellowship between believers?
11. What is the prevalent liberal or modernistic idea of the second coming of Christ?
12. How has this modernistic teaching caused some people to regard the term "Postmillennialism" with suspicion? Why is this suspicion unjust?
13. What is the difference between orthodox Postmillennialism, as taught by Hodge, Warfield, etc., and the counterfeit "Postmillennialism" of modernism?
14. What is the main truth in the prophetic revelation of the Bible, upon which agreement is absolutely necessary?

## LESSON XI

### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD, Continued

An examination of two other passages of Scripture will throw additional light on the question of a millennium, either before or after the second coming of Christ. It is a sound principle of interpretation that the more obscure and difficult passages should be interpreted in the light of those that speak more clearly; to reverse this process can lead only to confusion. It cannot be denied that Revelation 20 is a chapter of visions and symbols in a book of visions and symbols; this does not mean that we should reject it as without value, but it does mean that it should be interpreted in the light of the clearer language of the Gospels and Epistles. To start with Revelation 20, which may at first sight seem to contain the earthly millennium idea, and then to try to make the other parts of Scripture fit in with this idea, is certainly contrary to sound principles of interpretation.

The first passage we wish to cite is the Par-

able of the Tares and the Wheat, Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43. This parable is particularly clear because we have our Lord's own authoritative interpretation of it. Some have misused this parable to justify the toleration of modernism and unbelief in the Church, because the householder forbade his servants to root up the tares. It should be noted, however, that the field is not the Church but the world; no matter how corrupt the world may become, the Church ought by all means and at any cost to be purified of the leaven of the Sadducees, which is rationalism. A thorough exegesis of this parable and the Lord's interpretation would require much space; we here only intend to point out a number of things in it which we believe to be incompatible with both Premillennialism and Postmillennialism.

According to this parable, the population of the world will be mixed, of righteous and wicked persons, throughout the present age, and until a

future point of time here called "the end of the world" or "the consummation of the age." Before that time there is to be no separation of the righteous from the wicked, and the latter, instead of being suppressed, or ruled with a rod of iron, are to be let alone till the time of the harvest. The time of judicial separation of the righteous from the wicked is characterized by (1) Angels segregating the wicked; (2) The wicked being cast into hell. This is not a mere suppression of the wicked, but the total and final eradication of sin and sinners from the world, and casting them into hell for eternity. In other words, there is to be no separation of the righteous from the wicked until the final separation of the Great day when the wicked shall be judged and cast into hell; thus the premillennarian idea of 1,000 years before the judgment, during which the earth will be relatively free from sin and filled with righteousness, not only is not taught in this parable, but cannot even be fitted into the parable.

The righteous cannot shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father until the wicked have been cast into hell; but Premillennialism teaches that the righteous dead will rise at the beginning of the millennium and will reign with Christ in resurrection glory throughout the 1,000 years of peace and righteousness on earth, and that after all this will come the Great Judgment when the wicked will be judged and cast into hell. The parable leaves no room for these ideas.

It should be noted, too, that the "end of the world" or "consummation of the age" here spoken of is the absolute, final end of the world, because it includes the Great Judgment and the casting of the wicked into hell, after which, according to all interpretations there comes nothing but the eternal state. So the great dividing line is the Day of Judgment. After that, the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Before that, there can be no millennium of righteousness and peace on earth, for a millennium in which the wicked, planted by Satan, are left to grow along with the righteous, undisturbed until the Judgment, would not be a millennium of righteousness. And this parable would seem to be equally decisive against Postmillennialism, which holds that the preaching of the Gospel and the gradual extension of Christ's present spiritual kingdom will result in a state, before the Second Coming and the Judgment, in which the earth will be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea. Postmillennialism presupposes the conversion of practically the entire population of the world to Christ a long time before the Second Coming and the Judgment, an idea which cannot be harmonized with the Parable of the Tares and the Wheat.

The second passage we wish to cite is 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10, **It so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that**

**afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be marveled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day.**

In discussing this passage, we wish to raise two questions: (1) When will afflicted Christians receive rest? (2) What will happen at the Revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven?

This passage contains a promise of the Christian's future rest at the Lord's coming. It speaks of the Revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven as the first redemptive event on the prophetic horizon; Christians are to look forward to that Revelation as the time when, and not till when, they will receive rest from affliction. If Paul thought of a "Rapture" and "Revelation" as two distinct events, with seven years between, the Christians to be caught up in the clouds at the "Rapture," followed by the rule of the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation on earth, then why did he not say so here? Why did he not point afflicted Christians to the "Rapture" as the time when they would receive rest from affliction? Premillennialism, of the usual pre-tribulation-rapture type, teaches that the Rapture is the first event on the prophetic horizon, and that it may occur at any moment. It seems quite impossible to fit this idea into the passage before us. Therefore we conclude that the idea of a secret Rapture, and the Church being out of the world for seven years before Christ's visible second coming, is an unscriptural error. In the light of 2 Thessalonians 1:7 we answer the first question raised above by stating that Christians living on earth will receive rest from affliction at, but not before, the "Revelation" or visible second coming of Christ in glory.

Turning to the second question, we find that three things will happen at the Revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven: (1) The angels will come with flaming fire; (2) They will render vengeance to them that know not God, etc. (3) The wicked will be cast into hell (for this is the meaning of "eternal destruction from the face of the Lord"). Note that these three things will happen **AT** the Revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, not 1,000 years later as taught by Premillennialism. Therefore we conclude that Paul not only did not know anything about a "Revelation" 1,000 years before the judgment of the wicked, but that he actually left no room in this passage for such an idea. Three events are unmistakably linked as happening at the same time: (1) The Revelation of the Lord Jesus from hea-

ven; (2) Afflicted Christians receiving relief from trouble; (3) The wicked judged and cast into hell for all eternity. These three events are separated by Premillennialism as follows:

1. Christians caught up in the clouds at the Rapture or invisible second coming, and receive relief from affliction at that time.

#### **INTERVAL OF 7 YEARS. ANTICHRIST AND TRIBULATION**

2. Revelation of Christ from heaven, binding of Satan, suppression of the wicked; the saints, risen from the dead, rule the world with Christ.

#### **INTERVAL OF 1,000 YEARS. THE MILLENNIUM**

3. Judgment of the wicked, and they cast into hell; final end of the world and beginning of the eternal state; the new heaven and new earth.

No one will persecute Christians during the supposed millennium; therefore this passage, in promising rest to afflicted Christians, must speak of a rest to be received at the end of the present, so-called Church age, not at the end of a future hypothetical millennial age; and if so, then it has been demonstrated that the final judgment and punishment of the wicked will take place, not at the end of a 1,000 years' period after the Second Coming, but at the time of that Coming, the end of this age.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 seems as incompatible with Postmillennialism as with Premillennialism, because it leaves no room for a golden age of righteousness and peace on earth before the Second Coming of Christ. According to Postmillennialism there will be a long period before the Second Coming, during which Christianity will be supreme and nearly the entire population of the world will be Christians; but if this teaching is true, why did Paul point to the Revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven as the time when afflicted and persecuted Christians would find relief? The conclusion is inescapable that Paul not only knew nothing of an earthly millennium, before or after the Second Coming, but that there is no place in his eschatological scheme into which such a millennium can be fitted without wresting the meaning of his words.

#### **Questions:**

1. What principle of Bible interpretation must be kept in mind in dealing with difficult portions of the Bible?

2. How does this principle apply to the interpretation of Rev. 20?

3. Why is Revelation 20 a difficult portion of Scripture to interpret?

4. Why is the Parable of the Tares and the Wheat particularly clear and understandable?

5. What wrong use has been made of this parable by some, and why is this use of it not justifiable?

6. According to the Parable of the Tares and the Wheat, what will be the character of the population of the world until "the end of the world"?

7. What is meant by "the harvest" in the Parable of the Tares?

8. When will the judicial separation of the righteous from the wicked take place?

9. What will happen to the wicked at the time of "the harvest"?

10. What is the bearing of the Parable of the Tares on the Premillennial doctrine that the wicked will be suppressed with a rod of iron for 1,000 years before the Judgment Day?

11. What must happen before the righteous can shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father? What is the bearing of this truth on the doctrine of Premillennialism?

12. What is the meaning of "the end of the world" or "the consummation of the age" in Matt. 13:39,40?

13. What is the bearing of the Parable of the Tares on the idea of a Millennium of peace and righteousness on earth before the Judgment Day?

14. According to 2 Thess. 1:6-10, what is the first redemptive event on the prophetic horizon?

15. According to 2 Thess. 1:6-10, when will persecuted Christians on earth receive rest from their affliction?

16. What is the bearing of 2 Thess. 1:6-10, on the Premillennial doctrine of a seven year interval between the "Rapture" and the "Revelation"?

17. According to 2 Thess. 1:6-10, what three events will take place at the Revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven?

18. What is the bearing of this passage on the Premillennial teaching that the Judgment and casting the wicked into hell will not take place until a thousand years after the second coming of Christ?

19. How does Premillennialism separate the three events which 2 Thess. 1:6-10 speaks of as happening at the same time?

20. Why cannot the "rest" spoken of in 2 Thess. 1:7 not mean "rest" to be received by Christians at the end of a thousand year kingdom, or Millennium?

21. What is the bearing of 2 Thess. 1:7 on the Postmillennial teaching that Christianity will be dominant throughout the world for a long period before the second coming of Christ?

## LESSON XII

## THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD, Continued

Rejecting all kinds of millennialism as unscriptural, we hold the Amillennial or Non-millennial view of the kingdom of God, as shown in the accompanying table, to be the true and Scriptural view. According to this view the kingdom in its perfected state comes after the resurrection; in it the redeemed will have their glorious and incorruptible bodies; they will neither marry nor be given in marriage (Matt. 22:30); the kingdom will be eternal in duration; in extent it will include the new heaven and the new earth, probably the whole universe of the starry heavens, shown by modern astronomy to be so vast as to be utterly beyond the farthest reaches of the human imagination.

The reign of Christ spoken of in 1 Cor. 15:25-28 and Matt. 28:18 is his reign as Mediator, God-man, over the universe, and is to be carefully distinguished (1) from Christ's eternal kingship or headship over his redeemed people, the spiritual Israel; (2) from God the Father's eternal kingship or sovereignty over the entire universe. Christ is now king, as Mediator, over the universe. **For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. . . The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. . . then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:25-28).** The mediatorial kingship of Christ over the universe ends with the resurrection or the abolition of death. It is a kingship over men, angels, demons, heavenly spheres, all except the Father are made subject to Christ. The next to the last step in this conquest will be the destruction of the Antichrist and his armies; the last step will be the abolition of death, or the resurrection. Then Christ's mediatorial kingship over the universe will be given up to God the Father, but Christ will continue to all eternity as the head of the redeemed human race (Luke 1:33, **He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever**).

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF VIEWS OF THE  
LORD'S COMING IN RELATION TO  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD

## 1. RATIONALISTIC VIEWS

- (1) **Unbelieving historical criticism of the New Testament:** Christ predicted that he would come again but he was mistaken and the victim of a delusion. He never will or can come again for he is dead and the supernatural does not exist.
- (2) **Modernistic Social Gospel:** Predictions in The Bible of Christ's second coming are **spiritualized** to mean that good will overcome evil in the world, righteousness will become supreme, there will be "a new

social order" called the kingdom of God. Christ will never come again in bodily form.

## II. EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN VIEWS

- (1) **Postmillennialism:** Christ will come again literally and visibly at the end of a long period, or 1000 years, of universal or prevalent righteousness and peace on earth. The millennium comes before the second coming of Christ and is brought about by forces now at work in the world (the Word of God and the Holy Spirit), especially by missions and evangelism. During the millennium Christianity will be supreme and practically universal. Christ's coming cannot be expected for many centuries for the millennium, which is still future, must come first. At the end of the millennium there will be an outbreak of sin, followed by Christ's second coming, the resurrection, the judgment, and the eternal state.
- (2) **Amillennialism:** The kingdom will be eternal, not millennial. Christ will come again literally and visibly at the end of this age. His coming will occur when the signs predicted as preceding it have all been fulfilled. There will be a contemporaneous development of good and evil in the world, reaching its culmination just before the second coming of Christ. The second coming will be followed by the general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, the judgment, the new heaven and the new earth, and the eternal kingdom of God.
- (3) **Premillennialism:** Christ's coming will be followed by a 1,000 year kingdom during which Christ will reign in Jerusalem over the world. The redeemed will rise from the dead at the beginning of the millennium and the wicked at the end. During the millennial kingdom wickedness will be suppressed but not eradicated. After this period there will be a rebellion against Christ which will be suppressed by fire from heaven. This will be followed by the resurrection of the wicked dead, the final judgment, the new heaven and the new earth, and the eternal state.

**Questions:**

1. What is the "Amillennial" or Non-millennial view of the Kingdom of God, and how does it differ from the Premillennial and Postmillennial views?
2. According to the Amillennial interpreta-

tion, what will be the duration of the kingdom of God?

3. What is the reign of Christ spoken of in 1 Cor. 15:25-28?

4. From what other kingly function of Christ must the reign mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:25-28 be distinguished?

5. From what kingship of God the Father must Christ's reign in 1 Cor. 15:25-28 be distinguished?

6. When will the mediatorial kingship of Christ over the universe come to an end?

7. What will be the last event in Christ's conquest of His enemies?

8. What verse in the Gospel of Luke proves that Christ shall reign over the redeemed humanity for ever?

9. What is meant by the term "Rationalistic"?

10. What two rationalistic views of the second coming of Christ exist?

11. What is the view of unbelieving critics of the New Testament concerning Christ's second coming?

12. What is the view of the modernistic social gospel concerning the second coming of Christ and the Kingdom of God?

13. What three evangelical Christian views exist concerning the second coming of Christ in relation to the Kingdom of God?

14. Give a brief statement of the content of each of these three evangelical Christian views of the second coming of Christ in relation to the Kingdom of God.

### LESSON XIII

#### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND SOCIAL REFORM

There is a fundamental distinction between what the Bible predicts and what the Bible commands. Much confusion of thought results from the failure to recognize this distinction. The Lord predicted his betrayal by Judas, **Verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me** (Matt. 26:21; that was prophecy. God had also said, **Thou shalt not kill**; that was commandment. Both statements were the word of God and both applied to Judas' action. It was certain that Judas would betray the Lord, but it was murder for him to do it, as he confessed when he said **I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood** (Matt. 27:4). Not discerning the distinction between these two parts of divine revelation, namely prophecy and commandment, some have placed great emphasis on Bible prophecy to the disparagement of all kinds of social reform work. They reason something like this: "Scripture predicts that the world will grow worse and worse, and that wickedness will increase, culminating in the man of sin, the Antichrist. Why then should we make efforts to reform this corrupt world which is hastening to judgment? The Lord will initiate the reign of righteousness when he returns." This attitude is generally characteristic of the premillennial and particularly of the dispensational school of thought. Some have gone so far as to call efforts for social reform "the devil's righteousness." Those who hold this view maintain that preaching the Gospel of salvation to individuals is all that can be done toward reforming the world or anything in it, and that the world can be Christian only to the extent that its population is composed of born again persons. Others place great stress on social reform work, to the disparagement of the whole body of Bible prophecy and the gross neglect of

discerning the signs of these times. Such persons emphasize efforts directed toward the attainment of various social reforms, such as the legal prohibition of the traffic in liquor, tobacco and narcotic drugs, the abolition of child labor, civil legislation safeguarding the Lord's Day, legislation requiring the reading or teaching of the Bible in the public schools, the cultivation of international understanding and good-will, the attainment of social justice and improved relations between capital and labor, and the achievement of world peace through international negotiations and such agencies as the United Nations and the World Court. While perhaps holding the second coming of Christ as an abstract doctrine, they place that event far in the future, and it is not related in any organic way to their thinking concerning the world in which they live today. This attitude is characteristic of many Postmillennialists, and especially of those who are zealous in their advocacy of various reforms. Those who hold this view almost always believe that the ultimate result of missions and evangelism will be the conversion of the entire population of the world to Christ, and that the "Christianizing" of institutions and accomplishment of various social reforms will gradually bring in the kingdom of God.

Concerning these two viewpoints, it must be said that both are partly right and partly wrong. By combining the sound part of both attitudes, it will be possible to attain a wholesome and balanced attitude toward both our present duty and our future hope. It is right to study the prophecies of Scripture and to hope for the coming of the Lord and that perfect, eternal kingdom which flesh and blood cannot inherit; but it is

wrong to do only this and neglect all efforts for social reform and all testimony for the present mediatorial kingship of Christ over the nations. Again, it is right to testify against all evils and for the Lordship of Christ in every sphere of life during the present age, but it is wrong to do only this and neglect the study of prophecy and fail to set our hope on the Lord's appearing and the eternal kingdom of God. To refuse to try to bring about needed moral reform because of Scripture prophecies is as unreasonable to the attitude of a Christian woman, known personally to the writer of these notes, who badly needed a winter coat but would not purchase one because she felt sure the Lord would come before the cold weather set in. On the other hand to neglect all study of and belief in Scripture prophecy because of devotion to a present program of reform work is to cast discredit on a large portion of what the Holy Spirit has revealed in the Scriptures. The thoroughly eschatological nature of Biblical Christianity must be emphasized; it is pre-eminently occupied with hope of the things which are eternal. There is in this attitude no conflict with real Christian social and reform work, provided we do not hold eschatological errors and false expectations about the ultimate possibilities and limitations of such undertakings. Does not the Covenanter Church need a revival of eschatological interest and conviction, a deepened longing for the eternal things and a more earnest searching of the Scriptures to learn the truth about these matters? How many sermons do we hear about the Lord's second coming, the judgment, and eternity? Is it not true that many members have almost no convictions about the Lord's second coming beyond a vague opposition to Premillennialism? We are so wrapped up in the things that we are trying to do for God that we tend to forget that someday, perhaps not so far in the future, God will raise the curtain on his next great redemptive act and do things that men, even Christian men, cannot

do and that we have scarcely dreamed of. Our religion cannot be entirely made up of activity; it must also have the element of expectation, hope, waiting for God to bring about the final consummation of the world-process.

#### Questions:

1. Why must we distinguish clearly between what the Bible predicts and what the Bible commands?

2. How does the betrayal of Jesus by Judas illustrate the distinction between prophecies and commandments?

3. What is the attitude of those who emphasize the prophecies of the Bible while they pay but little attention to its commands?

4. What is the attitude of those who emphasize the commands of the Bible while they pay but little attention to its prophecies?

5. How can we have a balanced attitude toward our present duty and our future hope?

6. Why is it unreasonable to neglect efforts to bring about needed moral reform because of belief in Scripture prophecies?

7. Why is it wrong to neglect study of Scripture prophecies because of devotion to a present program of reform work?

8. What is the meaning of the word "eschatological" (see a dictionary)?

9. What is meant by saying that Biblical Christianity is thoroughly eschatological in nature?

10. Does our church need a revival of eschatological interest and conviction? What can be said on both sides of this proposition?

11. Why can our religion not be made up entirely of activity?

### LESSON XIV

#### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND SOCIAL REFORM, Continued

Mention must be made next of a certain psychology of reform which is quite foreign to the doctrines of the Bible. This psychology or way of thinking goes today by the slogan of "Building the Kingdom". The basic idea seems to be that as the whole is equal to the sum of its parts, so the kingdom of God can be divided into a number of specific social reforms, to be accomplished one by one, thus bringing in the kingdom of God gradually, until all are attained. There are Church members who appear to believe that the kingdom of God will be gained or lost with the success or failure of attempts to enact and enforce civil legislation against various evils. This psychology is unconsciously based on a

Pelagian view of man and of sin. Pelagius (about A. D. 400) taught that man does not have a sinful nature but only sinful acts and habits learned by imitation from others, and therefore that no new birth or radical change of human nature is necessary; all that is needed is to give up the evil habits and begin to practice the corresponding virtues. The objection to Pelagianism is that, according to the Bible, man not only has sins but *sin*, and the root of the thing has to be taken out before man can become perfect. But *sin* (as distinguished from sins), whether in individuals or in society as a whole, will not be totally eradicated until the resurrection. Reforms may deal with sins but they cannot eradicate

sin. Checked in one manifestation, it breaks out in other forms. **The kingdom of God cometh not by observation** (Luke 17:20), and it also comes not by the successive achievement of any number of specific reforms. If we could make a complete list of all desirable social reforms, and if in 500 years of united effort on the part of all the Christians in the world, every one of these reforms could be put into practice on a world wide scale, still the kingdom of God would not have come. The kingdom of God is far more spiritual and less mechanical than that. It is not a matter of legislation and statistics. A man does not become a Christian in the manner suggested by Benjamin Franklin in his Autobiography as a means of attaining perfection, by successively cultivating different virtues such as honesty, thrift, kindness, etc., until he has acquired all possible virtues. That is so-called morality, not Christianity. Believers become perfect instantaneously at their death when they pass into glory (Shorter Catechism, Q. 37); and so the world will become perfect instantaneously by our Lord Jesus Christ introducing the perfected kingdom of God at his second coming.

It is also necessary to say that the world can never be made Christian nor the kingdom of God brought in as long as the vast majority of the world's population are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore are unregenerate persons. A sound building can only be made of sound individual bricks, and a Christian world, or the kingdom of God, can only be made up of regenerate people. For this reason all visions of a warless world in the present age are bound to fail of realization. Christian conduct, individual or social, presupposes Christian people, and as long as the vast majority of the world's population are unregenerate, so long will sinful and selfish considerations determine the policies of the nations, treaties and peace pacts to the contrary notwithstanding. It is just as impossible for nations made up largely of sinful, unregenerate persons to make up their minds to treat each other in a Christian way, as it would be for a man with a broken leg to make up his mind to run a cross country race. Of course we should pray and work for peace, but at the same time we should not delude ourselves into thinking that **universal and permanent** peace can come in this age while the Prince of Peace is rejected by the vast majority of earth's millions.

We ought, then, to work and witness for desirable social reforms for their own sake, that is, in view of the anticipated benefits to ourselves and others from the said reforms, and the glory of God in the removal, to some extent at least, of the corresponding evils. It is obvious that any reform that is even partially accomplished may do a great deal of good in the world and eliminate much unnecessary sorrow and suffering. At

the same time we should not allow ourselves to dream that "a Christian world" or the kingdom of God is attainable by such measures.

Total sanctification during the present life, otherwise known as "sinless perfection," is a doctrine held by some denominations but rejected as an error by all branches of the Presbyterian family. If not a single individual can attain sinless perfection during the present life, then how can society as a whole attain that state during the present age? Society is made up of individuals, and a perfect society (the final kingdom of God) must be made up of perfect individuals. It will indeed be so in that day when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, but that will be after the resurrection, when the redeemed shall be confirmed in holiness and unable ever again to fall from that estate. We submit that those who believe that the kingdom of God in its final form can be attained by a series of social reforms, or even by evangelism and missions, are really holding a doctrine of sinless perfection, applied not to individuals but to society as a whole. This thing is an impossibility. Even if every individual in the whole world could be converted to Christianity, and every human institution "Christianized," still the final kingdom of God would not be here, for every Christian still has a sinful nature which may break out and lead him into sin. The kingdom of God, it is necessary to repeat, cannot be inherited by flesh and blood—by men during the present age, before the resurrection—it is founded upon the resurrection and cannot be realized in its perfect and final form until after that event.

#### Questions:

1. What is wrong with the expression "Building the Kingdom" as commonly used by religious liberals?
2. When did Pelagius live and what were his teachings?
3. What is wrong with Pelagianism, from the Bible point of view?
4. What is meant by saying: "Reforms may deal with sins but they cannot eradicate sin". Why is this a true statement?
5. If all desirable social reforms could be achieved on a world-wide scale, why would this not bring about the Kingdom of God in its final form?
6. What is the difference between "morality" and Christianity?
7. What was Benjamin Franklin's method of attaining perfection, as stated in his Autobiography? What was wrong with his idea?
8. When will Christian believers become

perfect in holiness, and when will the world become perfect in holiness?

9. Why can people not "build the Kingdom" by a mass movement among unregenerate people, stressing such ideals as temperance, social justice and world peace?

10. Why should we pray and work for world peace?

11. Why should we work and witness for desirable social reforms?

12. Why can there not be a perfect society until there are perfect individuals to compose it?

13. If every individual in the world were to be converted to Christ, why would the final Kingdom of God still not have come?

14. What is the relation between the Kingdom of God in its final perfection and the resurrection of the dead?

## LESSON XV

### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND SOCIAL REFORM, Continued

But the error of the modern religious liberals who have hopes of bringing in what they call "the kingdom of God" (though they do not believe in the Triune God of the Bible) by what they call "the social gospel," is even more fundamental than the error of the social perfectionism mentioned above. **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God** (John 3:3). It is clearly taught in Scripture that men become citizens of the kingdom of God by a new birth, or regeneration by the Holy Spirit. This act is always instantaneous, and it is an act of God's Spirit, in which man's spirit is passive or acted upon. One instant a man is dead in trespasses and sins; the next instant he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. Human consciousness of regeneration may come gradually, but the new birth itself is instantaneous. It is the beginning of a new spiritual life, and the beginning of anything cannot be a gradual process but in the nature of the case must be instantaneous. Now, a man is either born again or he is not born again, just as he is either a citizen of the United States or he is not a citizen of the United States. He is not 25% or 50% or 75% a citizen of the country; he is just a citizen or he is not. He may have taken out his first papers but he remains an alien until the moment he is declared a citizen by the court. A man may be a good citizen or a bad citizen, but still he is a citizen, or he is not. In the same way a man may be a weak Christian or a strong Christian, but still he is either a Christian or he is not, as the case may be. The use of the term "Christian" in the qualitative sense is part of the parlance of modern liberalism, as in the phrases "a Christian social order," "a Christian world", etc. The trouble is that those who talk about a Christian social order and a Christian world do not mean a society and a world made up of **Christians** in the old-time sense of born again, believing people, but a social order and a world which are to possess certain qualities which the liberal teachers call "Christian." Of course, the word "Christian" is never used in the Bible in this qualitative sense. While it is true that we use such terms as "Christian doctrine", "Christian education", "Christian literature", and the like, these merely

designate the doctrine, education, literature, etc., which pertain to Christianity, and it is understood that these things are connected with **Christian people**. The modern religious liberal, however, uses the word "Christian" merely in the qualitative sense. To him a Christian is not a believer in Christ, but any person who possesses "Christian" qualities, and a person can be more Christian or less Christian, according as he possesses more or less of these qualities, and irrespective of whether or not he is born again and a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, at the bottom of this idea is the denial of John 3:3 (**Except one be born anew**). The liberals object particularly to the clear-cut division of humanity into those born again and those not born again, for according to their ideas a man does not need to be born again, and what they call a Christian differs from other men only in degree, not in nature. These are the ideas that underlie the "social gospel" advocated by liberal teachers; it is based on a denial of man's total depravity and of the necessity of a supernatural new birth. Permeating the "social gospel" propaganda is the error that a world made up of people who have not been born again can gradually become more and more "Christian" by the adoption of Christian attitudes, principles, etc. As explained above, we believe in working for desirable social reforms, not because the kingdom of God can be brought in this way, but because of the value and benefit of the reforms themselves and because it is our duty to oppose evil and strive after good. We believe in a social application of the Gospel of Christ. But we reject the "social gospel", which is really a substitute for the Gospel of Christ, part and parcel, and refuse to be identified with it in any way. It is not a gospel; it is a deadly narcotic drug which lulls people off into a spiritual anaesthesia, so that they feel no need of a new birth and the cleansing blood of Calvary, but satisfy their souls by building dream castles of a perfect world founded on human qualities and attitudes. What has the Bible-believing, blood-bought Covenanter Church to do with a journal like the "Christian Century" which denies the truths of Scripture in practically every issue and regards the Lord Jesus Christ

as merely a great and good man who said many valuable things but also made some mistakes? Brethren, the God and the Christ they talk about are not the God and the Christ revealed in the Scriptures, and in whom we have believed. The kingdom of God of which they speak is not the eternal kingdom of God for which we are longing. Their "new social order" is of the earth, earthy. Their entire program is humanistic from start to finish. Let us not lose our savor by even apparent identification with such a Christ-dishonoring propaganda.

#### Questions:

1. What is wrong with the liberal idea of "a Christian world" to be attained through the "social gospel"?
2. According to the Bible, what is the relation between being born again and the Kingdom of God?
3. Is regeneration, or the new birth, an act or a process?
4. In regeneration, or the new birth, is the spirit of man active or passive?
5. Is the difference between a Christian and an unsaved person an absolute difference, or is it merely a matter of degrees?

6. What is wrong with the liberals' use of the word "Christian" in a qualitative sense?

7. What is the attitude of liberalism or modernism toward the truth stated in John 3:3?

8. What is the basic error of the "liberal" "social gospel"?

9. If we reject the "liberal" idea of the "social gospel", then why should we still work for social reforms?

10. What should be attitude of Bible-believing Christians toward books and journals which are filled with unbelief and denials of the truths of the Scriptures?

11. What is meant by saying that the "new social order" of modern liberalism is of the earth, earthy? Is this a true statement?

12. Why is it correct to say that the "social gospel" program of liberalism is humanistic from start to finish?

13. What is the difference between the "social gospel" of modern liberalism, and a social application of the Biblical Gospel of Jesus Christ? Is it possible for us to avoid the former while we insist on the latter?

## LESSON XVI

### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND SOCIAL REFORM, Continued

Someone may say, What is the use of working for the recognition of the kingdom of Christ over the nations if the fulness of the kingdom of God cannot come until after the resurrection? Now the mediatorial kingship of Christ over the nations is one of the neglected truths of Scripture. Plainly taught in the Bible, it has been largely ignored by the main current of Christianity throughout the history of the Church. It has remained for the Covenanter Church to lift a banner of testimony for "the crown rights of Jesus Christ." Such Scriptures as Rev. 1:5, Matt. 28:18, 1 Cor. 15:25, Psalm 2:10-12, and many others, teach that Jesus Christ has, now, in the present age, been exalted by God the Father as King and Lord of all. The fact that the nations in their present state of rebellion have not as yet recognized Christ's authority does not make any difference. It is the glory of the Covenanter Church to witness to this neglected truth and to point out to the nations their duty to **kiss the Son** (Psalm 2:12) by recognizing his kingly authority and submitting to his laws, in legislation and all civil affairs.

But even if in the course of time all the nations of the world should make adequate constitutional recognition of the mediatorial kingship of Christ, still the kingdom of God would not have been attained. No doubt such world wide

recognition would be attended by the greatest benefits and blessings to the human race. But sin, sorrow, suffering and death would still exist in the world, and God's people would still have to look forward to the coming of the Lord and fulness of the life eternal. Therefore we should not suppose that even world wide national recognition of Christ would bring in the kingdom of God in its final form.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the nations of the world will stubbornly refuse to recognize Christ's kingship until after his second coming. Is that any reason why we should not witness for the kingship? Some would say that if success is not obtainable we might as well drop the whole matter. This pragmatist, utilitarian view of life is quite common today but it is utterly foreign to the teachings of the Scriptures. If a thing is our duty, then we must do it, whether the results are likely to be successful or not. **Well done, good and faithful servant** is a very different thing from "Well done, good and successful servant." It is the bounden duty of the Covenanter Church to witness for Christ's kingship over the nations, and every member of the Church is **bound by oath** to further this testimony and to abstain from everything contrary of it. We approved of the Church's Covenant when we were admitted as communicant members, and are bound by that

Covenant just as much as if we had lifted our own right hand and sworn the oath with our own lips. Our duty is plain; the issue is with God. We are not engineers trying to remake the world; we are merely witnesses for God's truth and against human sin. If in his inscrutable purposes God has decreed that the nations shall turn a deaf ear to the testimony of his witnesses, as he decreed that Pharaoh would harden his heart against the words of Moses, that does not in the slightest degree lessen the obligation of the witnesses to testify to the whole truth. Furthermore, it will be to the glory of God at the day of judgment that those nations which have perished for their rejection of Jesus Christ have had a clear witness borne to them throughout the centuries, so that God will be **justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges** (Psalm 51:4). The prophet Isaiah, like the Covenanter Church, was commissioned by God to preach repentance to a nation, and he was told beforehand that they would not repent or believe his message. Read Isa. 6:8-12. God told him that the result of his preaching would be terrible divine judgment on all except a very small remnant of the people, **until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste** (Isa. 6:11). Did Isaiah say, "What is the use of my preaching if they are sure to reject my message anyway?" He was no utilitarian. He did exactly what God commanded him to do, not because he hoped to bring about a "new social order" but because it was his duty to do it. We should go and do likewise. Even though we may recognize that it is possible that the nations will never adequately recognize Christ's kingship over them until his second coming, when **every knee shall bow and every tongue confess** to him, still our duty to testify to the crown rights of Jesus Christ remains clear and imperative. God's judgments are a great deep. We must distinguish clearly between God's commandments and his predictions, guiding our actions by the former and our hopes by the latter.

#### Questions:

1. If the fulness of the Kingdom of God cannot come until after the resurrection, then is there any use in working for the recognition of the kingship of Christ over the nations?

2. What has been the treatment of the doctrine of the mediatorial kingship of Christ over the nations by most of the churches throughout their history?

3. What is meant by lifting a banner of testimony for "the crown rights of Jesus Christ"?

4. How does the Second Psalm teach the

doctrine of the kingship of Christ over the nations?

5. How is this doctrine of Christ's kingship over the nations taught in the Great Commission, Matt. 28:18-20?

6. Give a text from Paul's Epistles that clearly teaches the mediatorial kingship of Christ over the nations.

7. Give a text from the Book of Revelation that clearly teaches the mediatorial kingship of Christ over the nations.

8. What does the kingship of Christ over the nations imply concerning the duty of the nations toward Christ?

9. Would world-wide national recognition of Christ's kingship mean that the final Kingdom of God had come?

10. What benefits might be expected to result from national recognition of Christ's kingship?

11. What evils would still exist, even after such national recognition of Christ's kingship, which would prevent the enjoyment of the highest blessedness?

12. If the final, perfect Kingdom of God cannot be attained by national recognition of Christ's kingship, does this mean that we might as well give up the whole idea and drop the matter?

13. What is "Pragmatism" and why is it a false philosophy?

14. Why does the probability of success, or lack of probability of success, not change our obligation to do our duty?

15. What good is accomplished by a witness to divine truth which is rejected and disobeyed by the person or nation witnessed to?

16. What will be the relation between our witnessing here and now, and God's honor and glory at the Judgment Day?

17. What commission was given to the prophet Isaiah, and what was he told in advance as to the results of his prophesying (Isa. 6:8-12)?

18. Why did Isaiah obey God and bear witness to the people, since he knew in advance that his message would be rejected by the majority?

19. Should our actions be guided by God's commands or by His predictions?

20. Should our religious hope be based on God's commands or on His predictions?

## LESSON XVII

## THE DAWNING DAY

Many times in the old Testament occurs the phrase **the last days or the latter days**, referring to a remote time in the future when prophecy would be fulfilled. Micah 4:1-3 is an example of this: **But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem; and he will judge between many peoples, and will decide concerning strong nations afar off: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.** A glance at a concordance will show a large number of other references where **the last days or the latter days** are spoken of as the times when prophecy would be fulfilled.

Turning to the New Testament, we find that the writers of the various books are conscious that they are living in the midst of "the last days," the times prophesied of old. The last days are the days of the Messiah's advent; remembering that the Old Testament does not distinguish very sharply between the first and second comings of Christ, but more generally prophesies of his coming, we see that "the last days" began with the first coming of Christ, and will continue until the eternal order of things is ushered in and onward through eternity. Thus the entire period between the two advents is properly spoken of as "the last days." This terminology seems strange to us because of the shortness of our vision. We look back through history, and think of George Washington as someone who lived a long time ago, of Charlemagne as very long ago, and of the times of Christ and the apostles as ancient history. Because we ourselves are a part of the historical process and unable to lift ourselves above it, we tend to think of ourselves as living in "modern times" and Christ and the apostles as living in "ancient times." But one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. If we would understand the Scriptures, we must familiarize ourselves with the terminology which the Holy Spirit uses, however different it may seem from our ordinary habits of thinking. According to Scriptural terminology, when the Lord Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem, the end of the world began. As this may seem a strange idea, Scripture proofs of it will be cited here. 1 Pet. 1:19-20, Christ: who was foreknown indeed before

the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake. Heb. 1:1-2, God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days (Greek, at the end of the days, these) spoken unto us in his Son. Heb. 9:26, But now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 1 Cor. 10:11, Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come. In these texts the times of Christ, the apostles, and the early Christians are spoken of as the end of the times, the end of the days, the end of the ages, and the ends of the ages. The Messiah, prophesied first immediately after the Fall, had come at last in fulfilment of prophecy and had performed the first of those redemptive acts which would ultimately issue out into the eternal order of things. Everything from that time on belongs to "the ends of the ages." Everything from the first advent of Jesus Christ is part of the final winding up of the world's affairs, in preparation for the world of eternity. The early Christians understood this, felt it, were saturated with its atmosphere. They lived daily in the consciousness that **the world passeth away, and the lust thereof** (1 John 2:17), and that the permanent order of things was already being instituted, in fact that the first great act of the drama had already taken place. **The end of all things is at hand** (1 Pet. 4:7) was their attitude toward the present age. It was not a matter of the length of time involved. Whether a few years or a few centuries or longer, it was only a little while in the divine scheme of things. **For yet a very little while (Greek, how little, how little), he that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry** (Heb. 10:37), expressed their confident expectation. The process was already under way.

We modern Christians, much to our own loss, have a different attitude and different terminology. We tend to think of the first coming of Christ as very long ago and of his second coming as far in the future. We think that if his second coming is to take place in the last days, his first coming must have been in the first days. But according to the Bible, both comings and the whole period between them are part of "the last days." This is also shown by Acts 2:16-24, where the apostle Peter first quotes a prophecy from Joel and then goes on to say that it has been fulfilled in the time between the two comings of Jesus Christ. **But this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel: And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh. . . The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood,**

before the day of the Lord come, that great and notable day: and it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. So we see that Pentecost, a few days after the ascension of Christ, was in "the last days." The same idea that the end time of the ages had already arrived occurs repeatedly in the writings of the apostle John, as for example 1 John 2:18, **Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye have heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour.** Rev. 1:1, 22:6, **The things which must shortly come to pass.** Rev. 22:10, **And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.** Compare Daniel 8:26, **But shut thou up the vision, for it belongeth to many days to come.** 12:4, **But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.** 12:9, **The words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end.**

Three times in the last chapter of the Book of Revelation the Lord Jesus Christ testifies concerning the nearness of his coming: verse 7, **And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.** Verse 12, **Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is.** Verse 20, **He who testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus.**

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.

#### Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the expression "the latter days" or "the last days" which occurs frequently in the Old Testament prophets?
2. When did "the latter days" or "the last days" begin?
3. Give proof from the New Testament Epistles that the apostles and early Christians realized that they were living in "the last days".
4. What was the dominant attitude of the early Christians toward this present world?
5. Prove from the Bible that the first coming of Christ, the second coming of Christ, and the entire period between the two, are included in "the last days".
6. What solemn assurance is uttered by the Lord Jesus Christ three times in the last chapter of the Bible?
7. What reason have we for saying that the evening and the long night of human history have already passed and a new day, the morning of eternity, is about to dawn?
8. What spiritual comfort can a Christian derive from the doctrine of the second coming of Christ as revealed in the Bible?

### CONCLUSION

That great Covenanter, Samuel Rutherford, after enduring great sufferings for Christ's Crown and Covenant, departed to be with the Lord in the year 1661. On the afternoon of his last day on earth he said, "Glory dwells in Immanuel's Land." This saying became the basis of a beautiful poem about the life eternal, by Mrs. Anne Ross Cousin.

This series of lessons could not close more fittingly than by quoting its nineteen stanzas.

#### IN IMMANUEL'S LAND

The sands of time are sinking,  
The dawn of heaven breaks,  
The summer morn I've sighed for,  
The fair, sweet morn awakes;  
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,  
But dayspring is at hand,  
And glory—glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.

Oh! well it is for ever,  
Oh! well for evermore—  
My nest hung in no forest  
Of all this earth-doomed shore;  
Yea, let the vain world perish,  
As from the ship we strand,  
While glory—glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.

There the Red Rose of Sharon  
Unfolds its heartmost bloom,  
And fills the air of Heaven  
With ravishing perfume:  
Oh! to behold its blossom,  
While by its fragrance fann'd,  
While glory—glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.

The King there in his beauty,  
Without a veil is seen;  
It were a well spent journey,  
Though sev'n deaths lay between;  
The Lamb, with His fair army,

Doth on Mount Zion stand,  
And glory—glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.

Oh! Christ He is the fountain,  
The deep sweet well of love!  
The streams on earth I've tasted,  
More deep I'll drink above;  
There to an ocean fulness  
His mercy doth expand,  
And glory—glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.

Oft in yon sea-beat prison  
My Lord and I held tryst;  
For Anworth was not Heaven,  
And preaching was not Christ;  
And aye, my murkiest storm-cloud,  
Was by a rainbow spann'd,  
Caught from the glory dwelling  
In Immanuel's land.

But that He built a Heaven  
Of His surpassing love,  
A little New Jerusalem,  
Like to the one above;  
"Lord, take me o'er the water",  
Had been my loud demand,  
"Take me to love's own country,  
Unto Immanuel's land".

But flow'rs need night's cool darkness,  
The moonlight and the dew;  
So Christ from one who loved it,  
His shining oft withdrew;  
And then for cause of absence  
My troubled soul I scann'd—  
But glory, shadeless, shineth  
In Immanuel's land.

The little birds of Anworth,  
I used to count them blest—  
Now, beside happier altars  
I go to build my nest;  
O'er these there broods no silence,  
No graves around them stand,  
For glory, deathless, dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.

Fair Anworth, by the Solway,  
To me thou still art dear,  
E'en from the verge of Heaven  
I drop for thee a tear.

Oh! if one soul from Anworth  
Meet me at God's right hand,  
My Heaven will be two Heavens,  
In Immanuel's land.

I've wrestled on towards Heaven,  
'Gainst storm, and wind, and tide;  
Now, like a weary traveler  
That leaneth on his guide,  
Amid the shades of evening,  
While sinks life's lingering sand,  
I hail the glory dawning  
From Immanuel's land.

Deep waters cross'd life's pathway,  
The hedge of thorns was sharp;  
Now, these lie all behind me—  
Oh! for a well-tuned harp!  
Oh! to join Hallelujah  
With yon triumphant band  
Who sing, where glory dwelleth,  
In Immanuel's land.

With mercy and with judgment  
My web of time He wove,  
And aye the dews of sorrow  
Were lustered with his love.  
I'll bless the hand that guided,  
I'll bless the heart that plann'd,  
When throned where glory dwelleth,  
In Immanuel's land.

Soon shall the cup of glory  
Wash down earth's bitt'rest woes,  
Soon shall the desert brier  
Break into Eden's rose;  
The curse shall change to blessing—  
The name on earth that's bann'd  
Be graven on the white stone  
In Immanuel's land.

Oh! I am my Beloved's,  
And my Beloved is mine!  
He brings a poor, vile sinner  
Into His "house of wine";  
I stand upon His merit,  
I know no other stand,  
Not e'en where glory dwelleth,  
In Immanuel's land.

I shall sleep sound in Jesus,  
Fill'd with His likeness rise,  
To love and to adore Him,  
To see Him with these eyes;  
'Tween me and resurrection  
But Paradise doth stand;  
Then—then for glory dwelling  
In Immanuel's land.

The Bride eyes not her garment,  
But her dear bridegroom's face;  
I will not gaze at glory,  
But on my King of Grace—  
Not at the crown He giveth,  
But on His pierced hand—  
The Lamb is all the glory  
Of Immanuel's land.

I have borne scorn and hatred,  
I have borne wrong and shame,  
Earth's proud ones have reproach'd me  
For Christ's thrice-blessed Name;  
Where God's seals set the fairest  
They've stamp't their foulest brand,  
But judgment shines like noonday  
In Immanuel's land.

They've summoned me before them,  
But there I may not come—  
My Lord says, "Come up hither",

My Lord says, "Welcome home!"  
 My kingly King at His white throne  
 My presence doth command,  
 While glory—glory dwelleth  
 In Immanuel's land.

The night is far spent, and the day is at hand:  
 let us therefore cast off the works of darkness,  
 and let us put on the armor of light. Rom. 13:12.  
 The End.

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## The Pilgrim Edition of the Holy Bible

By the Rev. Lester E. Kilpatrick

The "Pilgrim" Bible, published in 1948, has been widely advertised as an edition using the "King James Version with notes especially adapted for young Christians". It is said to be also "Ideal for Bible students and teachers", but its suitability for young people is the point which is most emphasized.

The point of view of the notes, as to the inspiration of the Bible, is sound, and the doctrine is well stated and apparently an effort made sincerely to apply it in the notes.

In the first sentence of the "Introduction and Key" we are told that "Those who are familiar with the plan, format, and doctrinal emphasis of the Scofield Reference Bible will recognize immediately the great similarity" between the two. This is true. In fact, the similarity is so great that they may properly be called companion volumes. It is also stated (page v) that "The editors hold to the 'dispensational viewpoint' in the interpretation of Scripture."

One cannot help wondering why this very important fact has not been mentioned in the sales promotion material, and why it is not noted among the fourteen "special features" of this Bible listed on the dust jacket. Even reviewers who have given favorable reviews have been reluctant to admit this fact. Glenwood Blackmore, in an article reporting the Ritz-Carlton Hotel (New York) luncheon at which the Pilgrim Edition of the Holy Bible was introduced to representatives of the clergy, press and radio, praises the work as "an edition of the Bible that should have been published years ago", and as "the answer to a long felt need" (**United Evangelical Action**, Nov. 15, 1949). Yet he said not one word about its dispensational character, which is perhaps the most important thing needed to be said to describe it. One cannot escape the conclusion that it is just a little dishonest to cover this fact in the publicity, inasmuch as most people buying a Bible do not turn to and read the introduction before making the purchase.

It cannot be said that the editors were not aware of widespread disapproval of the dispensational interpretation, for on this same page we read: "They (the editors) recognize that the so-

called Dispensationalists are the object of much criticism by those who do not hold the same views." There is evident here a little self-pity, in that they claim that it is the dispensationalists who are the object of criticism, rather than their views. Actually, those Bible scholars who do not hold the dispensational view and who earnestly seek to know the truth of the Word, are critical of the dispensational interpretation of the Bible, not of those who hold it. Such an attitude on the part of the editors indicates a lack of confidence in their ability to answer the criticism of their system, and that the day of decline is definitely begun for Darby dispensationalism, so far as scholarship is concerned. Yet such a publication as the one under review will do much to maintain this erroneous system popularly for some time to come.

Most of what was said concerning the Scofield Reference Bible will apply in general to this volume, but a few matters should be touched on, inasmuch as this is an independent work.

### I. Overstatement

There are numerous examples of overstatement with reference to an explanation given for a Scripture. We are told (p. 5) that "It is POSSIBLE that such a light" (as that which shines from God) "shone from their" (Adam's and Eve's) "bodies". The next sentence states that "This, OF COURSE, took the place of clothing." Something is "possible" and then it is "of course" the thing that actually existed. And all this with reference to an idea that appears to contradict the specific statement of the Word, "And they were both naked".

Then the window which Noah was to make in the ark "DOUBTLESS was really a gallery open around the top" (p. 12). "Zedekiah UNDOUBTEDLY turned in faith to God, repenting of his evil way . . ." (p. 999), in spite of the fact that the Bible says only, "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done" (2 Kings 24:19). With reference to the present age we read, "WE KNOW that this age, the Dispensation of Grace, when the Gospel is being preached and the Church is being formed is not foretold in the Old Testament . . ." (p. 1126). This is a farreaching

and too much disputed idea to assert of it so definitely, "We know".

Then certainly it is an overstatement to say that "Prophecy is simply pre-written history" (p. 874), and of Antiochus of Syria, that his "history was pre-written in Daniel 11:21-35" (p. 1215). Prophecy gives certain marks or details, so that when the event prophesied takes place, it may be recognized by men of faith that it is fulfilment. It is not pre-written history. It is true that the prophecy of details of the reign of Antiochus was so accurate that unbelieving students of the prophecy of Daniel have been led to conclude that it was written after his reign, rather than before. Yet it was still but a few details that were prophesied, and not his history.

As for the statement in the introduction to the book of Esther, that "this is the only book of the Bible" in which "the name of God is not mentioned", this is not an overstatement, but an inaccuracy, for the Song of Solomon also does not mention God's name.

On page 9 where we read that "Cain . . . builded a city", we are told that there was "no government". It is true that no code of laws is mentioned, but it is a dangerous theory to conclude that if something is not mentioned, it did not exist.

It should be mentioned that some statements in the Scofield Reference Bible which have been severely criticized on this score, have been toned down in the Pilgrim edition. With regard to the prophecy of Ezekiel concerning "Gog and Magog", the SRB speaks dogmatically, "All agree", and of "a clear mark of identification", while the Pilgrim notes include such phrases as "It would seem", "could be translated", "may have therefore assumed their names", and "There are some who believe. . .", and unanimous agreement is not claimed. Of the beginning of the Dispensation of Law the SRB says, "The Dispensation of Promise ended when Israel rashly accepted the law", while the Pilgrim notes do not call Israel's acceptance of the terms which God proposed "rash".

There are numerous instances in which the notes go beyond the evidence of the Scriptures, to give an idea which is the result of pure speculation. Sometimes this is to fill out the dispensational theory. Many times it is not. In a word, many of the notes are not dependable.

## II. Concerning the Doctrine of God's Sovereignty

Whenever the idea of God's sovereignty in man's salvation is mentioned in the Bible, the notes take pains to explain it — away. One of the first suggestions of this position in the notes of this Bible is found in the record of the struggle of Israel to get free of the Egyptian bondage. The note on Exodus 4:21 says, "When God said

that He would harden Pharaoh's heart, He meant that He would allow Pharaoh to be stubborn in refusing the demands of the Israelites . . . He made up his mind of his own free will and God let him go his own wicked way." There is no mention of the fact that man is by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and totally unable "of his own free will" to choose the right.

In one great New Testament passage where God's sovereignty is clearly stated, Acts 2:23, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain", reference is not made at all in the notes to the "determinate counsel" of God, but we are referred to the note on "Foreknowledge" on 1 Peter 1:20. There we are told that "Before the world was created, God, foreseeing sin, planned that Christ should die for sinners . . .".

In the note on Rom. 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son . . .", the meaning of the word "predestinate" is given as "to plan beforehand". And in explanation of Eph. 1:5, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world", we are told that the "word means that God determined beforehand that everyone who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour would become His son . . .". In other words, predestination is watered down to mean merely God's plan for those who, when left to their own "free will to receive or reject the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour", actually receive Him (p. 1480). On the following page we are told that "God's choosing is always based on His foreknowledge". And on p. 1497 the notes speak of "the believer's ALLOWING the Holy Spirit to control him."

One may well ask, Who is sovereign, man or God?

Even if predestination is explained as foreknowledge, it does not solve the problem. It still remains a fact that if a thing is known, it must already be determined, and does not depend on the choice of the moment. If our acts are already known to God, then they are certain, and we have no absolute freedom, in the sense of being independent of the eternal foreordination of God, whether we think we have or not. If we hold that man's acts are not certain by reason of God's foreordination, but depend ultimately on the choice of the moment, then, to use the words of Boettner (*The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 43), "We sacrifice the sovereignty of God in order to preserve the freedom of men."

When Paul says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son", the foreknowledge spoken of is a favorable, rather than a merely mental,

knowledge. Christ said, concerning those whom He will put on His left hand, "I never knew you". It is not that He did not know them mentally, but that He did not know them as His own. If God's election of His children depends on what He knows they will do, God is not sovereign.

If the editors had been willing to admit that it is impossible fully to harmonize the idea of God's sovereignty with man's responsibility, to admit that it is a great mystery — as they did in the case of the evil and suffering in the world, where they say (p. 1479), "This is a mystery that not even Christians can understand, but it is plainly taught in the Bible and in all human experience", it would have been well. But these editors have undertaken to give a full explanation, which they do by paring down the sovereignty of God. Paul concluded his discussion of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, under the inspiration of the Spirit, with the words, "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" (Rom. 11:33).

### III. Types

There is the same loose use of the "type" idea as in the Scofield Reference Bible. "Types" are found in literally dozens of instances where there is no Scripture mention or suggestion of them. Abel, Cain and Seth are all "types", as were Isaac and Joseph, the two latter of Christ. Jacob was a "type" of the nation Israel. Isaac's wife and the servant who went for her, were "types" of the Church (though the Church is supposedly not in all the Old Testament view) and the Holy Spirit respectively. All parts of the tabernacle are "typical", even to the colors of the curtains. The brass used "always stands for judgment" (p. 116) (though no mention is made of this idea when the use is not so suggestive, as in the laver and the pillars in Solomon's temple). Sisera's defeat at the hand of a woman is said to be a "type of the defeat of the devil by the 'seed of the woman'". It is almost needless to say that such ideas are speculative, and open the door to human fancy in Scripture interpretation.

### IV. Oversimplification

There are numerous examples of this fault, but only one will be given. We are told (p. 476), in explanation of the statement in 1 Kings 11:9 that "The Lord was angry with Solomon", that "God's love for Solomon had not changed, but He did hate Solomon's sin". Again, where we are told in 2 Kings 13:3 that "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel", the notes state that "God loves the sinner, but because He is holy, He must ever hate sin" (p. 523). This is a superficial analysis, in view of such passages as "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Psalm 5:5) and "The Lord trieth the righteous: but the

wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth" (Psalm 11:5). "All their (Ephraim's) wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more" (Hos. 9:15). In none of these verses is comment given in the notes on the significant part of the verse. There is a comment on Jer. 12:8, "Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it", as follows: "This in the Hebrew, means TO LOVE LESS." This definition of the word "hate" is not even suggested in the commonly accepted lexicons, and at least in Hos. 9:15, would not fit at all. Actually, such a separation of the sinner from the sin is far too easy. They are identified with one another, they are inseparable, except for the one means that God provided. It is true that God loves sinners, but He loves them in the sense that He desires them to be righteous, and not that He delights in them in their present state. In this sense He can both love and hate the same time, but it is superficial to say that God loves the sinner and hates his sin.

### V. Dispensationalism

As in the Scofield Reference Bible, the most serious errors in this Bible stem from the dispensational system, into the mould of which all the Scriptures are forced. As in the former volume, Saint Augustine is suggested as supporting the system with his statement, "Distinguish the ages, and the Scriptures are made plain" (p. 1221), though as far as history goes, he knew nothing of this seven-dispensation division of all time.

It may be well to review again the Scripture passages in which the word "dispensation" is found. There are only four such references in our English Bible, 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2; and Col. 1:25. (The same Greek word is otherwise translated in four other passages, Luke 16:2-4; Gal. 4:1-4; Eph. 3:9 and 1 Tim. 1:4, but the meaning is plainly not the same, and no claim is made for these as proof in the notes of the Pilgrim Bible. On only one of the four passages is there a note which claims it as referring to a dispensation in the Pilgrim edition sense of the word, namely, Eph. 1:10. Actually, the divisions into seven dispensations are arbitrary, there being no indication whatever of a division, in the Bible itself, except between the Old and New Testament periods.

This scheme involves the idea that the Church was not in the whole Old Testament view. This whole age of already 1900 years is squeezed in between the 69th and 70th weeks in Daniel's vision, though there is no indication there of any interruption. And that prophecy has been understood by the great majority of Bible students

to be without interruption. Thus, a theory is made to do violence to the Scriptures.

We are told that the Old Testament saints "do not compose the Church, which is the New Testament revelation" (p. 1240), and in a note on Dan. 9:24 that this dispensation "when the Gospel is being preached and the Church formed is not foretold in the Old Testament" (p. 1126). And all this in spite of such verses as Eph. 2:19,20, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." There is no note of explanation on this latter passage, which plainly declares the unity of the old and new covenant people.

This antithesis between the Church and the Old Testament saints, between the age of law and the age of grace, is further evidenced in notes on the law. Explaining the words, "righteous before God", said of Zacharias and Elizabeth, parents of John the Baptist, a note tells us (p. 1320) that "They kept the Law as perfectly as it was humanly possible to keep it." Of course, it was true in Old Testament times as well as in New Testament times, that "Without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11:6). It was not the keeping of the law nearly perfectly that made them righteous before God, for that did not make Abraham nor Saul of Tarsus acceptable. It was their faith. Furthermore, in explaining the Sabbath, we are told (p. 1242) that "There is no law for the Christian to keep Sunday as the Lord's day; it is a liberty which Christians enjoy". Of course, this is true of every Christian duty. It is a liberty. It is also true that the Old Testament

saints should have found the observance of the Sabbath a delight (Isa. 58:13). But such relief from the obligation of the other nine commandments is not stated. Why is one of the Ten Commandments singled out, and comfort given to those professing Christians who profane the Lord's day?

Other matters might be mentioned, but perhaps the strength — hence the danger to immature Bible students — of his volume is the multitude of references to the "seven dispensations", to the "two resurrections", to the rapture and the great tribulation, and other matters which are given distinctively dispensational connotations. Reference is made to such on perhaps a majority of the pages of the volume, even though there is nothing in the particular verse to suggest the dispensational interpretation. Then a reference is made to another note, and that one suggests one or more further, and so on. Thus the force of repetition is given to the notes, "Line upon line, line upon line", and the implication is given, consciously or unconsciously, that there is evidence of the correctness of the dispensational mode of interpretation on almost every page of the Bible.

While this Bible is being sold by and to many well-meaning people, it is certainly not the book to place in the hands of young Christians.

(Certain words in the foregoing article, in quotations from the Pilgrim Edition of the Holy Bible, are printed in capitals for the sake of emphasis. This emphasis is that of the author of this article, not that of the editors of this edition of the Bible).

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## The Cultural Concept of Christianity

Book Review by J. G. Vos

**THE CULTURAL CONCEPT OF CHRISTIANITY**, by Arthur W. Calhoun. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 155. \$2.50.

The author of this book is Dean of Sterling College, an institution of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, located at Sterling, Kansas. The dust jacket calls the book a "brilliant analysis of the mechanistic thinking of our age" and "a most timely reassertion that God created man an organism, both biologically and socially, 'a living tissue of relationships', responsible to Him, — not a machine of fragmentary and isolated interests plundering the world's resources for the advantage of special interests." "Instead of a mechanistic science, Dr. Calhoun tells us, we need an organismic science as the un-

folded of experience into a broadening and deepening sense of the wholeness of life which identifies logic, reason, sanity with the meaning embodied in and revealed through the fulness and wholeness of Christ." "The Christian is urged 'not to belittle Christianity into a selfish scheme for personal insurance, or to feature the priestly office of Christ at the expense of his claims as teacher and Lord.' The world's society with its political, economic and social institutions, Dr. Calhoun asserts, is a fit subject for regeneration." "Calhoun is trying to get under the skin of secular scientism on the one hand, and under the skin of a derationalized religious world which has yielded more than it guesses to secularism, on the other hand. This needs doing badly. His argument is that Christianity is social, social

in being, not merely social in application . . . Presumably Christianity, Protestant Christianity, will simply have to confront the fact that it has connived too much with the rationalistic individualism of the eighteenth century. Calhoun's sense of this is sound, and his application in the several spheres of life is thoroughgoing and broadly informed." We have quoted thus at length from the dust jacket in order to show what this book itself claims to be, as stated by the publishers, presumably with the approval of the author. We wish to set forth the book's own claims for itself before undertaking any argument or criticisms concerning its contents.

Throughout the book, the author's main thesis is that mechanistic thinking must be replaced by "organismic thinking"; that is, thinking in terms of machines must be replaced by thinking in terms of organisms. We are to think of man, society and the universe as organisms — tissues of relationships — not as mere mechanical combinations put together out of lifeless parts. This emphasis is applied to a variety of social and economic problems, with conclusions which the author affirms are required by a Christian view of man and society.

In general, Dr. Calhoun calls for a worldwide "planned economy" of a socialistic type, production for use rather than production for profit, the replacement of politics by economics, the use of statistics to solve our problems; and he even offers a suggestion of the advisability of a program of eugenics based on statistical tables and a mathematical formula. Over and over again the author pleads for a change of our social and economic system. He regards a change of THE SYSTEM as the great need and the only way out of our troubles. He identifies the Utopian system which he would introduce with "the kingdom of God", saying: "Anyone seriously proposing a competent use of the planet according to an all-embracing plan is dismissed as Utopian, though of course Utopia—the co-operative commonwealth—is but another name for the Kingdom of God. . ." (p. 55). Here the Kingdom of God is defined as a Utopia which is to result from "an all-embracing plan" for "a competent use of the planet". For our part, we deny that a "planned economy" for the whole world would be even a step toward bringing the real Kingdom of God down to earth. All plans for a Utopia fail because they invariably fail to realize the depth and extent of human wickedness. Someone has wisely remarked: "You cannot have the Utopian plan, until you have the Utopian man". "The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery" (Shorter Catechism, 17). This fall was not a lapse into a **wrong system** of economics and social organization, but into a wrong condition of heart, a state of enmity against God. The population of this world is largely made up of people who, in their inmost heart, HATE the

living and true God (Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 1:30). Only the restraining hand of God's common grace prevents the unregenerate from rising up tomorrow and killing every Christian believer in the world. The real obstacle to the fulness of the Kingdom of God on earth today is not the dominance of a wrong social or economic system, but the prevalence of men whose hearts are filled with enmity against the holy God and His Law.

This book is a thoroughgoing re-interpretation of Christianity in terms of a socialistic type of sociology. We have already cited the statement on the dust jacket that the author maintains "that Christianity is social, **social in being, not merely social in application**" (emphasis mine, J. G. V.). It would not be unfair to say that this book attempts a Christian application of sociology, rather than a social application of Christianity. "Now religion, in essence a social attitude toward one's universe, is the implementation of sociology. . ." (p. 73). Here the author says it plainly: religion is the implementation of sociology. If religion is the implementation of sociology, then sociology must be prior to, and more basic than, religion. The reviewer must demur.

The reviewer finds this book radically unsound in its idea of God. It presents and advocates a concept of God which is incompatible with Christian Theism. The author regards God as a part or an aspect of the universe. Since the author's idea of God is radically unsound, it is not surprising that almost everything else in the book is off-center and misleading. Orthodox Christianity's ultimate point of reference, or highest category of interpretation, is God (Gen. 1:1). Dr. Calhoun's ultimate category is **the universe**, of which God is regarded as a **part**. This is the assumption or major premise on which the entire book depends, and which vitiates and distorts practically everything that the author has to say on his subject. Some of his statements about God are as follows: ". . . an overruling vital wholeness, which is what devout people mean by 'God' " (p. 20); ". . . the wholeness of things, which theologians call God" (p. 25); ". . . we are brought face to face with that integral wholeness which theologians call God; . . ." (pp. 36-7). What kind of theologians call the "integral wholeness" of the universe "God"? Certainly not orthodox Christian theologians. Dr. Calhoun's statements lean toward Pantheism. A Hindu mystic could believe in a "God" who is identified with the "integral wholeness" of the universe. The Biblical truth is that the integral wholeness of the universe proceeds from God, has God for its Author and Creator; but the "integral wholeness" is not itself God, and to say that it is, is to tend to break down the most basic distinction of the Bible, the distinction between Creator and creation.

On page 37 Dr. Calhoun quotes Tennyson's

terrible poem, "Flower in the Crannied Wall", as follows:

"Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower — but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all  
I should know what God and man is."

Dr. Calhoun adds: "Here we have perfectly expressed that faith in the dynamic, the vital interdependence of all things which makes it possible and worthwhile to develop science in the assurance that no apertures will finally persist in the seamless robe of truth and that momentary lesions in her body will heal without a scar" (p. 37). We do not hesitate to call Tennyson's poem "terrible", because, though beautiful as poetry, its teaching is religiously poisonous. This poem is essentially pantheistic. It holds that complete understanding of a flower, "root and all", would involve understanding of "what God and man is". This is Pantheism; it identifies the Creator with the creation; it breaks down the line of demarcation (which Scripture everywhere preserves inviolate) between God and the universe. Dr. Calhoun endorses this poem, saying that it perfectly expresses "the vital interdependence of all things". Now the poem speaks of a flower, God and man. Thus, according to Dr. Calhoun, flower, God and man are vitally interdependent. But according to the Bible, God is NOT dependent on flower nor on man. The creature is dependent on the Creator, but the Creator is NOT dependent on the creature. Modern thought regards God and man as correlative, like the terms "husband" and "wife", or "employer" and "employee". But in the Bible God and man are NOT regarded as correlative. God is absolutely independent of His creatures. See the Westminster Confession of Faith, II. 2, and the Scripture references given there.

On page 40 the author quotes the poet Pope, as follows:

"All are but parts of one stupendous whole,  
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul."

Dr. Calhoun adds: "But Paul transcends this conception when he features Christ as the binding principle—'In him all things hold together.' " The quotations from Pope is, of course, rank Pantheism, and entirely contrary to Christian Theism. Dr. Calhoun apparently endorses this quotation as far as it goes, though he adds that the apostle Paul transcends it with his doctrine of the cosmic significance of Christ. He should have stated that Pope's idea is simply false, and that the background of Paul's statement is no such Pantheism, but the pure Theism of the Bible, according to which God is most certainly NOT "the soul"

of the universe, but its transcendent Creator who also is everywhere immanent in His creation.

Again, Dr. Calhoun says: "Belief in God is, indeed, essentially confidence in the wholeness of things, in the integrity of experience. . ." (p. 40). Again, "Of course if we set God over against the universe as an external factor capable of intrusion, the story will sound different, but it is far more practical to apply the term 'universe', not to our particular solar system, nor yet to everything except God, but rather to the total of all that exists" (p. 47). This certainly leans far in the direction of Pantheism; God is regarded as a part of the universe. The truth is, of course, that the Bible most certainly and definitely DOES set God over against the universe as an external factor capable of intrusion. In orthodox theology, this is called the transcendence of God. Without it, there could be neither a work of creation by God, nor any such thing as a real miracle.

The author says: "So far, indeed, as our religion concerns this planet and its denizens, it appears not only that 'man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever', but likewise that God's chief end is to glorify man and enjoy him forever (emphasis mine, J.G.V.). Thus the most that we know or can know about the universe coincides with the most that we know or can know about the human race" (p. 17). This correlativity between God and man is typical of modern thought, but it utterly subverts true Theism. Again we refer the reader to the Westminster Confession of Faith, II.2.

Dr. Calhoun's book also discloses throughout its contents a very defective view of human sinfulness. "All human problems, for example, go back to the fact that man is faced with the problem of survival on a planet of limited size and reluctant resources, and even the most refined spirituality is a reflection of this predicament, which in turn opens all the vistas of theology" (pp. 41-2). Dr. Calhoun is mistaken. All human problems go back to the Fall of man. Even the problem of wresting a living from the reluctant soil goes back to the Fall of the race into sin, for the Fall brought a divine curse on the ground for man's sake (Gen. 3:17-19). All human problems go back to the Fall into sin; they are not ultimately rooted in the limited size and resources of the earth.

"Because the structure of our social order is so much worse than is the general disposition of the individual, the immediate human problem is not so much how to regenerate more people" — (does Dr. Calhoun think that regeneration or the new birth is a work performed by man?) — "or even how to better the conduct of right-hearted individuals, as it is how to apply intelligence so as to make the pattern of society as good as is

the disposition of the ordinary person (emphasis mine, J.G.V.), who 'means well', though he may be far from carrying his better impulses into consistent action. That is to say, the plan of our society could be vastly improved without presuming a preliminary improvement of 'human nature' and without putting any impossible strain on human nature as it is" (p. 143). The reviewer holds that the exact opposite of these statements is the truth. The "ordinary person" (not the Christian, please note) is not only not "good", but is desperately wicked and hates God (Rom. 1:30). He is inherently selfish and evil. The idea of man having a "better nature" is again presented on page 144, with the statement: "If only man could come to believe that it is safe to give free play to his 'better nature', the general world problem would be open for solution." But according to the Bible and all orthodox Christian theology, **sinful man has no better nature. His WHOLE nature is depraved and corrupted by sin.** Cf. Eph. 2:1, and the Westminster Confession of Faith, VI.2 (" . . . dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body"). The idea that people have a "better nature" and that this "better nature" is the key to a solution of "the general world problem", is just liberalism, not Christianity. Dr. Calhoun thinks of sin in social terms; the Bible speaks of sin as primarily sin against God. Even a sin as violently anti-social as the adultery and murder committed by David was primarily a sin against God, as shown by Psalm 51:4. Dr. Calhoun regards **THE SYSTEM** rather than **THE PEOPLE** as the seat of sin. Over and over again he stresses the wrongness of "the system" and the need for changing it. By analogy from the sport of football he advocates changing "the rules of the game" (p. 74). But football is, after all, morally indifferent, not an ethical problem as social justice is. A non-Christian may obey the "rules of the game" and play good football, but a non-Christian cannot be made (with or without a change in "the rules of the game") to live and act according to Christian ethics. To hold that he can would seem to involve the notion that righteousness can come by the law (Gal. 2:21; 3:21). Dr. Calhoun fails to realize that social justice, no less than the forgiveness of sins, is a matter of supernatural divine grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit in human hearts and lives. Not a different system, but better people, are needed.

Dr. Calhoun's idea of Christianity seems to be predominantly an ethical one, without adequate recognition of the real power of supernatural divine grace in human lives. He defines "the essence of religion" as "a social attitude toward one's universe" (p. 51). Again, ". . . an 'individual' is an abstraction; he cannot disentangle himself from the network that made him" (p. 69). No doubt the "network" of heredity and

environment makes the non-Christian person what he is, but room must be left for the almighty power of supernatural divine grace in changing human personality. Saul the persecutor and blasphemer became Paul the Christian and apostle when the grace of God in Christ overtook him on the Damascus road. "The network that made him" was still the same as before, but a new, all-powerful factor had come into the picture — the transforming power of the new birth from the Holy Spirit. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Here is a transforming power more powerful than heredity, more powerful than environment — the almighty power of God the Holy Spirit. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots (Jer. 13:23), but God can change them, and in the case of His elect, He does change them. Dr. Calhoun says: "In any event, the individual gets his character as a focus of forces, and his personality is but a resultant of social factors" (p. 69). The reviewer must dissent. According to the Bible the Christian individual gets his character BY A MIRACLE — a supernatural act of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, Eph. 2:1; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Even the doctrine of the atonement is ethicized by Dr. Calhoun. He says: "Thus, for instance, the atonement, which evangelicals are wont to couch in a forbidding formula borrowed from the law courts and the class in mathematics, becomes an artistic and valid expression of the principle of social integration, personal identification, and collective salvation, all of which are essential to health, soundness, and persistence of personality" (p. 124). The "forbidding formula borrowed from the law courts and the class in mathematics" is assuredly derived from the Bible itself (Isa. 53:5,6; Mark 10:45; Rom. 3:25,26; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rev. 5:9). Opposition to it is nothing new; it was essentially the same in Paul's day, "the offence of the cross". It amazes this reviewer that the dean of a United Presbyterian college should use such language as that cited above concerning the doctrine of the atonement of Christ.

Another wrong tendency which is quite prominent in the book is its anti-eschatological bias, that is, its tendency to emphasize the importance of the present life rather than the life to come. The author says: "The essence of salvation in the Christian sense is that one is kept from going to waste. The very slight attention given to the future life by the writers of Scripture almost forbids the strenuous attempts often made to build a picture of heaven. . . ." (p. 155). This, of course, presents a false idea of the essence of salvation, the result of attempting to define something which is not primarily social in social terms. Salvation is essentially a matter of being reconciled to God. The dying thief

was certainly saved; but was he "kept from going to waste" socially? Hardly. But beyond this point, the sentence quoted shows Dr. Calhoun's anti-eschatological bias. He says that "very slight attention" is given in the Bible to the future life! On the contrary, the future life is given very great attention in the Bible, and the present life is always regarded as a preparation for the life eternal. Think of First Corinthians chapter fifteen! The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth, and that they desired a better country, that is, a heavenly (Heb. 11:13-16). Read Romans 8:18-25 (a reference to this passage on page 148 of the book indicates that Dr. Calhoun understands it of the present life. Of course, he is mistaken; "the redemption of our body" which is represented as the object of Christian hope means precisely the resurrection of the body at the Last Day). Dr. Calhoun cites the texts: "the world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb. 2:5) and "waiting for the manifestation of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19) as if these texts referred to fruits of Christianity to be realized here on earth during this present age, before the end of the world. This is contrary to the Biblical usage of the expression "the world to come", and to the context of the expression quoted from Romans 8. Both texts are eschatological, referring to events which will take place at or after the Second Coming of Christ.

Something should be said about Dr. Calhoun's use of Scripture. He often quotes Scripture, but too often in an abbreviated form which is prejudicial to its true meaning. Thus Romans 8:28 ("And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose") is quoted over and over again in the book, but almost always in the drastically shortened forms "all things work" or "all things work together". The reviewer noted only one place (p. 45) where this verse is quoted in its entirety.

Dr. Calhoun also misuses the Bible, quite after the modern liberal fashion, by quoting texts which properly concern the elect, or Christian believers, as if these texts applied to human beings indiscriminately, or to human society as such. Thus the line of demarcation between Christian and non-Christian — redeemed man and merely human man — is obscured and broken down. Examples of this misuse of Scripture are found on page 72 ("We are all members one of another", Eph. 4:25); and page 83 ("That they all may be one", John 17:21).

Dr. Calhoun is wrong in asserting that Christianity in its essence is primarily social rather than individual. The great issues of life are individual — birth, effectual calling, faith in Jesus Christ, justification, death, the resurrection, the judgment. "So then every one of us shall

give account of himself to God", Rom. 14:12. God from all eternity elected particular persons — individuals — to eternal life, singling these individuals out from the mass of humanity which God decreed to pass by (Westminster Confession of Faith, III.3,7). Christianity has indeed a social aspect, as well as a social ethical application, but it is wrong to say that Christianity is essentially social rather than individual.

Respecting Dr. Calhoun's proposals for a world-wide "planned economy" and his suggestion of the advisability of an expertly planned program of eugenics (pp. 63, 64, 139 and elsewhere in the book), the reviewer would reply that no one in a sinful race is reliable enough to be trusted with the administration of such programs. In discussing proposals for euthanasia, the late Dr. J. Gresham Machen wrote: "This is a very dangerous business — this business of letting experts determine exactly what people 'never will be missed'. For my part, I do not believe in the infallibility of experts, and I think the tyranny of experts is the worst and most dangerous tyranny that ever was devised" (*The Christian View of Man*, Chap. XV).

On page 61 Dr. Calhoun says: "It may well be, indeed, that statistics hold the answer to all questionings and all problems. In any event, the seemingly uncontrollable by reason of unpredictability is the proper area for research into those numerical relations that will reveal predictability and control. Thus we may arrive at a social order as trustworthy as the order of nature and may attain a solution of our baffling social and personal problems." By statistics! Think of it! We had supposed that the "solution of our baffling social and personal problems" was to be sought in the Bible, first by an understanding of its message, and then by application of that message to our problems. But no! It is now held possible that STATISTICS may "hold the answer to all questionings and all problems". The reviewer considers further comment on this unnecessary.

Dr. Calhoun's view of evangelism appears on page 100: "Genuine evangelism. . . would address itself to society and challenge the group to decide collectively for Christ, knowing that it is the social fabric that gives meaning and value to life, a fact always realized in the insistence that the Christian must needs become part of a Christian fellowship. It would be psychologically simpler and sounder to strive for such a Christianization of our collective choices, as would create the maximum probability of sound individual development and decision." The apostles in their preaching recorded in the book of Acts did not address themselves to society and challenge the group to decide collectively for Christ; on the contrary, Peter in his sermon on Pentecost urged his hearers: "Save yourself from this untoward

generation". The result was not a collective decision by "society", but individual decisions by some three thousand persons. Yet presumably this was "genuine evangelism" which is recorded in the second chapter of Acts.

Dr. Calhoun says: "It is a thankless task to try to produce much Christian character in a pagan society. A few heroic individuals may become notably superior to the current norm, but usually at the cost of such strain and tension as to favor neuroses" (p. 127). But real Christianity is no hothouse plant. The life which comes from the new birth grows stronger by struggle with evil. Dr. Calhoun's idea of making it easier to live the Christian life fails to take account of the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14). Those words were addressed to the early Christians, who lived in the midst of a vicious pagan society. As the Reformer Martin Luther said, the Christian life is lived, and the Christian conflict is waged, "by the grace of God, in spite of the devil." To cite the words of our Lord: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

There are many other statements in the book from which this reviewer must dissent, but because of lack of space, only a few of them will be mentioned here: ". . . the fundamentalists became an interest group whose dignity required the undermining of evolution" (p. 32); "There is great truth in the dictum of the ancient philosopher that 'man is the measure of all things' . . ." (p. 36); "Indeed, for us the meaning of the universe is just its relation to us and our interests" (p. 50); "If, indeed, we are to 'think God's thoughts after Him', we should put ourselves in the way of **participating by mathematical measurement in the divine foreknowledge of so sharing in divine providence** by way of social control of life's vicissitudes" (p. 66; emphasis mine, J. G.V.); ". . . the sense of mysterious power begets a theology. When man reaches out after fellowship with this pervasive force, religion arises" (p. 85); "The salvation of souls is always, indeed, incidental to the building of the Kingdom of God, and undue concentration on souls caters to and enhances a type of selfish-

ness that defeats the larger purposes of the evangel" (p. 147). Numerous other statements might be cited, some of which this reviewer considers simply false, some of which he thinks exaggerated and some of which seems to him over-simplified or distorted.

Pages 84-91 deal with "The Sociology of Spirituality". Dr. Calhoun uses the word "spiritual" throughout in a non-Biblical sense. He uses it in the modern sense of the word, not connecting it with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. For example, he says, ". . . spirituality comes with effective attainment and development of sound relationships" (p. 84). The truth is, of course, that spirituality comes when the Holy Spirit enters into and indwells a human life; and effective attainment and development of sound relationships is the RESULT, not the cause, of spirituality. In the New Testament the word **pneumatikos** ("spiritual", e.g., 1 Cor. 2:15) means **indwelt by the Holy Spirit**; the word is NEVER used in Scripture in the modern sense of "religious", "devotional", or "connected with the human spirit".

Dr. Calhoun's strictures on "the profit system" should be considered in the light of Luke 19:23 and Matt. 25:27 ("Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers. . ."). These texts imply an investment of money in a "capitalistic profit system" with the motive of obtaining profit. Clearly the "profit system" as such was not condemned by Jesus. Of course if a person's supreme motive is the obtaining of profit, above love to God and man, then it is sinful — it is covetousness and it is idolatry. But to hold that the "profit system" is capable of sinful abuse is very different from holding it to be sinful in essence. There is much unwarranted criticism of "the profit system" and "the profit motive" today, which arises from failure to distinguish between the essence of the system, and the abuses which may from time to time incidentally exist in it.

Regretfully it must be said: this is an unsound and dangerous book. Its unsoundness consists not in minor details, or incidental matters, but in the main thrust of the author's positions concerning God, man, society, economics and religion. May God preserve students and young people, especially, from being led astray by its unbiblical teachings.

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**Note on Pantheism:** The late Dr. J. G. Machen wrote: "According to the pantheistic view, not only does the world not exist apart from God, but God does not exist apart from the world; God is either to be identified with the totality of the world-process, or else He is to be regarded as connected with the world-process as the soul of

man is connected with his body." ". . . to that whole . . . all-embracing world-process, which we moderns have learned with a new clearness to regard as one, the pantheist applies the dread name of God. God is thus . . . thought of as nought but the universe, conceived of not in its individual manifestations, but as a mighty whole." (*What is Faith?*, 1925, pp. 52, 70).

## 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. Please purchase books from your local bookstore or direct from the publishers; do not send orders to the publisher of "Blue Banner Faith and Life".

**A STUDY OF THE PROPHET MICAH: POWER BY THE SPIRIT**, by Benjamin A. Copass and E. Leslie Carlson. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1950, pp. 169, \$2.00.

Copass and Carlson, professors of Old Testament Interpretation at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, have produced this condensed and informative volume.

More than half of the book deals with the background study of prophecy, history, laws and conditions, as well as biography of Micah, which are valuable to anyone interested in the prophecy of Micah. The authors have packed a remarkable amount of information in the first 94 pages, though the reading is not tedious. They have a happy terseness of style which is quite suggestive.

This book, though not large, or perhaps for that very reason, is a valuable aid to pastors and Bible teachers.

— D. Ray Wilcox

**ABRAHAM KUYPER ON EVOLUTION**, by Steve Van Der Weele. Youth and Calvinism Group, 1113 Alpine Avenue, N.W., Grand Rapids, Mich. 1950, pp. 15, paper cover. 35 cents.

The purpose of this small pamphlet, and others like it, can best be summarized in the words of the author: "The loss to our Western Society of its Christian basis has created a sense of Crisis, a feeling of decline. In this atmosphere we as young Christians find ourselves compelled to do two things. First, believing that Calvinism is the best available world and life view, we find it necessary to reexamine the Calvinistic assertions in the light of present day problems and needs. Secondly, believing that the world is doomed without a Christian unit of reference, we find it necessary to propagate our Christian principles in such a form and manner that they may be the primary source of answering present day problems and for filling present day needs" (p. 2).

In keeping with this summary of purpose there are presented in this pamphlet translations from the Dutch of two summaries of Abraham Kuyper's lecture on "Evolution" which he delivered while Rector of the Free University in Amsterdam. One is from J. C. Rullman's "Kuyper Bibliographie"; the other is from W.F.A.

Winckel's biography of Kuyper. Since neither of these works has been translated into English, this material has passed almost without notice by the English speaking Calvinists in the British Isles and in America.

Mr. Van Der Weele, a student at the University of Wisconsin, has used an interesting technique in the translation of these two summaries by students of Kuyper's contribution to Twentieth Century thinking.

Abraham Kuyper, in 1899, was saying that Evolution had laid hands upon more than the natural sciences. For its thesis that there is "a struggle for life, the weak must be destroyed, the powerful must conquer", has been developed within the framework of a mechanical materialism. Its by-products have been observed in a spirit of brutish power in economics, in social relations, in politics, and in international relations. The only effective antidote to this SYSTEM is the Christian faith marked by a theistic and teleological concept, whose starting point remains, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth."

— S. Bruce Willson

**PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION**, by Louis Berkhof. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1950, pp. 169. \$2.50.

From the pen of Dr. Louis Berkhof, the President Emeritus of Calvin Seminary, comes this new text in Biblical Interpretation. It is easy to see the hand of an experienced professor and writer in his orderly and scholarly presentation of this important subject. Dr. Berkhof has long since gained recognition as an authority in the ranks of Reformed theologians, and "Principles of Biblical Interpretation" is a worthy addition to the "Berkhof shelf" in your library.

The publishers announce that this volume "is specifically designed for class use in Seminaries and Bible Schools. It will be found equally valuable for use by the active pastor and Bible teacher." I concur in this heartily! The Questions and Study Exercises at the end of each section are well prepared for classroom assignments, but they are also very suggestive and stimulating for the pastor or layman. Those of us who no longer profit by the discipline of daily assignments will do well to assign ourselves to the Questions and Study Exercises. In connection

with this study, the author suggests excellent bibliography for each chapter, and also on pp. 110, 111, 129-132 he suggests reference works and commentaries for general study and interpretation of the Scriptures.

The main topics of this volume are as follows: The History of Hermeneutical Principles, the Proper Conception of the Bible, Grammatical Interpretation, Historical Interpretation, and Theological Interpretation. Under these headings, there are numerous subtopics such as: The Inspiration of the Bible, The Meaning of Separate Words, The Meaning of Words in Their Connection, The Figurative Use of Words, The Symbolical and Typical Interpretation of Scripture, The Interpretation of Prophecy, and The Implied Sense of Scripture.

Of particular interest to Psalm-singing Christians is the section on "The Interpretation of the Psalms". Dr. Berkhof shows that "they comprise both lyric and didactic poetry. In the didactic psalms, God gives instruction through the poet and addresses Himself to the understanding; in the lyric, He reveals Himself through the emotions and spiritual experiences of the sacred poets, and directs Himself to the heart" (p. 154). In the interpretation of the Psalms, the author stresses the importance of studying the historical occasion when the Psalm was written, the character of the Psalmist, and the frame of mind in which he composed his song. "In view of the fact that the Psalms are not purely individual, but largely communal, they must be regarded as utterances of the regenerate heart, of the life that is born from God; and the interpreter should not rest satisfied until he understands how they, too, reveal God's will" (p. 154). In the interpretation of the Messianic Psalms, Dr. Berkhof states that careful distinction must be made between Psalms and parts of Psalms which are directly Messianic (such as Psalms 2, 22, 45, 110), and those that are indirectly Messianic (such as Psalms 72 and 39). In connection with the "Imprecatory" Psalms, he lists certain facts that should be taken into consideration.

One of the most important principles with which Dr. Berkhof deals is "The Bible as a Unity". In the light of present day modernism and dispensationalism, your reviewer would strongly commend this section to you. In a key paragraph, the author writes, "Both the Old and New Testament form essential parts of God's special revelation. God is the author of both, and in both has the same purpose in mind. They both contain the same doctrine of redemption, preach the same Christ, and impose upon men the same moral and religious duties. At the same time, the revelation they contain is progressive, and gradually increases in definiteness, clearness, and spiritual conception. As the New Testament is implicit in

the Old, so the Old is explicit in the New" (p. 135).

Dr. Berkhof believes in the verbal inspiration of the Bible and defends it nobly. He sets forth the Unity of the Sense of Scripture. He propounds certain basic principles: "The interpreter should carefully guard against the mistake of trying to illustrate a perfectly clear passage by one that is less perspicuous" (p. 80). "The interpreter should make it his aim to discover, not merely what message each book contained for the contemporaries of the author, but what permanent value it has, what word of God it conveys to all following generations" (p. 139). "A doctrine that is clearly supported by the analogy of faith cannot be contradicted by a contrary and obscure passage" (p. 166). It is easy to see from these representative quotations that the author is building a sound foundation. Principles such as these should lead to true interpretation.

There is a crying need today for a return to sane and Biblical Hermeneutics, and books of this caliber deserve a place in the thinking and in the libraries of the sincere students of the Word of God.

— Bruce C. Stewart

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: A STUDY MANUAL**, by Peter Y. De Jong. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1950, pp. 90. Paper cover, 60c per copy, \$6.00 per dozen.

This little paper-backed book is a handy study manual for individuals, for families, for Bible classes or discussion groups. It consists of 28 lessons, covering the Foundations, the Provisions, and the Practice of the Christian Life. Each lesson has two pages of teaching, a Scripture passage, questions on the lesson, and related questions for discussion.

The author expresses the purpose of the book in these words: "It can hardly be denied that there is among us as Reformed Christians of the twentieth century a lamentable weakness in the practice of the Christian life. It is true that no section of Christendom has grasped more clearly and expounded more consistently the wonderful truths which God has revealed concerning our salvation. We would glory in the sovereign grace of our triune God alone. And yet, how far short our practice falls of the ideal. . . . It may be that one of the chief reasons why we so easily forget the plain implications of the law of God lies in the fact that the practice of the Christian life is not as regularly and as zealously taught as its theory."

The book then goes on to study the Source, the Nature, the Pattern, the Struggle, the Dynamic, and the Goal of the Christian Life. It

points out the relationship between the Christian life and the Bible, Preaching, the Sacraments, Prayer, and the Church. The third section of the book emphasizes the place of the Law in the Christian Life; it gives a very fine treatment of each of the ten commandments; it studies the Christian approach to death and the life beyond the grave.

Of necessity, there is some overlapping between the lessons and also some superficiality; the two page limit which the author set might well be relaxed in his discussion of the Grace of God, or of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. Conciseness, however, has its place, and Dr. De Jong has said much in a few words.

The great value of the book is that it sets a definite course of study; it goes without saying that supplementary reading should be done for each lesson as well. Suffice it to say that I am using Dr. De Jong's book to good advantage in a discussion group in our church. I recommend it heartily to pastors and teachers as a most interesting and effective manual in the study and practice of the Christian life.

— Bruce C. Stewart

**THE DEITY OF CHRIST AND OTHER SERMONS**, by John Calvin. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 302. \$3.50.

The sermons in this volume were selected by Leroy Nixon, minister of Queensboro Hill Community Church, Flushing N.Y., and by him translated from the original French. Mr. Nixon is the author of "John Calvin, Expository Preacher", reviewed in the October-December, 1950, issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" (page 187). The latter book is itself a review of the method and content of Calvin's preaching, and quotes at length from the sermons included in this volume.

Any Calvinist would want to read "John Calvin, Expository Preacher". There should be greater value to the student in reading the sermons of Calvin themselves. Leroy Nixon has provided that opportunity by translating for the English reader this selection of twenty sermons from the thousand, approximately, which are available in French.

The first of the published sermons is "The Deity of Jesus Christ", with the text John 1:1-5 "The Nativity of Jesus Christ" is based upon Luke 2:1-14. There are nine sermons on the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Resurrection, from Matthew 26:36-28:10. These are simply entitled, "First Sermon on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ", etc. There are four likewise on "the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ", four on Pentecost, and a concluding chapter on the Final Advent. It is disappointing that Calvin's sermon on Acts 2:5-12 has been lost, so that we can be given only the first, third, fourth and fifth on Pentecost. A music student was once asked

how many symphonies Beethoven wrote, and answered: "Four: the first, third, fifth, and eighth!"

A volume of Calvin's sermons is not only source material for a study of Calvin's preaching; it is a great help in learning of Calvin's Saviour. Reading this book, one is impressed by Calvin's love for our Lord Jesus Christ. The sermons on the passion of Christ are most helpful. They encourage us in prayer, humility, and dependence upon Jesus for salvation. The book shows Calvin to be no conceited thunderer of judgment, as he is sometimes imagined, but a meek disciple of the Son of God, whom he believed died for his sins and rose again for his justification. Characteristic of his attitude is the closing sentence of nearly every sermon, "Now we shall bow in humble reverence before the majesty of our God."

Calvin evidently experienced no difficulty in deciding upon a text and theme for his next sermon. It was his practice to begin preaching with the verse following the verse with which he left off the last time, and his theme would be a continuation of the morning sermon. Nixon asserts that Calvin preached two hundred consecutive sermons on the book of Deuteronomy. A congregation today might not protest against such a procedure -- it would more likely stay at home after the first fifty. But Calvin was a man of the Book, and his congregation, many of them refugees from lands of persecution, was hungry for the Word.

If one were criticizing these sermons in general, in the manner of "student criticisms" as practiced in the seminary, he would observe that the introductions are unduly long; the items of emphasis are unrelated or obscure in their relationship. Indeed, the sermons are more "running commentaries" than pointed declamations. However, they are sparkling with pertinent comments, and can be read with confidence that the preacher is a believer in the inspiration of the Scriptures, and in the deity of Christ. This reviewer found them a little refreshing compared with some currently popular "daily devotional" comments.

— T. Richard Hutcheson

**Note:** Reviews of the following books, previously listed as "Books Received", will be published, D.V., in our April-June 1951 issue:

**THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES**, by Oswald T. Allis

**THE CASE AGAINST THE SOCIAL GOSPEL, THE CASE FOR THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST, THE CASE AGAINST THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, THE CASE AGAINST THE FEDERAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, THE CASE AGAINST MODERNISM, THE CASE AGAINST MODERNISM IN FOREIGN MISSIONS, THE CASE AGAINST COMMUNISM**, all by Chester E. Tulga

## BOOKS RECEIVED

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

**THE LIFE STORY OF DR. LEE S. HUIZENGA**, by L. J. Lamberts. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 194. \$2.50.

**THE BRETHERN OF THE COMMON LIFE**, by Albert Hyma. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 222. \$3.50.

**BIBLE LESSONS FOR JUNIORS: BOOK I**, by Andrew Vander Veer. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1950, pp. 38, paper cover. 75c per copy; \$7.50 per dozen.

**THAT YE MAY BELIEVE**, by Peter H. Eidersveld. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 172. \$2.50

**CHRISTIANITY AND CLASSICAL CIVILIZATION**, by Ralph Stob. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 198. \$3.00.

**BIBLE ANACROSTICS**, by Rose A. Huston. The Board of Publication of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, 1209 Boswell Ave., Topeka, Kansas. 1950, 8½ x 11¼ inches, paper cover with plastic spiral binding, pp. 62. \$1.00.

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## BLUE BANNER QUESTION BOX

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

### Correction:

The editor has received the following letter requesting correction of an erroneous statement on page 178 of the October-December 1950 issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life":

29 Lewis Street,  
Stornoway, Isle of Lewis,  
Scotland,  
Nov. 21, 1950.

Dear Friend:

I am surprised and annoyed to find that you include my name (p. 178 of current issue of "Blue Banner") among several who have accepted "the Amillennial view". This is NOT true and will create a wrong impression. I must therefore ask you to please insert a **disclaimer** in the "Blue Banner" as soon as possible. I find the Amillennial explanation of Rev. 20:1-10 as **unsatisfactory** as any of those from the Pre's and Post's.

Yours by Divine Mercy,  
A. W. Pink

### Comment:

We are glad to publish the above letter in order to correct, as far as possible, the misstatement of fact which was unintentionally made in our last issue. As it is not clear to us in what particular respects Mr. Pink's view differs from that commonly called "Amillennial" or "Non-millennial", we have invited him to prepare a

brief statement of his view for publication in the April-June 1951 issue of this magazine. We believe it is a fact that those who deny that there will be a Millennium or thousand year Kingdom on earth differ rather widely among themselves as to their exegesis of Revelation 20:1-10, so that we can hardly speak of any one interpretation of that difficult passage as "the" Amillennial explanation of it. We wish to express to Mr. Pink our sincere regret for the publication of the statement to which he has taken exception.—Ed.

### Question:

Does Scripture warrant aids to worship, such as candles, crosses, flowers, stained glass windows?

### Answer:

Insofar as any of the things listed in this query are regarded as "aids to worship", it may be confidently stated that Scripture does not warrant their use. The Scriptural principle of worship is that "The second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in his Word" (Shorter Catechism, 51). Candles, crosses, etc., are manifestly "not appointed in his Word" as ways of worshipping God. Therefore they are not to be used. With respect to flowers and stained glass windows, however, the case is somewhat different. Our Lord Jesus Christ preached and taught among the beauties of nature, and spoke of the lilies of the field as more

beautiful than "Solomon in all his glory". The editor of this paper can see nothing wrong in having a vase of beautiful flowers in the sanctuary where God is worshipped. These are not in any sense to be regarded as an "aid to worship", but simply a help to making the place of worship fittingly beautiful. As for stained glass windows, as every church building has windows, these have to be made of some kind of glass, either clear, frosted, or colored. The present writer can see no difference of principle between clear glass window panes, frosted glass panes or colored glass panes, any more than he can see a difference of principle between church pews left with the natural wood unpainted, and pews stained dark oak or walnut color and polished. Neither should be regarded as an "aid to worship" except in the sense that some kind of window panes are necessary to keep the weather out, and pews are necessary for sitting in. At the same time we believe that a church building should be beautiful, dignified and attractive. We see no reason why people who live in comfortable, attractive homes should worship the Most High God in a dreary, barn-like structure with bare floors, loose rattling windows, decrepit furniture and interior walls that have not been papered or painted for years. Yet we have seen a number of church sanctuaries in various places which presented a most depressing appearance. We quote from the "Directory for the Worship of God" adopted by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1945: "A building dedicated to the worship of God should be regarded as sacred, and nothing should be admitted into it which would tend to destroy its dignity in the minds of the congregation or community. Such a building should be consistent with the simplicity of the New Testament worship and as comfortable and beautiful as the circumstances of the people will permit. God is not honored by unattractive, neglected church property" (Chap. I, Sec. 6, page 306).

The present writer regards pictures in stained glass windows as undesirable and unwise, and pictures of Jesus (so-called) as absolutely improper and sinful. But mere stained glass in windows, either plain or arranged in geometrical designs, would not seem to violate any Biblical principle concerning the worship of God.—J. G. Vos.

#### Question:

Upon what does the Reformed Presbyterian Church base its opinion that baptism by sprinkling is acceptable as well as baptism by immersion? I have been informed that the word "baptism" comes from the Greek word "baptismos", which has only one meaning, namely immersion. At looking up the passage in Matt. 20:22 which in the King James Version quotes Christ as saying to the disciples, "Are you able . . . to be

baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with", I find that in the same passage the reference to baptism is omitted in the Revised Version. What is your opinion concerning this matter?

#### Answer:

The questions raised in this query, in general, have been quite fully discussed in past issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". We refer the reader to the following places: Concerning the meaning of the Greek words "baptizo" and "baptismos", Volume 2, 1947, pages 92 and 177; volume 3, 1948, pages 166-168. Concerning the essential meaning of baptism, Volume 3, 1948, pages 161-168. Concerning the question of whether baptism is necessary for salvation, Volume 3, 1948, page 167, questions 6 and 7; on the Roman Catholic view, pages 161-3, questions 1, 2, 7. We may also list here the following references on the question of Infant Baptism: Volume 2, 1947, pages 179, 180; Volume 3, 1948, pages 169, 170; Volume 4, 1949, pages 89, 169, 170.

With reference to Matt. 20:22, this is a "textual" question, that is, it concerns what is the correct text of the Greek New Testament. In all probability the American Standard and Revised Standard versions are correct, as over against the King James Version, in omitting the phrase about baptism. In any case, the reference to "baptism" in this verse does not refer to the sacrament of baptism, but is a metaphor to describe Christ's sufferings on the cross. Even if the phrase is a genuine part of the Greek text, the question would mean only: "Are you ready and willing to suffer death, as I am soon to suffer death?"

Jesus Himself never received Christian baptism; he received John's baptism, which was different from the sacrament of Christian baptism. At the time when Jesus was baptized by John, the sacrament of Christian baptism had not yet been instituted. That John's baptism and Christian baptism were definitely distinct, is proved by Acts 19:1-7, where a group of twelve persons who had already received John's baptism were required to receive, in addition, Christian baptism. It has often been claimed that John's baptism and Christian baptism were identical, and some have said, "I want to be baptized the same way Jesus was". But Jesus was baptized with the baptism of John, a temporary rite of the last days of the Old Dispensation, not with Christian baptism.

Those who hold that immersion is the only valid mode of baptism are often extremely insistent that they are right and that they alone are supported by the Greek New Testament against the overwhelming majority of Christians of all places and all ages of the Church. The fact is, however, that their claims are debatable at a number of points.

The basic meaning of the Greek words "baptizo" and "baptismos" is not immersion but washing or cleansing. The Greek text of Mark 7:4 speaks of "baptisms of cups, and pots, brazen vessels and tables" (the Greek word "baptisms" is in this verse translated "washing" in the King James Version). Surely it cannot be maintained that tables were cleansed by immersion. In Luke 11:38 ("And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner") the Greek text may be literally translated: ". . . he marvelled that he was not first baptized before the dinner". The Greek verb is the same one that is used for the sacrament of baptism. If "to be baptized" always means that the person must be entirely immersed in water, then the Pharisee in Luke 11:38 must have marvelled that Jesus did not take a complete bath before the dinner; but this is very improbable, and out of line with what is known of the customs of the Jews of those days concerning such matters. We believe that the essential meaning of the Greek words is washing or cleansing with water, and that the particular mode of application of the water is incidental.

As a matter of history, it is quite well known that immersion was common as the mode of baptism in the early Church. This does not prove, however, that immersion was the only mode of baptism practiced in the early Church, nor does it prove that immersion was regarded as the only valid mode of baptism. The Lord's Supper was first instituted and observed on a Thursday evening, in an upper room, with only men present; yet the time, place and the fact that no women believers participated are all incidental matters, not essential to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Similarly, the frequency of observance of the Lord's Supper, being not specified in the Bible, is an incidental and not an essential matter. The use of the elements of bread and wine, and the words of institution, on the other hand, are essential to the sacrament. Similarly, in the case of baptism, the use of water is essential, but we believe that the quantity of water and the particular mode by which it is applied to the person, are incidental. Historically there have been three modes of baptism, namely immersion, pouring and sprinkling. We believe these are equally proper and valid. — J. G. Vos.

**Question:**

Did John Knox adhere to the teachings of John Calvin? And do we Covenanters adhere to the teachings of John Knox, or do we adhere to both Calvin and Knox?

**Answer:**

John Knox, the great leader of the Reformation in Scotland, was a personal friend and pupil of the Reformer John Calvin at Geneva. There can be no doubt that Knox adhered to the teach-

ing of John Calvin, as did the entire Protestant Church of Scotland in Knox's day. John Knox was one of the "Six Johns" who compiled the Scots Confession of Faith, the first Protestant creed of Scotland, in 1560. This document is clearly Calvinistic in its theology. To say that John Knox and the Church of Scotland adhered to the teachings of Calvin does not mean, however, that they regarded Calvin himself as their authority. As true Protestants, they did not regard any man as their authority, but the Scriptures, the written Word of God, only. They adhered to the teachings of Calvin, not because of Calvin personally, but because they were convinced that the teachings of Calvin were eminently Scriptural. This was not a blind adherence to Calvin's teachings, but one that resulted from searching the Scriptures, as the Bereans did, to see whether these things were so. Nor does the fact that Knox and the Scottish Church followed Calvin's teachings mean that they necessarily followed every detail of Calvin's teachings. They adhered to the system of Christian theology known as "Calvinism" over against the rival systems of Lutheranism, Romanism, Socinianism (akin to present-day Unitarianism), and later, Arminianism. In the providence of God, John Calvin was the man who was raised up to formulate the doctrines of the Bible in logical, systematic form. This he did with remarkable ability and success, and this is undoubtedly the explanation of his extremely wide influence. If there is any one thing that characterizes Calvin and his writings, it is absolute loyalty to the Scriptures. Calvin took the Bible at face value, as the infallible Word of God, and treated it with the utmost reverence. He followed it wherever it led him, never trying to apologize for its teachings or explain away difficulties by human reasoning. The result was that he organized and developed the most consistent and Biblical system of Christian theology that the world had ever known.

There is no essential or important difference between the teachings of Calvin and those of Knox. In adhering to the teachings of Knox we are at the same time adhering to those of Calvin. Not only Knox but the whole Scottish Church of the Reformation era was nourished and built up by the doctrines of Calvinism, and largely by the writings of the great Genevan Reformer himself.

Of course, when we say that our Church adheres to the teachings of Calvin and Knox, we do not mean that these men are our authority in religion. The Bible is our authority. We mean that we find system derived from Knox and Calvin to be the most accurate and consistent interpretation of the teachings of the Bible, and that we therefore adhere to it as against the other systems which also claim to be true.

Christ promised His disciples that He would

send the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth (John 16:13). This promise, of course, was kept. Therefore it is certain that in the history of the Christian Church there is a line of truth, in fulfillment of Christ's promise. Somewhere amid the diverse theologies and the discordant teachings, a progressive development in the understanding and systematic statement of the truth of God revealed in the Bible, must exist. By studying the history of the Church and testing the various rival doctrines and systems by the Scriptures, we come to the conclusion that this line of truth or "line of orthodoxy" runs from the apostles, through the early church councils to the great North African bishop Augustine of Hippo; then from Augustine (through various men in the Middle Ages) to the Protestant Reformer Martin Luther and especially John Calvin; and from Calvin to the Puritan "divines"; and from the Puritans to the outstanding Reformed theologians of the nineteenth century—Kuyper, Bavinck, Charles Hodge, and others. In this "line of orthodoxy" there is a progressive development in understanding and systematically stating the truth revealed in the Bible. Thus the men who wrote the Westminster Confession of Faith followed the trail that had been blazed by Augustine, Luther and Calvin in understanding the Bible. This does not mean that Augustine, Luther and Calvin were never mistaken about any matter, for they certainly were, and in some particulars their teachings have been corrected by further study of the Word; also there has been progress in the development of some doctrines since their time. But the work and writings of these men constituted true progress in the age-long task of discriminating between truth and error.

The official doctrinal standards of our Church are of course not the writings of Calvin or Knox, but the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Testimony, etc., which the Church has formally adopted as statements of its faith. The mere fact that some teaching or opinion is found in the writings of Calvin or Knox does not imply that it is necessarily a part of the faith of our Church. Only those doctrines that are found in our official Confession of Faith and other standards are the professed faith of our Church. But, in the providence of God, it was Knox and especially Calvin that taught the Church a large part of what is today formulated in our official doctrinal standards. Our supreme authority is the Bible; our official, corporate interpretation of the Bible is set forth in our Confession of Faith and other doctrinal standards; and these in turn are based on the work of Calvin, Augustine and the early church councils in understanding and clarifying the system of truth revealed in the Bible. Other men labored, and we are entered into their labors. — J. G. Vos

#### Question:

If the Catholics are so dead wrong as many claim they are, why has God allowed the Roman Catholic religion to remain in existence for many hundreds of years? If they are so dead wrong, why have they been allowed to exist and expand? By fighting the Catholics we may be fighting against God.

#### Answer:

No Bible-believing Protestant should claim that the Roman Catholic Church is absolutely wrong about everything. We can open a Roman Catholic catechism and agree with everything through quite a number of questions and answers, and then we come to a place where the path divides and we no longer assent to what is stated. The Roman Catholic system is not wholly false; it includes many truths which are held by Catholics and Protestants in common.

The Roman Catholic system as it exists today is a mixture of truth and error. It is really a combination which has been derived from three sources: (1) Biblical Christianity; (2) Old Testament institutions taken over into the New Testament age (priesthood, altar, sacrifice, incense, etc.); (3) European paganism (worship of Mary and the saints, veneration of relics such as dead men's bones, observance of festival days such as Christmas and Easter, etc.). This hybrid system gradually developed through the Middle Ages as the Roman Catholic Church spread through Europe. This process involves a gradual but increasing departure from the truths of the Bible and from the pure, Biblical worship and government of the New Testament Church.

Although the Roman Catholic system as it exists today is a mixture of truth and error, we must add that the error predominates and determines the character of the system. This is because the error does not consist of mistaken beliefs about minor or incidental details, but about the pivotal or crucial points of Christian truth. Because error has triumphed at these pivotal points, the system as a whole is a false system, even though there are many elements of truth that can be discerned in it.

These pivotal points are: (1) the seat of authority; and (2) the doctrine of salvation.

As Protestants we believe that the Bible is the seat of authority for faith and life, that the Bible is addressed to all men, and that every man must read and study the Bible for himself and decide for himself what it means and what it teaches. Rome teaches that the seat of authority is the Church. Subordinately to the Church, Rome holds a double authority, namely, (a) the Bible; and (b) tradition. The supreme authority is neither the Bible nor tradition, but the living Church. This idea finally crystallized in the dog-

ma, proclaimed in 1870, of the infallibility of the pope. Because Protestants regard the Bible as their supreme authority, while Roman Catholics regard the Church as their supreme authority, it is extremely difficult to make any progress in controversy with Roman Catholics about religion.

As Bible-believing Protestants, we believe that salvation is wholly by the grace of God through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But Rome, on the other hand, teaches a salvation that is partly by God's grace and partly by our own human works. It is partly a gift of God's free grace, and partly earned or deserved by our own good works, or by the good works of the saints credited to our account. According to the Bible, especially the Epistle to the Galatians, salvation must be either by grace or by works, not by a combination of the two. To speak of salvation being partly by grace and partly by works is like speaking of a bridge that reaches almost, but not entirely, across a river. In the end, your getting across depends on your ability to jump; so a salvation that is partly by works is really just salvation by works, period. In the end, it depends on our own works.

A Roman Catholic Catechism asks the question: "Is grace necessary to salvation?" and answers it by saying: "Grace is necessary to salvation, because without it we can do nothing to merit heaven." Note that according to this we get to heaven by "merit", and we get "merit" by DOING something, and grace enables us to do it. This whole notion of human "merit" and "doing" having a place in salvation is contrary to the Word of God. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28); "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16): "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works. . . ." (Rom. 4:5,6; "FOR BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES: IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD: NOT OF WORKS, LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST" (Eph. 2:8,9). These texts and many others that might be cited are diametrically opposed to the Roman Catholic notion of "meriting heaven".

Another pivotal error of the Roman Catholic system is its sacerdotalism. Rome teaches salvation by sacraments in the hands of an official priesthood. It places the priest between the individual believer and his Saviour. This is contrary to the EVANGELICAL faith of the Bible, which teaches that God deals directly with each

person, and that the only mediator between God and men is Jesus Christ.

Because Rome gives false answers to the questions: How can I know what to believe and what my duty is? What must I do to be saved? Roman Catholicism is a false system. The fact that many strands of truth are interwoven with these errors does not alter the fact that the system, as a system, is false.

The query asked why, if the Catholic system is wrong, God has permitted it to exist, and even to expand, for so many centuries. This, really, is but a phase of the old problem of evil. Doctrinal error is just one form of evil. Why did God permit sin to enter the world in the first place? Why does He still permit the devil to deceive men and nations? Why did God allow the Roman Empire to persecute Christianity for more than two hundred years? Actually there are systems of error which are more completely false than Romanism, which God in His providence has permitted to continue and even to increase for longer periods of time. Buddhism is a false system from beginning to end, which today holds many millions of human beings in its power. It has existed for about two thousand five hundred years. Mohammedanism is another false system. It originated in the seventh century after Christ and is still going strong and gaining ground today, even in the United States of America (or so it is reported in the press). Why did God permit this? We can only say that God in His wisdom permitted evil, having purposed to order it to His own glory in the end.

Neither antiquity, numbers nor expansion is a criterion of truth. The Roman Catholic Church may be hoary with age, but that does not prove that its claims are true. Millions of people today are turning to Communism as their saviour, and Communism is certainly expanding, but that does not prove that its claims are true. We must realize that the Judgment Day has not yet arrived; the command to root the tares out of God's wheat field has not yet been issued; and Satan is still permitted by God to deceive the whole world, both men and nations (Revelation 12:9).

To those who are interested in a further study of this subject, the writer would recommend two books, both by L. H. Lehmann. The titles are: (1) THE SOUL OF A PRIEST (paper, \$1.50; cloth \$2.00); (2) OUT OF THE LABYRINTH (\$3.00). These books may be ordered from Agora Publishing Company, 120 Liberty Street, New York 6, N.Y., or from Bible Truth Depot, I. C. Herendeen, Swengel, Union Co., Pa. Dr. Lehmann was a Roman Catholic priest who finally left the Church of Rome for conscience' sake. He knew Roman Catholicism by experience, from the inside, in Ireland, Italy, South Africa and the United States. His books are accurate and intensely interesting, as well as free from all fanaticism, extreme statements and

(Continued on bottom of page 55)

# The Offense of the Cross

By J. G. Vos

**"If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offense of the cross ceased". Gal. 5:11.**

The word here translated "offense" is the Greek "skandalon", which first meant the trigger of a trap or snare, then an occasion of stumbling. Our word "scandal" is derived from it. The offense of the cross is the stumblingblock that keeps people from becoming Christians. It is the offense of the cross that makes Christianity different from all other religions. Only Christianity presents a crucified Saviour as the center of its system. It is the presence or absence of the offense of the cross that determines whether a movement or organization is truly Christian or not. If the offense of the cross is by-passed or toned down, it is not Christianity but a counterfeit.

It is the cross of Christ, not our cross, that is spoken of. The "cross" means the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ for sinners. This implies human guilt, depravity, inability to save self. It implies that salvation is not an attainment but a gift of free grace. It reduces us all to paupers before the holy God.

The cross of Christ is not a sentimental idea, but a horribly realistic one. There is nothing beautiful or lovely about the cross of Christ in itself; it is unspeakably dreadful. It stands for the righteous judgment and awful wrath of God against human sin. It stands for the curse of God upon the sinner. Christ was made a curse for us: for it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). But the cross also stands for the love and mercy of God. At Calvary, divine love and divine wrath meet. God so loved this wicked world that He gave His Son to suffer and die for sinners on the accursed cross.

The cross is an offense not merely because of its crudity, its cruelty and its shame. It is an offense to unsaved sinners even more because of what it implies concerning them. It cuts the root of human pride, pretension and self-righteousness. It eliminates all ground of human boasting. It leaves us nothing to claim, nothing to congrat-

ulate ourselves about. The cross will not let a man stand on his own feet before God. It will not let a man claim salvation by "doing his best" or "keeping the golden rule". All this is cut off at the root.

The cross is an offense to all non-Christian religion, to all apostate religion, to all pseudo-Christianity, to all legalism or moralism, to all formalism, to all Christless schemes of "character building", and to all the rest of the dismal array of human substitutes for salvation by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Today, more than ever, the cross is an offense. Men seek to evade it by theories that take the blood out of salvation and leave us a Jesus who was only an example, a martyr, a teacher. Thousands of theological books have been written in these attempts to get rid of the offense of the cross—the bare, bald truth that the Son of God suffered and died, His blood was shed, in bearing the wrath and curse of God as the Substitute of guilty and helpless sinners. Our age retains the name of the cross, but explains away its reality and power. Modern religion is really a bloodless faith. Because it is bloodless, it is also hopeless, and cannot save guilty men from sin and hell.

What the world hates, the saved Christian glories in. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). The offense of the cross, the hated sign of the substitutionary atonement, is the sign of genuine Christianity. We should never tone it down, minimize it, soft-pedal it, apologize for it. It must always be dominant in our religion. Christ is not preached aright unless His shed blood is emphasized as the only way guilty human beings can find peace with the righteous God. We can never advance beyond the cross; we can never outgrow it and go on to other things. It will always be central.

(Reprinted by permission from "The Covenanter Pastor")

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(Continued from page 54)

name-calling. To those who wish a shorter and less expensive book on the errors of Romanism we recommend BEING PROTESTANT, by Walter McCarroll, obtainable from The Covenanter Witness, 1209 Boswell Ave., Topeka, Kansas, at 35 cents per copy or \$1 for 3 copies. This is a paper-bound booklet of 71 pages which contrasts Roman

Catholicism with evangelical Protestantism at the salient points of difference between the two systems. A study of the books named will afford an intelligent understanding of the Roman Catholic system, preventing the blunders made by many Protestants because of their ignorance of Catholic doctrine.—J. G. Vos

## From "Lays of the Kirk and Covenant"

By HARRIET S. MENTEATH

Since from Herod's couch the slumber  
 Parted at the wise men's word,  
 Kings and rulers without number  
 Band themselves against the Lord!  
 Tolls a death-knell through their riot;  
 Shakes a terror 'neath their scorn;  
 And they seek, with vain disquiet,  
 For the Babe in Bethlehem born!  
 Hating still, in deadliest measure,  
 Who that rising sceptre own;  
 Marring all their pomp and pleasure  
 With the shadow of a throne!  
 True! They kneel with feigned behavior,  
 Myrrh and frankincense will bring;  
 Priest and Prophet own the Savior,  
 But—they crucify the King!  
 Wouldst thou hail an earthly Master,  
 Then the world would love its own!

Grasp thy banner-truth the faster—  
 See that no man take thy crown!  
 Hope thou not, then, earth's alliance;  
 Take thy stand beside the Cross;  
 Fear, lest by unblest compliance,  
 Thou transmute thy gold to dross!  
 Steadfast in thy meek endurance,  
 Prophecy in sackcloth on—  
 Hast thou not the pledged assurance,  
 Kings one day shall kiss the Son?  
 Oft thy foes may triumph o'er thee;  
 Tread thy carcass in the street;  
 Sing aloud the hate they bore thee—  
 Thou shalt stand upon thy feet!  
 Life through all thy veins returning,  
 In the sight of those who doomed—  
 And the Bush, for ever burning,  
 Never—never—be consumed!

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## J. G. VOS, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

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**"All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them."**

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Clay Center, Kansas

## *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,  
 Harken 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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## *The New Jerusalem*

(Author Unknown)

Jerusalem, my happy home,  
 When shall I come to thee?  
 When shall my sorrows have an end,  
 Thy joys when shall I see?

O happy harbor of the saints!  
 O sweet and pleasant soil!  
 In thee no sorrow may be found,  
 No grief, no care, no toil.

There lust and lucre cannot dwell,  
 There envy bears no sway;  
 There is no hunger, heat nor cold,  
 But pleasure every way.

Thy walls are made of precious stones,  
 Thy bulwarks diamonds square;  
 Thy gates are of right orient pearl,  
 Exceeding rich and rare.

Quite through the streets, with silver sound,  
 The flood of Life doth flow;  
 Upon whose banks on every side  
 The wood of Life doth grow.

Jerusalem, my happy home,  
 Would God I were in thee!  
 Would God my woes were at an end,  
 Thy joys that I might see!

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 6

APRIL-JUNE, 1951

NUMBER 2

## *Sketches from Our History* *Contending for the Faith Through the Ages*

### CHAPTER VI

#### THE DAWN OF THE REFORMATION

##### 1. The Church at the End of the Middle Ages

Between the death of the great African bishop Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 430) and the posting of Luther's 95 Theses on the church door at Wittenberg, Germany (A.D. 1517) — roughly a period of a thousand years — the Church had moved away from the truth of the Gospel rather than towards the truth of the Gospel. A false ideal of powerful centralized government controlled the Church, and it became a monarchy in which the pope claimed supreme power. The Church's worship became grossly corrupt, consisting largely of adoration of Mary and the saints, while faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour became weaker and weaker. Belief in salvation by human merit or good works became almost universal, and the pure Gospel of salvation by the free grace of God was all but forgotten. Prayers and masses for the dead became prevalent. Large elements of European paganism found their way into the Church, disguised only by a thin veneer of Christian terminology. The masses of the people were in spiritual darkness and gross ignorance; the Bible was almost an unknown book. Even the clergy were often ignorant, slothful and immoral.

Such conditions cried out for reformation. Many earnest Christians tried to reform the Roman Catholic Church from within, that is, without separating themselves from it. Particularly noteworthy were John Wycliffe of England and John Huss of Bohemia (Czecho-Slovakia). These men sought to reform some of the most glaring errors and abuses of the Church of Rome. They were not really Protestants, however, for they never separated from the Church of Rome. Huss throughout his life held some of the errors of the Church of Rome, and Wycliffe held some doctrines which both the Roman Catholic Church and orthodox Protestants would pronounce unsound.

##### 2. Martin Luther the Reformer

The first real Protestant was the German reformer Martin Luther, who was born of poor but pious parents in 1483. His father wished him to become a lawyer, and his early education was in that direction. At that time Luther's only knowledge of the Bible was the portions he had heard read in church services. The religious training which he had received only filled him with dread of the wrath of God. He thought of Jesus Christ not as a Saviour from sin but as a righteous Judge who would pronounce sentence of condemnation upon him unless appeased by good works and prayers to Mary and the saints. His soul was filled with the terror of the Law, while he wholly lacked the comfort of the Gospel of God's grace. He thought of salvation as something to be earned by the merit of human works, not as a free gift of God through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

While attending school in the town of Erfurt, Luther became quite depressed. Two events produced a profound impression upon his troubled soul: the sudden death of one of his friends, and a terrifying thunderstorm. In his state of mind bordering on despair Luther resolved to renounce all worldly ambitions and become a monk.

This decision was very unwelcome to Luther's father, who regarded the idle life of most of the monks of that time with great contempt. But in spite of his father's unwillingness, Luther entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt in 1505, at the age of about 22 years.

The life of a monk, however, did not bring peace to Luther's conscience. He was oppressed by the consciousness of a heavy burden of guilt, and did not see how it could be removed, for he did not yet know the secret of the forgiveness of sin. The medieval theology of a person saving himself by his own good works was all that he had been taught, and under the influence of this he engaged in severe penances and acts

of self-denial, by which he almost ruined his health.

The vicar or superintendent of the order, Johann von Staupitz, tried to point Luther to Christ as the source of forgiveness, and advised the young monk to study the Bible, which Luther did with great earnestness. It was only very slowly, however, that the truth of salvation by the free grace of God dawned upon his soul. In 1507 Luther was ordained as a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, and a year later he was appointed professor of philosophy at the new university of Wittenberg. Beginning in 1509 Luther lectured publicly on the Scriptures, starting with the book of Psalms. Soon he became publicly known for his devotion to the Bible. It was evident, too, that here was something strangely new in Luther's lectures and his preaching. Yet neither his hearers nor Luther himself realized the wide difference that existed between his message and the official teachings of the Church of Rome.

In 1510 Luther was sent to Rome to represent his monastic order, with another monk named Johann von Meckeln. Having always thought of Rome as the "holy city", Luther was very eager to go there, and he expected to find everything at Rome pure and holy. While enroute to Rome, the two monks visited a monastery of their order in Italy. To Luther's astonishment the Italian monks seemed to have practically no interest in religion, but only in worldly luxuries. Luther reminded them of their monastic vows, whereupon they became so incensed against him that he found it desirable to leave the city immediately.

On his first sight of the city of Rome, Luther knelt and said, "Hail thou holy city, yea, thrice

holy by the martyrs' blood which hath been shed within thee." But after he had seen Rome at closer range and had lived for a time in the "holy city", Luther discovered greed, hypocrisy, deceit and many other forms of sin on every hand. He found that Rome, instead of being a "holy city", was really a sink of iniquity, worldliness and vice. Later Luther said that he would not have missed this trip to Rome for a thousand florins, for it gave him a first-hand knowledge of religious and moral conditions at the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church. As an eyewitness, he could speak with authority.

Luther spent considerable time in Rome. Besides attending to the business with which he had been entrusted by his order, he went the rounds of the churches and other historic places of Rome. He also took some lessons in the Hebrew language from a learned Jewish rabbi.

Thinking that it would help him religiously, Luther decided to climb the steps of St. Peter's Cathedral on his knees, following the common custom of saying a prayer on each step. While he was doing this, suddenly a text of Scripture, "The just shall live by faith", flashed through his mind. This impressed him profoundly, for he realized the contrast between this text and his own efforts to gain eternal life by works of human merit. He came to realize that we cannot save ourselves by our own works or life or character; it is Jesus Christ that saves us, and we are to believe on Him as our only Redeemer. His heart now found peace, for he knew that Christ had borne the penalty for all his sins on the cross of Calvary.

(To be continued)

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## *The Scottish Covenanters*

### THEIR ORIGINS, HISTORY AND DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES

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

#### PART II

#### THE HISTORY OF THE COVENANTERS

#### CHAPTER III

#### THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIANS SINCE THE REVOLUTION

#### 4. The Division of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod, 1863.

From its origin to 1863 the Reformed Presbyterian Church had maintained the principle of political dissent from the British constitution. In 1863 a controversy arose over the question of the elective franchise. The Synod which was held in that year adopted the following motion:

"The Synod, having read the reports from Presbyteries and Sessions anent taking the oath of allegiance and exercising the elective franchise, find that all the Presbyteries and a majority of Sessions, confining themselves to the consideration of the point of exercise of discipline for the acts therein specified, have adopted said overture only to this extent. The Synod, therefore,

in accordance with these reports enacts that, while recommending the members of the Church to abstain from the use of the franchise and from taking the oath of allegiance, discipline to the effect of suspension and expulsion from the privileges of the Church shall cease, and earnestly enjoin upon all under their charge to have respect to this decision, and to follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another". This was equivalent to abandoning the position of political dissent, so far as the Church was concerned, and leaving it an open question for every member to decide for himself. On May 7th, 1863, the minority filed with the Synod a protest, signed by the Rev. W. Anderson and others, which stated: "We, the undersigned ministers and elders, members of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland, in our own name, and in the name of all adhering to us, do hereby protest against the decision now adopted as the law of the Church by the majority of this court, as opposed to the Word of God, and to the Testimony of the Church, and unconstitutional-ly adopted; and seeing that they have thereby abandoned, in regard to the matters referred to in that decision, the principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Church clearly set forth in her Testimony, to which we are all solemnly pledged, and have thereby departed from the Scriptural position which the Church has occupied for more than 170 years; we do hereby protest and claim for ourselves, and for those adhering to us, to be constitutionally the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland", etc. This was signed by three ministers and four elders. These continued their organization as a separate Synod, maintaining what had been the principles of the whole body before 1863.

##### **5. The Union of the Larger Reformed Presbyterian Synod with the Free Church, 1876.**

In 1863 negotiations were begun for the organic union of various Presbyterian bodies in Scotland. The negotiations broke on the rock of the question of the relation of the civil magistrate to the Church and to religion, and were abandoned in 1873. Before the breach occurred, a report was made by the Committee which had conducted the negotiations. This report, dated May, 1873, lists articles on which the various parties were agreed, and also articles which were not agreed upon, but which were distinctive of various Presbyterian bodies. The Churches involved were the Presbyterian Church of England, the Free Church of Scotland, the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church (larger body). Among the articles which were agreed upon were the following: 1. It was agreed that civil government is an ordinance of God, and that the magistrate like other men must be subject to Christ, and must regulate his conduct ac-

ording to Scripture. 2. That the civil magistrate ought to be a Christian, and ought in his official capacity to publicly further the Christian religion, and to be ruled by it in making laws, administering justice, swearing oaths, etc. 3. That it is not within the province of the civil magistrate to impose a creed or form of worship on his subjects, or interfere with the government of the Church, "It being the exclusive prerogative of the Lord Jesus to rule in matters of faith and worship". 4. Marriage, the Sabbath, and the appointment of days of national humiliation and thanksgiving, are practical instances to which these principles apply. 5. "That the Church and the State, being ordinances of God distinct from each other, they are capable of existing without either of them intruding into the proper province of the other, and ought not so to intrude. Erastian supremacy of the State over the Church, and Anti-christian domination of the Church over the State, ought to be condemned; and all schemes of connection involving or tending to either are, therefore, to be avoided. The Church has a spiritual authority over such of the subjects and rulers of earthly kingdoms as are in her communion, and the civil powers have the same secular authority over the members and office-bearers of the Church as over the rest of their subjects. The Church has no power over earthly kingdoms in their collective and civil capacity, nor have they any power over her as a Church. But, though thus distinct, the Church and the State owe mutual duties to each other, and acting within their respective spheres, may be signally subservient to each other's welfare". 6. "That the Church cannot lawfully surrender or compromise her spiritual independence for any worldly consideration or advantage whatsoever. And further, the Church must ever maintain the essential and perpetual obligation which Christ has laid on all His people, to support and extend His Church by free-will offerings".

The distinctive articles presented by the Reformed Presbyterian Committee were as follows: "1. While friendly alliance ought always to be kept in view as the normal relation of the Church and state, the question whether, or to what extent, the realization of it in any given case ought to be attempted, cannot lawfully or safely be determined without taking into account the circumstances, character, and attainments of both; particularly the degree of unity which the Church has attained, and the extent to which the State has become Christian. 2. While the Church is bound to uphold civil government, founded on right principles, and directed to its appropriate ends, nevertheless, as a public witness, for the truth and claims of Christ, it ought to testify against whatever is immoral in the civil constitution, or iniquitous in public policy. 3. When the Civil magistrate sets himself in habitual opposition to, and abuses his power for

the overturning of religion and the national liberties, he thereby forfeits his right to conscientious allegiance, especially in countries where religion and liberty have been placed under the protection of a righteous constitution. 4. While it is not lawful for the magistrate to grant aid to the Church from the national resources, merely from motives of political expediency, it is competent for the Church to accept aid from those resources, provided that the terms in which it is given do not involve the Church in approbation of that which is evil in the constitution of the State; but the national resources cannot lawfully be employed for the support of truth and error indiscriminately".

The Original Secession Magazine, commenting on the foregoing, spoke as follows: "It is not altogether unnoticeable here that the Reformed Presbyterian Synod's Committee, though the representatives of those who so long claimed to be Covenanters, par excellence, has entirely ignored the Covenants, and the doctrine of covenant obligation, in their statement of principles given in to the Joint-Committee. In acting thus they have the credit of adopting a wise and consistent policy. For, to human view (though with God all things are possible) they might about as soon expect to remove the Alps from their present basis by any lever power which they could employ, as raise the United Presbyterian Church and the Free to the platform of the Second Reformation, and an advocacy and avouchment of the Covenants; and to live up a testimony for their continued obligation and against the perjury of the Church and kingdom in the manifold violation of these solemn deeds, and virtual repudiation of their obligation".

The negotiations failed, as the divergent views held by the Churches involved proved to be irreconcilable. They show, however, the desire for union which existed at that time and which resulted in the union of two of the bodies involved in 1876. These were the Free Church, which had originated in the Disruption of the Established Church in 1843, and the larger of the two Reformed Presbyterian Synods. On May 25th, 1876, at Edinburgh, the two bodies entered into organic union. Seventy ministers and elders, representing the Reformed Presbyterian Synod, dissolved their judicatory to unite with the Free Church. Only one congregation of the larger Reformed Presbyterian Synod elected to remain out of this union. This left the smaller of the two bodies into which the original Reformed Presbyterian Synod had divided in 1863 to continue alone as the legitimate continuation and spiritual succession of the followers of Cameron, Cargill, Renwick and Macmillan. The Free Church, with which the larger body united in 1876, united with the United

Presbyterian Church to form the United Free Church in 1900, and the United Free Church united with the Established Church in 1929, so that the Reformed Presbyterians who adhered to the larger Synod in 1863, in 1929 found themselves in organic union with the Established Church of Scotland, after 239 years of dissent from that body, from 1690 to 1929.

The smaller of the two bodies resulting from the division of 1863 continues to the present day as the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The following is a brief statement of the present distinctive position of that Church, as found in the "Summary of the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland", published by the Synod in 1932: "The great cardinal truths of the Gospel are professed not only by the various Churches, great and small, into which Presbyterian Scotland is divided, but also by other evangelical denominations. They teach that the Son of God died for sinners and that salvation is free to all who will repent and believe on Him.

"It is the duty of Christ's Church, however, to confess all His truth, and to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded. Under this conviction Reformed Presbyterians, while joyfully esteeming other Christians as brethren in the Lord, abide by the distinctive doctrines and practices which they have been taught to regard as in accordance with the Scripture and the mind of Christ. For this reason they cannot conscientiously surrender their separate position as a Church, which is the indispensable organ of their testimony.

"Of the various sections of Scottish Presbyterians, none has ever proposed to stand with the Reformed Presbyterians on the ground of political dissent. They alone as a denomination divest themselves of responsibility for the denial by all our present-day Parliamentary parties of Christ's claim to national obedience. They are the only religious body in Scotland who maintain that one cannot be true to Christ as Lawgiver and King of Nations and at the same time be a party to the present British Constitution or give their vote to Parliamentary candidates who accept that Constitution. As believers in the Headship of Christ and in the Covenants of our forefathers, we cannot help to place in power parties or persons who avow the political principle that atheists, agnostics, Romanists and other enemies of the Protestant faith are entitled to sit in the Legislature and hold places of power and trust in the government of this professedly Protestant nation".

(To be continued)

# The "Imprecatory" Psalms

By J. G. Vos

(Continued from last issue)

**Note:** This article was originally published in *The Westminster Theological Journal* (Volume IV, Number 2, May 1942) under the title *The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms*, and is reproduced by permission of *The Westminster Theological Journal*.

Turning, then, from the various solutions of the ethical problem of the Imprecatory Psalms which have been suggested, the following is proposed as a solution of the problem along a different line, namely, by a criticism of the presuppositions on which the usual objections to the Imprecatory Psalms are based. The problem, viewed with respect to the principles involved in the Psalms themselves, was defined thus: How can it be right to wish or pray for the doom or destruction of others as is done in the Imprecatory Psalms? Subordinately to this, the question was raised: Is it right for a Christian to use the Imprecatory Psalms in the worship of God, and if so, in what sense can he make the language of these Psalms his own? The usual objections to the Imprecatory Psalms assert that it is not right to wish or pray for the doom or destruction of another, and that therefore a Christian cannot consistently use these Psalms in the worship of God, nor make their language his own except perhaps in a figurative sense far removed from their original and proper meaning. The fundamental objection, or major premise of the argument, then, is that it is immoral to wish or pray for the doom or destruction of another. This objection is, perhaps often unconsciously, founded upon two presuppositions. The first is, that the welfare of man is the chief end of man; and the second, that man has rights which even God is bound to respect.

If the first presupposition, that the welfare of man is the chief end of man, be granted, then it follows necessarily that it is wrong to wish or pray for the doom or destruction of any human being. In that case, we should only pray for the present good and eternal salvation of every member of the human race, regardless of how wicked a particular person may be, or how great an offence and occasion of stumbling to the people of God. I John 5:16, however, states that "there is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request", and the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Q. 183, states that prayer is to be made "for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter; but not for the dead, nor for those that are known to have sinned the sin unto death". In other words,

there may exist cases in which the glory of God and the welfare of man conflict, and in such cases it is wrong to seek the welfare of the particular persons involved.

This presupposition, that the welfare of man is the chief end of man, is essentially humanistic, is contrary to theism, and overlooks the fact that man is not self-existent but a created being who is therefore dependent on God and who does not exist for himself but for God's glory. If man is the creature of God, then it follows that the chief end of man is to glorify God. Only by denying that man is the creature of God can it be successfully maintained that the chief end of man is the welfare of man. No doubt many of those who object to the Imprecatory Psalms, and who are influenced by the presupposition under discussion, do really believe in God in the theistic sense, but have been greatly influenced by the present-day non-theistic view of life, and in particular by the substitution of the theory of evolution for the Biblical doctrine of the creation of man; and this influence may often have been so great as to render the viewpoint of such persons practically (though not theoretically) atheistic. This non-theistic view of life is exceedingly common and popular today and has penetrated the preaching and church life, as well as the newspaper and magazine theology, of our time far more than is commonly realized. The proposition that the chief end of man is the welfare of man is unchallenged in many circles, and it is this point of view that is at the bottom of most, if not all, of the objections to the Imprecatory Psalms. Our answer to those objections, then, must in the first place be a challenge to the legitimacy of this presupposition. The chief end of man is to glorify God, not to seek the welfare of man. These two are of course not mutually exclusive; the glory of God includes the welfare of man in general, but Scripture teaches that particular cases may, and do, exist where the two conflict, and in such cases the believer must seek the glory of God and not the welfare of man which is in conflict with the glory of God.

The second presupposition underlying the objections to the Imprecatory Psalms is that man has rights which even God is bound to respect. This presupposition tacitly, perhaps unconsciously, regards the moral law as something which exists independently of God himself, something to which God as well as man is subject. It is of course quite true that God will never act con-

trary to the moral law, but this is simply because the moral law is an expression of the nature or character of God, and God cannot deny himself (2 Tim. 2:13). Whatever God does is in harmony with the moral law, simply because God does it, for God cannot act contrary to his own nature of which the moral law is an expression; but this is a very different matter from the notion that the moral law is something above and beyond, which exists independently even of God himself, and which God is bound to obey in the same sense that man is bound to obey it. The very idea of obligation to obey the moral law implies a higher power to whom man is responsible. In the nature of the case there can be no higher power to whom God can be responsible. None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? It follows that many things which would be wrong for man to do, are right when done by God. A man who throws a bomb in a crowded street and kills a number of people may be guilty of murder, but when God in his providential government sends an earthquake and destroys thousands or tens of thousands of people he is wholly righteous in doing so. It is wrong for man to put the children to death for the sins of the fathers, yet God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those that hate him, and it is worthy of note that this truth is affirmed in the very Decalogue which is the summary of the moral law given by God to man as a rule of life (Ex. 20:5; Deut. 5:9).

Man is a created being and therefore possesses no rights except those conferred on him by God his Creator. On the subject of human rights, there is much confusion of thought at the present time. Many hold that in creating man, God somehow limited himself, and was thereupon under obligation to respect certain rights possessed by man. Some maintain that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are inalienable right which not only man, but even God, is bound to respect. According to this view, not only would it have been wrong for David to slay his enemies by his own hand, but it would also have been wrong for God to bring this about in answer to David's prayers as recorded in the Imprecatory Psalms. Against such notions, the sovereignty of God must be affirmed. God and man are not equals, nor are they both responsible to some higher power or principle. God is the Creator, and man is the creature. Man is responsible to God, but God is not responsible to man. Man, therefore, has no rights whatever except those conferred on him by God; that is to say, man has no rights at all in the absolute sense, no rights to which appeal can be made in a controversy between man and God.

Furthermore, man as sinful, by the Fall, has forfeited even those rights conferred by God at his creation. Since the Fall, man is in the posi-

tion of an outlaw and a rebel against God's authority, possessing no legal status whatever and debarred from claiming rights of any kind. Man is not merely a creature, but a sinner, and is therefore totally devoid of rights which God must respect. In other words, whatever of good man may ever attain can come from no other source than the free, sovereign and unmerited grace of God.

It is true, of course, that by the common grace of God even sinful man has rights which other men are bound to respect, that is to say, civil rights which have validity within human society; but sinful man has no rights which God is bound to respect. Therefore while it would be wrong for man, acting on his own initiative and independently of commands from God, to plan, wish or pray for the destruction of the wicked, these would not be wrong if done by God himself or by man in obedience to specific commands of God. But such is precisely the character of the Imprecatory Psalms, for these Psalms were given by divine inspiration and were therefore not simply the personal desires or petitions of men, but prayers offered under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit of God.

It is necessary to insist that evil and evil men exist only by the providential permission of God and not by any right of their own which they can claim before God. Satan's entire domain is a kingdom of usurpation. Sinful man does not have the right to a breath of air to inhale, a drop of water to drink, or a particle of food to eat, in God's world. He has, indeed, a civil right to these things, by God's common grace, which right must be respected by his fellow men. But life and the things which make it possible come ultimately not from man but from God, and sinful man has no right to these things which he can plead before God. It follows, then, that God may at any time, and in perfect harmony with his righteous nature, take away the life of sinful man, either by means of the forces and laws of nature, or by his commands addressed to men, as for example when the children of Israel were commanded to exterminate the inhabitants of Canaan. But if it is right for God to destroy evil and evil men in his universe, or to command his servants to effect that destruction, then it was also right for him to inspire the Psalmists to pray for that same work of destruction, and it was moreover right for the Psalmists to offer such prayers. It has already been shown from the history of David's life that the destruction of evil men which is prayed for in the Imprecatory Psalms was not motivated by a desire for personal revenge. It was, on the contrary, a judicial vindication of the name of God for which David prayed. This is shown, for example, by Psalm 59:13, where David prays: "Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be; and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth".

Ultimately, then, it was right for the Psalmists to pray for the destruction of the wicked because they were praying for God to do something which it was in harmony with God's nature for him to do, because the act of God which was prayed for conflicted with no actual rights of men, and because the prayers themselves were uttered by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and therefore must have been right prayers and could not have been immoral. The total destruction of evil, including the judicial destruction of evil men, is the prerogative of the sovereign God, and it is right not only to pray for the accomplishment of this destruction, but even to assist in effecting it when commanded to do so by God himself.

Scripture teaches that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), and since every man has sinned, every man is deserving of death, both physical and eternal. Even infants have sinned in Adam, who represented them in the Covenant of Works, and are therefore deserving of eternal death, though they are without actual transgressions. The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines murder as "the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatever tendeth thereunto" (Q. 69). When life is taken away justly, then, it is not murder but execution. Man, of course, does not possess the right to take away the life of his fellow man for every cause. But every man stands before the judgment bar, not only of his fellow men, but of God. Before that divine tribunal he stands guilty, a rebel, an outlaw, wholly without rights. Because he is guilty, he deserves to die. It is appointed unto men once to die (Heb. 9:27), and in the end God brings about the death of every human being. Whether this is done by natural causes or in some other way is immaterial, so far as the question of God's righteousness is concerned. Ordinarily, man's death occurs as the result of natural causes, such as disease, accident or old age. At other times, man's death may be caused by murder, that is, by unjust violence on the part of man. Even though man is unjust in committing the murder, God is righteous in permitting it to be committed, for though the person murdered had a civil right to life which should have been respected by his fellow men, he had no moral right to life which he could plead against God. In still other cases, man's death may be caused by lawful violence on the part of man, according to the provision of Genesis 9:6, and in such cases it is not murder but execution. The extermination of the Canaanites by the children of Israel, for example, was not murder but execution, because the persons killed had forfeited all right to life, and because the Israelites were not engaged in an ordinary war of conquest but in a divine program in which they were acting by the specially revealed commands of God for the administration of divine justice (compare Gen. 15:16).

The destruction of the wicked which is prayed for in the Imprecatory Psalms, then, is not murder but execution. These Psalms do not seek the unjust destruction of the life of man; on the contrary they are in essence an appeal to the justice of God and a prayer for that justice to execute sentence upon the wicked. The whole question of the morality of such prayers hinges upon the question of the compatibility of the thing prayed for with the nature of God; and since the prayers were inspired by the Holy Spirit, there need be no doubts on this point. The Imprecatory Psalms, considered as prayers of David and the other Psalmists, must be regarded as free from suspicion of immorality. God is both sovereign and righteous; he possesses the unquestionable right to destroy all evil in his universe; if it is right for God to plan and effect this destruction, then it is also right for the saints to pray for the same.

There remains to be considered the subordinate question whether it is right for Christians to use the Imprecatory Psalms in the worship of God, and if so, in what sense they can make the language of these Psalms their own. It must of course be recognized that inspiration and special revelation ceased with the completion of the documents which form the New Testament. Since that time, the saints have enjoyed illumination by the Spirit of God, but not inspiration or special revelation. It must also be recognized that only by special divine revelation could it be known with absolute certainty that a particular person was a reprobate. Beyond doubt many of those who are very wicked persons today will later in their lives be transformed by the grace of God and become saints. God has not revealed who the elect are. It is possible that a person may know concerning himself that he has committed the sin unto death. It is also possible that a Christian may in certain exceptional cases be able to judge with high degree of probability whether a particular person has or has not committed that unpardonable sin. But man can never attain infallible knowledge except by divine revelation. The Biblical account of the transformation of Saul the persecutor, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord (Acts 9:1), into Paul the apostle, who could say "to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21), should serve as a warning against all positive assertions that even the wickedest opponents and persecutors of Christianity in our own day are certainly reprobates. While the Psalmists in composing the Imprecatory Psalms undoubtedly had particular persons in mind, and while the apostle Peter speaking by the Holy Spirit quoted a portion of Psalm 109 and declared that it referred to Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:16, 20), still it remains true that in no way except by divine revelation could absolute certainty about the reprobation of a particular person

be attained. Consequently if the Imprecatory Psalms are regarded as prayers for the ETERNAL doom of wicked persons, no Christian could apply these Psalms to any particular person, or pray other prayers of the nature of the Imprecatory Psalms and offer such petitions to God for the eternal doom of particular persons. To do so would be presumptuous for it would involve a claim to infallibility or special revelation. It is not necessary to state that it would be sinful to pray for the eternal doom of an elect person, even in the case of an elect person who is still living in sin and in rebellion against God. Such prayers can be offered only with reference to the reprobate, never with reference to the elect.

We are, however, by no means warranted in assuming that the Imprecatory Psalms are necessarily prayers for the ETERNAL doom of the wicked. They may also be regarded as prayers for severe temporal judgments upon the enemies of God. In the case of temporal judgments involving the physical death of wicked persons the eternal doom of those persons would inevitably follow, for the opportunity for repentance would be cut off forever. In such cases the Imprecatory Psalms, even if regarded as prayers for eternal doom, would be applicable because such persons would be the objects of divine reprobation. But the Christian could not offer such petitions to God for the physical death of particular persons, because he does not know which wicked persons, in the secret counsel of God, are reprobates and which are included in the election of grace.

The Christian can, indeed, pray for severe temporal judgments upon the enemies of God, but in doing so he must leave to God the application of such petitions to particular persons

because only God can discern between wicked persons who are the objects of reprobation and wicked persons who are included in the election of grace.

It may be concluded, then, that the Christian can use the Imprecatory Psalms in the worship of God, and can offer them as prayers to God, for temporal judgments short of death upon those enemies of God who in the divine secret counsel are elect persons, and for judgments including physical death and issuing in eternal death upon those enemies of God who in his secret and unrevealed counsel are reprobates. Even the prayer for the death of the wicked person who is a reprobate is not only not immoral but is in itself righteous and is, in fact, included in the pattern of prayer commonly called "The Lord's Prayer" which teaches us to pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). God's kingdom cannot come without Satan's kingdom being destroyed. God's will cannot be done in earth without the destruction of evil. Evil cannot be destroyed without the destruction of men who are permanently identified with it. Instead of being influenced by the sickly sentimentalism of the present day, Christian people should realize that the glory of God demands the destruction of evil. Instead of being insistent upon the assumed, but really non-existent, rights of men, they should focus their attention upon the rights of God. Instead of being ashamed of the Imprecatory Psalms, and attempting to apologize for them and explain them away, Christian people should glory in them and not hesitate to use them in the public and private exercises of the worship of God.

(The End)

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## *A Misunderstood Scripture*

"Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). This text of Scripture has been terribly misused. It is a favorite text for baccalaureate services, anniversaries of various kinds, and the like, and on such occasions it is practically never used in its true meaning. This text serves such speakers as a convenient peg on which to hang their optimistic liberal belief in human progress, or a handy springboard from which to jump into a discourse on faith in our fellow men.

Such speakers seize upon the word "vision" in this text, and proceed to read into this word a meaning which is entirely foreign to the word as it occurs in the Bible. The speaker may say, for example, that the community needs "men of vision" in order that its future prosperity and

welfare may be provided for. A man who has thought of ways to beautify and improve his town, and enthused others with his ideas until they were put into practice, will be called a "man of vision". In industry, a man who has found a profitable use for a product which had formerly gone to waste, and so brought about an increase in wealth and employment, will be called a "man of vision". In short, the word "vision" is used by after dinner speakers and preachers of baccalaureate sermons to mean a kind of combination of brains and ambition, a compound made up of intelligence and optimism.

Without such "vision", the audience is told, "the people perish". The country cannot get along without such "men of vision". If their brains and ambition, their intelligence and op-

timism, are lacking, the nation will stagnate and the life of its people will atrophy. Thus the impression is given that a text of the Bible teaches the popular American philosophy of "success", and that what keeps the people from perishing is an optimistic faith in man and his powers. This, it must be pointed out, is a terrible abuse of the Scripture.

The word "vision" originally meant ordinary eyesight. It is derived from the Latin verb "video" which means "to see". Then the word was used also to mean "that which is or was seen", strictly the object of vision. In the third place, the word "vision" came to be used for a MENTAL representation of objects or events, such as a dream, in sleep or in a special psychic state. Finally, the word "vision" is used in the Bible and in orthodox Christian literature to mean a special revelation of God given to one of the prophets in Bible times. Visions formed one mode of God's special revelation to His servants; in such visions, objects and events not physically present were impressed upon the consciousness of the prophet as if they were objectively present before his bodily eyes. Such a vision might be of events remote in time or place, as when Daniel saw visions concerning the Roman Empire, the kingdom of Christ and the end of the world, and as when Ezekiel in Babylon saw in vision events in Jerusalem. We should realize that such visions were supernatural revelations from God, and therefore they were quite distinct from the experience even of Christian people today; and moreover they had absolutely nothing in common with the modern popular idea of "vision" as "optimism" or "intelligent ambition". Ezekiel and Daniel were indeed "men of vision", but this was because they were the recipients of supernatural visions from God. They were not "men of vision" in the sense of the after dinner speaker who says: "Mr. Jones, President of the Blank Bank and Trust Company, is a man of vision, who is a credit to our city".

The Hebrew word for "vision" in Proverbs 29:18 is CHAZON, a word which occurs 34 times in the Old Testament. In every one of these instances it means a vision in the sense of a representation of objects or events to the mind of a person. Of these 34 occurrences, one (Isa. 29:7) speaks of "a dream of a night vision" as something transitory and impermanent; four (Jer. 14:14; 23:16; Ezek. 12:24; 13:16) speak of visions

which the false prophets claimed to have seen. The remaining 29 occurrences of the term all speak of supernatural visions seen by the true prophets of the Lord. Every one of these 29 texts means by "vision" A SPECIAL, SUPERNATURAL REVELATION FROM GOD TO ONE OF HIS SERVANTS.

The same word for "vision" (CHAZON) is used in 1 Samuel 3:1, "And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision". That is, at that particular period of Old Testament history, direct revelations from God were few and far between. The verse uses the term "vision" as equivalent to "the word of the Lord", that is, special revelation from God. When Proverbs 29:18 says that "Where there is no vision, the people perish", this means that where there is no revelation of truth and duty from God, the people perish. They perish, because they do not know what they ought to believe, nor what their duty is. The people's knowledge of truth and duty came from the instruction of the prophets, who received it by vision or revelation from God.

Today God no longer reveals Himself to prophets by visions; both prophets and visions ceased with the completion of the Scriptures. Today the special revelation of God is preserved in permanent form in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. It is still true today that "Where there is no vision, the people perish", but the relevance of this today is that WHERE THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD, THE HOLY BIBLE, IS UNKNOWN OR UNHEEDED, THE PEOPLE PERISH. In Eli's day (1 Sam. 3:1) the Word of the Lord was "precious", that is, scarce. There is no need for it to be scarce today. In our country, at any rate, it is not that the Bible is not available, but the fact that people's hearts are hardened and indifferent to it, that occasions their perishing.

The next time we hear a baccalaureate sermon on the text "Where there is no vision, the people perish" in which the speaker takes the word "vision" as meaning "intelligent optimism and ambition", let us NOT leave the building saying "Wasn't that a fine sermon! Wasn't it inspiring!" Rather, let us pity the speaker, who has substituted human progress for Christianity; and let us pity the hearers, who came for bread, and received only stones. — J. G. V.

Can peach renew lost bloom,  
Or violet lost perfume,  
Or sullied snow grow white  
As overnight?  
Man cannot compass it;  
Yet never fear!

The leper Naaman  
Shows what God will and can  
God who worked there is working here.  
Wherefore let shame, not gloom  
Betinge thy brow;  
God who worked then is working now.  
— C. G. Rossetti

## *Religious Terms Defined*

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

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

**FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD.** The knowledge of God by which, from all eternity, He has known all things that will ever come to pass. This foreknowledge of God is based upon His own decrees of foreordination, and is not in any way contingent or dependent upon acts of His creatures. (See Westminster Confession of Faith, II.2).

**FOREORDINATION.** God's determination, from all eternity, of every fact in the universe, including every event that takes place in time. (God's foreordination is not based upon His foreknowledge, but upon the counsel of His own will. Eph. 1:11. Westminster Confession of Faith, III.1,2; Shorter Catechism, 7).

**FORGIVENESS OF SINS.** That act of God (included in JUSTIFICATION), by which the sinner's guilt is no longer imputed (reckoned) to him, and the corresponding penalty is therefore not inflicted upon him. Forgiveness of sins is possible only because of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the sinner's Substitute, to whom the sinner's guilt was imputed by God, and by whom the sinner's penalty was vicariously borne.

**FORMALISM.** That perversion of Christianity in which emphasis is placed upon the mere

external observance of the ordinances of worship, while the heart remains unaffected by the power of godliness (2 Tim. 3:5). Formalism affects all churches, not only those with an elaborate ritualism, but also those which insist upon Scriptural purity of worship.

**FREE AGENCY.** The capacity of rational beings, including man, for making decisions and performing actions in accordance with their own nature or character, without constraint from outside their personality. (The term "free agency" is more correct than "free will", for the latter may imply that the will can choose independently of the person's nature or character, which is not true. Free agency means only freedom of the personality from EXTERNAL constraint; it does not mean freedom of the will from the personality as a whole. The unsaved sinner is a free agent, but because his nature is sinful, his free decisions and acts are always sinful too).

**FUTURE LIFE.** The "world" or "age" to come, which will follow the present age in which we are now living. The present world is the world of HISTORY; the future world will be the world of ETERNITY. Scripture divides the life of man into "this world (age)" and "the world (age) to come"—Matt. 12:32; Eph. 1:21; etc. The future life is "the life which is life indeed" (1 Tim. 6:18, ARV).

**GNOSTICISM.** The general name given to the teachings of a number of sects, in the time of the early Church, which claimed possession of a deeper knowledge of truth than was possessed by the orthodox Church and its members. Gnosticism was largely derived from heathen religion and philosophy. It taught that the God who created the world was not the Supreme Being, and that evil is identified with matter.

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## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

"The doctrine of an eternal purpose of God is the foundation upon which all the teaching of the Bible is really based. Back of all the events of human history, back of all the changes in the inconceivable vastness of the universe, back of space itself and time, there lies one mysterious purpose of Him to whom there is no before or

after, no here or yonder, to whom all things are naked and open, the living and holy God."

J. Gresham Machen

"The Christian man finds in the Bible the very Word of God. Let it not be said that dependence upon a book is a dead or an artificial thing. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was

founded upon the authority of the Bible, yet it set the world aflame. Dependence upon a word of man would be slavish, but dependence upon God's Word is life. Dark and gloomy would be the world, if we were left to our own devices, and had no blessed Word of God. The Bible to the Christian is not a burdensome law, but the very **Magna Charta of Christian liberty.**"

J. Gresham Machen

"It is perfectly true that no mere man can pay the penalty of another man's sin. But it does not follow that Jesus could not do it; for Jesus was no mere man but the eternal Son of God."

J. Gresham Machen

"Wrestle, fight, go forward, watch, fear, believe, pray; and then ye have all the infallible symptoms of one of the elect of Christ within you."

Samuel Rutherford

"Christ's cross is the sweetest burden that ever I bore; it is such a burden as wings are to a bird, or sails to a ship, to carry me forward to my harbor."

Samuel Rutherford

"I have had many things in my hand and I have lost them all; but whatever I have been able to place in God's hand, I still possess."

Martin Luther

"If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battle-field besides, is merely flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

Martin Luther

"God's choice and Christ's salvation run parallel. So God's choice saveth none but such as Christ is anointed to save, and God seeth us to be saved."

Richard Sibbes

"A man may paint fire, but he cannot paint heat. A man may dissemble actions in religion, but he cannot affections. Love is the very best affection of truth. A man may counterfeit actions; but there is none that can love but the child of God."

Richard Sibbes

"Now, farewell, all dear friends! I hope the Lord will have a glorious Church in Scotland, and that He will raise His glory out of the ashes of a burnt Covenant. Now, farewell sun, moon, and

stars! Farewell, holy Scriptures! Oh! I am going to a life where I shall no more be troubled with a body of sin or death. Oh! I am going to a mansion of glory that my Lord has prepared for me. I shall have a crown of life; because I have been, by my blessed Lord's assistance — though I slipped aside — made faithful to the death. Now, welcome, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou hast redeemed me by thy price, and by thy power. Oh! Lord of Hosts, into thy hands I commit my spirit!"

James Skene (Written in prison in Edinburgh, Scotland, November 30, 1680, the day before he was hanged for his loyalty to Jesus Christ)

"I bless the Lord that these thirty years and more I have been at peace with God, and was never shaken loose of it; and now I am sure of my interest in Christ and peace with God as all within this Bible and the Spirit of God can make me; and I am no more terrified of death, nor afraid of hell, because of sin, than if I had never had sin; for all my sins are freely pardoned and washen thoroughly away, through the precious blood and intercession of Jesus Christ."

Donald Cargill (From his last words, spoken just before he was hanged for his loyalty to Jesus Christ, at Edinburgh, Scotland, July 27, 1681)

"Nothing will induce me to form an impure church. 'Fifty added to the church' sounds well at home, but if only five of these are genuine, what will it profit in the Great Day?"

David Livingstone

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## *None Other Lamb*

By Christina G. Rossetti

None other Lamb, none other Name,  
None other Hope in heaven or earth or sea,  
None other Hiding-place from guilt and shame,  
None beside Thee.

My faith burns low, my hope burns low,  
Only my heart's desire cries out in me:  
By the deep thunder of its want and woe  
Cries out to Thee.

Lord, Thou art Life tho' I be dead,  
Love's Fire Thou art, however cold I be:  
Nor heaven have I, nor place to lay my head,  
Nor home, but Thee.

# *Psalm Fifty*

## *A Summons from Our Covenant God*

By the Rev. Frank D. Frazer

**"The Almighty, God, Jehovah hath spoken, And summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down. From Zion, the crown of beauty, God caused his light to shine. Our God cometh, and doth not keep silence: A fire devoureth before him, And is very tempestuous about him. He calleth to the heavens above, And to the earth, that he may judge his people: Gather to me my saints, the COVENANTERS OF MY COVENANT UPON THE SACRIFICE" (verses 1-5).**

It is the voice of Jehovah, the Unchangeable God of the Everlasting Covenant. Once before His people were gathered to Him at MOUNT SINAI, HIS THRONE OF LEGISLATION. "And the appearance of the glory of Jehovah was like devouring fire on the top of the mount." Neither did He then keep silence, but "there were thunders and lightnings and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud"; and all the people trembled when they heard His voice speaking to them out of the fire. He declared to them the law of His covenant. They answered, "All that Jehovah hath said we will do and be obedient." So the covenant of Jehovah was then and there confirmed, according to the tenor of His words, by the BLOOD OF THE COVENANT that flowed from THE SACRIFICE.

But the people of God have proven unfaithful to their promise. They are now summoned to MOUNT ZION, HIS THRONE OF JUDGMENT. "Gather to me MY SAINTS", that is, those upon whom God had set His love; those upon whom He has showed mercy, to the end that they, in loving gratitude, might be devoted to His service. They had accepted the covenant as He gave it, and He calls them "COVENANTERS OF MY COVENANT ON THE GROUND OF THE SACRIFICE". But they have not kept His commandments. They must now face the facts before the throne set on the Mercy Seat above the tablets of the Law.

This is not the judgment of the nations at the last great day. It is an indictment of the people of God before that day come, that they may still have time to repent. The heavens and the earth have seen all that the people of God have done, so they are called to be the witnesses. And the heavens, where God is known so well, already attest the justice of His administration: "And the heavens declare his righteousness; for God is Judge; HE alone" (verse 6).

That He who now appears as Judge is the same as He who gave the Law admits of no question. The controversy is with those who under cover of pious pretending have been insincere in heart and life.

### THE CHARGE OF FORMALISM

**"Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: God, even thy God, am I. Not because of thy sacrifices do I reprove thee; Nay, thy burnt-offerings are before me continually. I would not take a bullock out of thy house, Nor he-goats from thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, And the cattle, by thousands on the mountains. I know every bird of the hills; And that which roameth the field is with me. If I were hungry I would not tell thee; For the world is mine and the fulness thereof. Would I eat the flesh of bulls, Or drink the blood of he-goats?" (verses 7-13).**

Do you, as the heathen, imagine that I am a beast? You have brought the appointed sacrifices, but you have done it as those who know not God. You have the crude superstitions of them that have forgotten God; the imbecile credulity of them that have abandoned their faith in God. You worship you know not what, though you were shown my glory in the way of my salvation. Here are the forms, but they are empty. Where is the thankfulness that there is a way of access to God for a sinner? Where is the obedience that characterizes all that belongs to the way of His salvation? Where is the understanding that prompts the praise? the love that prompts the obedience?

I am God, Creator and Possessor of heaven and earth, and of all that is in them. Everything you have I gave you. I am your God, not because you chose me, but because I chose you and loved you and made the atonement for you. I gave you your sacrifices to be memorials and types of my redeeming love and faithfulness, but in offering them you have senselessly supposed that you were putting me under obligation to you. I gave you your sacrifices to be tokens of your faith and obedience, but you have believed a lie, and have not paid your vows.

### ADMONTION

**"Offer unto God the sacrifices of thanksgiving; And to the Most High pay thy vows; Then call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (verses 14, 15).**

"Man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart." Sacrifices without thankfulness and the desire to obey are abominable to Him, deserving only of His wrath and curse. Yet, in wrath He remembers mercy. His judgments are already due, yet His love delays, as it were, His hand. The day of trouble is sure to come, but there is still a way of escape.

Here is a promise for us upon whom the day of trouble has cast its shadow. Over and above all our personal, family, and local troubles, we face a great national emergency, along with the other nations of the earth. Our rulers and leaders know not what to do under the threat of a powerful, Godless, inhuman foe, such a foe as may be the rod of God's anger. Only God can save us. All others are crying to us for help. Only God offers help. But if we do call upon God at such a time, we must do so with thankful acknowledgment of His way of salvation, which lies in the way of obedience to His commandments. Are we willing to glorify Him in the way He has appointed, or are we merely wanting to get ourselves out of trouble?

#### THE CHARGE OF HYPOCRISY

**"But to the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes? And that thou hast taken my covenant in thy mouth? THOU, yes THOU hast hated instruction, And cast my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief thou didst agree with him, And with adulterers has been thy portion. Thy mouth thou hast given over to evil, And thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest; against thy brother thou speakest; In the way of thy mother's son thou puttest a stumbling-block. These things thou hast done, and because I kept silence you imagine I am a being like yourself. I will reprove thee, and set these things in order before thine eyes" (verses 16-21).**

The "wicked", as frequently in the Psalms, are not the heathen outside the covenant society, but those within. They are the enemies within the gate, more to be feared than those at a distance. While they repeat the words of the covenant, and pretend to be the people of God, they are the fifth-columnists and saboteurs of the church. They are more or less openly involved in violations of the laws of God. Violations of the Eighth, the Seventh, and the Ninth Commandments are specified (in verses 17-19), because it is with these, principally, that the work of destruction is begun and carried on.

Unfaithfulness to God quickly shows itself in unfaithfulness to brethren. "Thou sittest"; that is, Thou sittest in a position of honor, in a seat of authority; perhaps "in Moses' seat". "Thou speakest against thy brother", especially against the true and faithful brother who so loves his brethren that he urges them to keep the com-

mandments of God and walk in His way of salvation. "It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling shall come, but woe unto him through whom they come! It were better for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble."

This is a true indictment of liberalism, always modern, as it operates in the church today. It gets itself seated in high places. Then with the lowest of men it attacks the rights of property and devises ways and means of legalizing stealing, it invades the sanctity and security of the home in the name of freedom of self-expression; it minimizes faith in God and explains away the Ten Commandments; it fills the land with its propaganda of deceit, under color of humanitarianism, which, though Christless, is called Christianity. But the affinity of modernism within the church and Godless Socialism without does not escape the eye of God. The refuge of lies shall be swept away.

"These things hast thou done, and because I kept silence"; because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, they come to the blasphemous conclusion that God is like themselves; that He approves, or at least does not care what they do. But God replies, "I reprove thee, and set these things in order before your eyes." They can no longer be hid. Unless there be repentance soon, the sentence shall be executed.

#### ADMONITION

**"Now consider this, ye that forget God, Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver: He that sacrificeth thanksgiving glorifieth me; And he who thus orders his way, To him I will show the salvation of God" (verses 22,23).**

The judgments of God are imminent. But once more He holds out the loving offers of His mercy. He gives further opportunity that we may render in sincerity the thanksgiving and obedience we owe, and His grace makes possible.

But formalism and hypocrisy blind the eyes and dull the conscience. Be not deceived by the double-talk and half-covered insinuations of supposedly Christian teachers who cry, Peace, peace, when there is no peace; who tell us that Socialism is a new name for the Kingdom of God; that Communism is bringing the good to our social and political life that Christianity has somehow failed to give. They show what they are when they raise doubts in the way of faith, and cause the weak to stumble; when they seek to win favor by making light of sin, and when they interpret the doctrines of God's Word so as to confuse and mislead.

The instruction of this Psalm abides for us in the present emergency. It has lost none of its power to convict, none of its authority to admonish. Dealing with the formalists and hypocrites in Zion, its startling summons is meant to be heard around the world. There is no duty so commonly neglected, even among professing Christians, as thanksgiving for the way of salvation in Christ. At this season of the year many of us are called to the observance of the Lord's Supper, also named "the Eucharist", "the Thanksgiving". May it be just that for us. This sacrament is also a covenanting ordinance for renewal of our covenant obedience. Let it be so kept.

We are human, body and soul. We require some outward forms with which to give expression to the things of the spirit. The forms of New Testament worship are as few and simple as possible, yet we are still in danger of allowing them to become what sacrifice and offering became to the Jews of old — empty forms; and then of using them as a cloak for our sin. Let

us see to it that they are filled with the love and gratitude to God which they are fitted to convey. In becoming members of the church, in becoming servants and officers of the church, we have taken vows of obedience. Let us renew these vows, seeking grace and strength to pay them. "To obey is better than sacrifice". All true religion, all acceptable worship may be comprehended in these two things, GRATITUDE and OBEDIENCE, answering to the MERCY and the LAW of God. God's charge against His people is that they have not rendered these. What shall we do? Thankfulness in the heart is the only cure for formalism. New obedience is the only cure for hypocrisy.

Are we really COVENANTERS OF HIS COVENANT ON THE GROUND OF HIS SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF FOR US?

(Note: Mr. Frazer's series of studies in the Psalms will be continued in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". — Ed.)

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## *Studies in the Epistle to the Romans*

### LESSON 1

#### THE INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE. 1:1 to 1:17

The Epistle of Paul to the Romans may be divided into two main sections, as follows:

1. Doctrinal Section. Chapters 1-11.
2. Practical Section. Chapters 12-16.

We can accept this division of the book for the sake of convenience. But we should realize that the doctrinal section is really very practical, and the practical section is really quite doctrinal. Perhaps a better way of division would be to say that the whole Epistle is both doctrinal and practical, but that chapters 1-11 deal with the doctrine and practice of the Way of Salvation, while chapters 12-16 deal with the doctrine and practice of the Christian Life.

We may take as the theme of the first eleven chapters THE GOSPEL WAY OF SALVATION. In discussing this theme, the Apostle Paul first takes up THE NEED FOR SALVATION, in chapters 1, 2 and the first 20 verses of Chapter 3. The first 17 verses of chapter 1 are an introduction to the Epistle. The rest of chapter 1, beginning with verse 18, sets forth the truth that humanity is hopelessly lost in sin and guilty before God. This is for the purpose of laying the groundwork for his treatment of the way of salvation. We shall first consider the Apostle's introduction and then see what he says about the need for salvation.

#### Paul Introduces Himself and his Message

Paul's Epistle to the Romans was written about the year 58 A.D. from Corinth in Greece. The apostle, at the time of writing this Epistle, had never been in Rome. Thus he speaks in verses 10 and 13 of his desire to visit the church at Rome, and of his repeated intention of doing so — an intention which was frustrated by circumstances over which he had no control.

Note what Paul calls himself. He uses three words to describe himself. The first is "servant" (verse 1) — "a servant of Jesus Christ". The Greek word ("doulos") means "bondservant" or "slave".

The second term is "apostle" (verse 1) — "called to be an apostle". "Apostle" means an official, accredited messenger, someone who is commissioned and sent to do something. Paul was called to be an apostle when he was "separated unto the gospel of God"—he became a messenger of the Gospel.

The third term is "debtor" (verse 14) — "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise". He was Christ's bondservant or slave, and a DEBTOR to his fellow men, a debtor because he owed them the Gospel message with which the Lord had entrusted him.

So much for what Paul says by way of introducing himself to a church which had never heard him preach nor seen his face. Now let us see what Paul says about his message, which he calls briefly "the gospel of God".

First, this message is no NOVELTY, no new-fangled philosophy invented by men, for it was promised long before by the prophets in the Holy Scriptures, the books of the Old Testament (verse 2). What Paul preached was simply the true fruit and development of what had already been set forth long before in the Old Testament Scriptures. This shows how wrong is that popular modern notion which asserts that the New Testament Gospel is something radically new and essentially different from the message of the Old Testament. The essential message of the Old Testament is identical with that of the New, the great difference between the two being that the Old Testament looks forward to a promised and coming Redeemer, while the New Testament speaks of the Redeemer who has already come and wrought His great work of redemption.

In the second place, Paul's message was a message ABOUT JESUS CHRIST: Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. . . " (verse 3). Paul was not preaching salvation by character, nor salvation by good works, nor salvation by culture and education. He was not trying to "appeal to people's better nature", nor to advocate salvation by "spiritual values" and "high ideals". There were plenty of people in his day and age who proclaimed that type of message, but Paul was not one of them. His message was not a way of self-salvation; it was a way of salvation BY A SAVIOUR. It was a message ABOUT CHRIST, and he tells us so at the very beginning of his Epistle.

Furthermore, there is not the slightest doubt as to WHAT Christ it was that Paul proclaimed. He did not proclaim Jesus simply as a good man, or a great teacher, or a noble example, or a martyr for his principles. No, the Christ whom Paul preached was the DIVINE Christ. He was human, too, for he was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh", but that was not all; that was only His human nature. In addition to His human nature, He had another nature, His DIVINE nature, here referred to as "the Spirit of holiness", in contrast to "the flesh". He was "declared to be the Son of God with power" according to His divine nature, by the resurrection from the dead. His rising from the dead did not MAKE Him the Son of God, for He always was that, but it DECLARED Him to be the Son of God. Paul did not preach the weak Christ of modern liberal theories; he preached the divine Christ of the Scriptures.

In the third place, the message Paul preached is A UNIVERSAL MESSAGE. It is to be published and accepted throughout the entire world, "for obedience to the faith among all nations" (verse 5). It is not for the Jews only, but for the whole world, without regard to national or racial

barriers. Paul himself proposed to proclaim this message both to the Greeks and to the barbarians (verse 14), to the limit of his opportunities. Obviously, the Apostle Paul was a believer in foreign missions.

In the fourth place, the message Paul preached was a POWERFUL message. He was not ashamed of it, for it had the power of God back of it. Unlike the doctrines and philosophies of the Greeks and the Romans, the Gospel that Paul preached was not mere human speculation and theorizing; it was a message of truth and it struck home with tremendous power, the power of God unto salvation, in the case of every person who accepted the message. It was a saving, life-changing message, a message involving "the righteousness of God" (verse 17). Those who accept this message obtain the righteousness of God through their faith in the Redeemer. Paul closes this introductory section of the Epistle with a quotation from the Old Testament, "The just shall live by faith". This statement of the Scripture would one day become famous as the keynote of the Protestant Reformation; indeed, it is really the keynote of the Biblical doctrine of salvation. Taken originally from Habakkuk 2:4, the statement is quoted repeatedly in the New Testament (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). The person who understands the true meaning of these words, "The just shall live by faith", understands the true meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the way of salvation and the Christian Faith. As we proceed further in the study of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, we shall learn more of the meaning of this wonderful statement.

#### Questions:

1. How is the Epistle to the Romans commonly divided, and how many chapters are there in each of the divisions?
2. What can be said in criticism of this common way of dividing the Epistle?
3. What is the theme of the first eleven chapters of Romans?
4. When was the Epistle to the Romans written?
5. Where was Paul at the time when he wrote this Epistle?
6. What is the literal meaning of the word for "servant" used by Paul in speaking of himself in 1:17?
7. What is the meaning of the word "apostle", and when was Paul called to be an apostle?
8. What did Paul mean by calling himself a "debtor" in 1:14?
9. How does Paul guard against the idea that his Gospel was something new?

10. In what respect are the Old Testament and the New Testament the same and in what respect do they differ?

11. How did Paul's Gospel differ radically from the other messages of his day?

12. What do we learn from 1:3,4 concerning the Christ that Paul preached?

13. What expression in 1:3 speaks of the human nature of Christ?

14. What expression in 1:4 speaks of the divine nature of Christ?

15. What is the bearing of Christ's resurrection on His divine sonship?

16. How does 1:5 show the obligation to support foreign missions?

17. What power did Paul's message have back of it, which the philosophies of his day lacked?

18. From what place in the Old Testament is the statement "The just shall live by faith" quoted?

19. Besides Romans 1:17, where in the New Testament is this statement, "The just shall live by faith", quoted?

20. What is the importance of the statement "The just shall live by faith?"

## LESSON 2

### THE NEED FOR SALVATION. 1:18 to 3:20

#### A. Humanity is Hopelessly Lost in Sin and Guilty Before God. 1:18-32.

In this section of Paul's Epistle to the Romans we have a very terrible, dark picture of the sinfulness of the human race placed before us. First of all, Paul tells us about God's attitude toward human sinfulness: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (1:18). God's righteousness is contrary to human sin. Paul lays this down as an axiom. The rest of his argument in this Epistle depends upon it.

"Who HOLD the truth in unrighteousness". The Greek word for "hold" really means WITHHOLD, RESTRAIN, or HOLD DOWN. We might translate the phrase, "Who interfere with the truth in unrighteousness". Against those who do that, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven". We hear little about the wrath of God today. Some people even say that we should not use such an expression; that we should only speak of God's love, not of God's wrath. But the Bible speaks of God's wrath. It tells us that God's wrath is revealed from heaven against human sin.

First, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven in the human conscience, that still, small voice within us which tells us when we are doing what we know to be wrong. But people harden their hearts, and ignore their conscience, and go on in their wicked way. So God speaks in another way, with a louder, sterner voice, the voice of EVENTS. Then come wars, and rumors of wars, until men learn that the wages of sin is death. The four horsemen of the Apocalypse ride across the earth with their trail of bloodshed, famine and pestilence. These things do not come by chance; they are the voice and judgment of God, revealing the wrath of God from heaven against man's sin.

Sin is not a figment of the imagination; sin is a reality. God's wrath against sin is not imaginary, but terribly real. Men may try to forget it, they may close their minds to it, they may evade it, but it will follow them no matter what they do. They cannot get away from God and God's wrath against sin.

Our own day looks lightly on sin. The 19th century almost eliminated the idea of sin from people's thinking. The same 19th century, with its proud belief in human goodness and human progress, thought that civilization had outgrown war. But human wickedness was still the same. There were two terrible world wars in less than 30 years, and now there is a still more terrible third world war looming on the horizon. If anyone doubts the reality of human wickedness, the present world situation ought to be enough to convince him of it.

#### Mankind is Entirely Without Excuse. 1:19,20

It is human nature to try to find excuses for our sins and failings. It has been so since the time of Adam and Eve. Adam tried to place the blame on Eve: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12). Eve tried to blame it on the devil: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:13). And so on down through the ages, sinners have tried to disclaim responsibility and to take refuge in excuses and alibis. But Paul insists that sinners are "without excuse" (1:20). The human race is in a condition of ungodliness and unrighteousness, and is without excuse.

And why? Because even without the Bible, mankind had a revelation from God in the book of nature. Even without the light of Scripture, it was possible to know something about the true God. This revelation in the book of nature was universal, it was world-wide, it spoke about

the true God to every human being everywhere.

The revelation of God in the book of nature included two parts. The first part is mentioned in 1:19, "Because that which may be known of God IS MANIFEST IN THEM". This is a revelation of God in the human heart and conscience. The second part is outside of us — the great world of nature round about us — the starry heavens, the vast, created universe. As the Psalmist said, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). Just so, Paul here says that: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, BEING UNDERSTOOD BY THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (1:20).

Of course, the revelation of God in the book of nature is not a complete revelation. It does not tell people anything about the way of salvation; it does not tell anything about a Saviour who suffered and died on the cross as the Substitute for sinners; it does not tell of God's saving grace. But it does tell something about the true God. In Paul's words, it tells men of "his eternal power and Godhead". That is, it tells men that there is a God, and that He is an eternal and almighty Being. It tells men enough about the true God to leave them without excuse.

If there is an eternal, almighty God, a God who has created all things, including the human race, then plainly it must be our duty to serve and worship Him. That much may be known simply from the book of nature, without the Bible. So the revelation of the true God in nature left the human race without excuse, because when mankind went on, deeper and deeper into sin, it meant that men were SINNING AGAINST THE LIGHT. Men were rejecting the light God had given them, the light of nature.

It is an axiom of human law that "ignorance of the law is no excuse". But in the case of the human race sinning against God, no person could claim ignorance of the law and the divine Law-giver. Men were sinning in spite of the law, sinning even though the law was known through God's revelation in nature.

Even the heathen people, in the dark regions of the world where the Bible has never penetrated, have a certain knowledge of God and the law of God from the light of nature. The law of God, as Paul tells us in chapter 2 of this Epistle, is written on their own hearts.

Thus far we have considered two truths, namely, (1) that God's wrath is revealed from heaven against human sin; and (2) that mankind is entirely without excuse, because the true God has revealed Himself in nature. The rest of chapter 1 is devoted to a description of the effects of sin on the human race.

#### Questions:

1. What does 1:18 tell us of God's attitude toward human sin?
2. What is the meaning of the word "hold" in 1:18?
3. What is conscience and how does it reveal God's attitude to sin?
4. When men ignore the voice of conscience, what louder voice speaks of God's attitude to sin?
5. What does the present world situation show concerning human wickedness?
6. When did sinners begin to try to find excuses for their sins?
7. Why is the human race without excuse for its sin?
8. What two parts are included in God's revelation in nature?
9. Why is God's revelation in nature not a complete revelation? What truths does it not speak of?
10. What truths concerning God may be known from His revelation in nature?
11. What does the existence of God's revelation in nature imply concerning human sinning?
12. What subject is dealt with in the rest of chapter 1, after verse 20?

### LESSON 3

#### THE NEED FOR SALVATION. 1:18 to 3:20, Continued

##### A. Humanity is Hopelessly Lost in Sin and Guilty Before God. 1:18-32, Continued

##### The Effects of Sin in the Human Race

Paul now takes up the effects of sin in the human race. First he discusses the RELIGIOUS effects of sin, and then he discusses the MORAL effects of sin.

Human sin results in false religious beliefs. False religion results in wicked life and conduct. Wicked life ends in the divine sentence of DEATH.

First, then, let us look at the religious effects of sin on the human race. The revelation of God in the book of nature was terribly misused by men. Instead of leading men to rever-

ence and worship God, to glorify God and be thankful to God, it became twisted and distorted into the heathen religions of the world.

Religion is universal in the human race. Even the atheist really has a religion — he worships himself. But whence came the many religions with their numerous gods and idols? The evolutionist is ready with an easy answer. He says the heathen religions are just stages in the slow, steady evolution of religion, from a crude belief in spirits, to the worship of one God. It is an easy explanation, but it is not the true explanation. For the earliest and oldest religion was MONOTHEISM, the worship of one God. We know this not merely from the Bible, but from the facts of human religions. In China, for example, the oldest known religion was a worship of one supreme God. The numerous gods and idols worshipped by the Chinese today, in their various religions, are a later development, a corruption of their earlier worship of one God.

In Romans 1:21-23 Paul tells us the real origin of the world's heathen religious systems. They originated from perversion of God's revelation in the book of nature. God's revelation in nature was clear enough, but something terrible had happened to the human race. In Paul's words, "They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (1:21,22).

If you look through amber-colored glasses, everything you see will be amber-colored. If you look through blue glasses, everything you see will appear blue. God's revelation in the book of nature was clear and plain, but something had happened to mankind's spiritual vision. The human race had fallen into sin, and thereafter it looked at the book of nature through colored glasses. What it saw was distorted and spoiled. "They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

We often think of the moral effects of the fall into sin — of what the fall of the race into sin did to people's moral sense. We realize something of the depravity and wickedness which came as the result of the sin of Adam and Eve. But we tend to forget that that is only part of the picture. It is true that the fall corrupted our moral sense and made us wicked; but that is not all. The fall not only made us wicked; it also made us FOOLISH. It had an effect, not only on our heart and conscience, but also ON OUR MIND, ON OUR THINKING.

Paul is here telling us of the effects of the fall on the human mind, of what the fall did to man's ability to think straight. He says that the result of the fall was that man's "foolish heart was darkened", and so on. Though re-

garding himself as very wise, man had become extremely foolish. He could no longer see straight nor think straight in matters of religion. He looked in his own heart, and then he looked out on the world of nature, and then he became an IDOLATER. Seeing the sun, he became a sun-worshipper. Seeing the stars, he began to worship them. Seeing the moon, he regarded it as a god and worshipped it. He worshipped the heavens, instead of worshipping the God who created the heavens.

Taking another look at himself, man became a man-worshipper. He "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (1:23). Man had been created in the image of God, but after the fall he sought to reverse the order, and began to make for himself gods fashioned in the image of man. The old myths of Greece and other countries show us what kind of gods man invented for himself. The gods were not only like their makers—they were sometimes even worse than their makers. There was no kind of wickedness or crime that the Greek gods and goddesses were not involved in. Decent people in ancient Greece were ashamed of the stories about their gods.

Idolatry, worshipping false gods and images, is the most degrading practice that the human race has ever engaged in. Of all the sins and evil practices of the heathen, there is none worse or more degrading than the practice of worshipping idols. The Bible says this about man-made idols: "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them" (Psalm 115:8). Idolatry drags man down, and down, and down. He becomes a slave to falsehood, superstition and fear; he cannot emancipate himself. Some people think that the heathen religions with their temples and rites are quaint and romantic. They do not know what they are talking about. The heathen religions are unspeakably evil and terrible. God's Word gives a true estimate of them in Deut. 32:32, "For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter. Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps". That is a true appraisal of the false religions of the world.

But false religions are not limited to the age-old false religions of the heathen world. We have false religions right here in America in our own day, not to mention the other nations of the world. The outstanding false religion of today is COMMUNISM. For Communism, in spite of its atheistic character and its claim to be against all religion, is itself really a religion, for it claims supreme devotion of all its followers. People are even willing to die for their devotion to Communism. A faith that can call forth such loyalty and such sacrifices is certainly a religion.

Many people in America are deeply concerned about the tremendous growth and expansion of

Communism throughout a large part of the world. But what do they have to put in its place? Those that are not Christians have nothing but another false religion to put in place of Communism—the false religion of Humanism, or **FAITH IN MAN**. This is called by various names; sometimes it is called “the brotherhood of man”; sometimes it is called “democracy”; sometimes it is called “progress”; sometimes it is called “service”; and sometimes it is called “the American way of life”. All these, without Jesus Christ, are just another false religion. Yet people put their religious faith in them.

There is only ONE true religion, and that is the religion of the Bible, the religion of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. All others are false and will be proved false in the end.

#### Questions:

1. What effect should God's revelation in nature have had on the human race?
2. What was the actual effect of God's revaluation in nature?
3. What is the real origin of the heathen religions of the world?
4. How do evolutionists explain the heathen religions?
5. How do we know that this evolutionistic explanation is false?
6. What was the oldest known form of religion in China, and what change took place in later times?
7. What was the effect of the fall on the human mind?
8. Was the fashioning of gods in the image of man a sign of religious progress, or was it a sign of religious corruption?
9. What was the character of the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece?
10. What is the effect of idolatry on the worshipper?
11. What does Psalm 115 say about idols and idolaters?
12. What does Deuteronomy 32:32 teach concerning the heathen religions?
13. What is the outstanding false religion of the world today?
14. Why is it correct to say that Communism is a religion?
15. What is Humanism, and why is it not an adequate remedy for Communism?

### LESSON 4

#### THE NEED FOR SALVATION. 1:18 to 3:20, Continued

##### A. Humanity is Hopelessly Lost in Sin and Guilty Before God. 1:18-32, Continued

##### The Moral Effects of Sin

In the previous lesson we studied the religious effects of the fall into sin. We shall now consider the **MORAL** effects of the fall on the human race. The fact is that false religion leads to bad conduct and wicked living in the end, and wicked living ends in destruction. Wicked living is the result of false religious beliefs.

Many people today say that beliefs do not matter very much; that what counts is whether a person lives a good life. But according to the Bible there cannot be a good life unless there is first of all a true belief. We should note that Paul first discusses the **RELIGIOUS** effects of sin, and then after that he discusses the **MORAL** effects of sin. Many people today would say that the order should be reversed; that the moral effects are more important, and come first; and the religious effects are less important, and subordinate to the moral effects of sin. But it is not that way in God's Word. The Apostle Paul, inspired of the Holy Spirit in writing this Epistle, discusses the religious effects of sin first, and regards them as of the most basic impor-

tance; whereas he discusses the moral effects of sin afterwards, and regards these as the results of the religious effects of sin.

Human sin results in false religious beliefs and practices. False religion results in wicked lives. Wicked lives end in the divine sentence of death. Such, in brief, is the argument of the Apostle Paul in this first chapter of Romans.

If there is any absurd notion that is widely held in America today it is the notion that men can gather grapes of thistles — that a false belief and a good life can go together, and that the one can produce the other. The truth is, of course, that moral degradation actually **RESULTS** from false religion. The heathen became so desperately wicked because of their worship of false gods and idols. People changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the creator (1:25).

What was the result of this lapse into false religion? We find the answer in an awful statement which is thrice repeated in these verses:

“Wherefore **GOD ALSO GAVE THEM UP** to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts. . . ” (1:24).

"For this cause GOD GAVE THEM UP unto vile affections . . ." (1:26).

"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, GOD GAVE THEM OVER to a reprobate mind. . ." (1:28).

Because of men's turning away from the truth to false religion, GOD GAVE THEM UP to all kinds of moral degradation, as described in these verses.

This is still going on today. Many are concerned about the moral evils of the day; few are concerned about the false religion of the day. Many would like to reform the moral conditions, who have no zeal or concern for a general return to the pure worship of the true God, and the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But the only way to get real reform of the moral conditions is by teaching and preaching the truth of God. Religious reform is the real secret of moral reform.

John Knox, the great Scottish reformer, said: "Vain is it to crave reformation of morals where the religion is neglected" — and Knox spoke the truth as we find it in Romans 1. The real cause of the moral evils of our day, the liquor evil, the divorce evil, the crime evil, the evil of Communism, and all the other moral evils — the real cause of these evils is departure from the true religion, from the true God.

We are told today that the world is hurtling to destruction. There is indeed some reason for thinking so. But if the world is hurtling toward destruction, the reason is departure from the true religion, departure from the true God.

And what is the remedy? The remedy is the old, old story, the Gospel of Jesus Christ and

Him crucified, the religion of the Holy Bible, the Word of God. Do not let us deceive ourselves. Bad moral conditions are only the symptoms of the trouble; they are not the disease itself. We can never get things right by paying attention only to the bad moral conditions, and trying to get people to live better moral lives. What people really need is to believe and know THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD. Then they will get a NEW HEART and they will begin really to live a NEW LIFE.

#### Questions:

1. What is the real cause of wicked living?
2. Why can there not be a good life until there is first of all a true religious belief?
3. Why did Paul discuss the religious effects of sin first, and the moral effects of sin afterwards?
4. What judicial act of God is three times mentioned in 1:24-28?
5. Why did God "give them up" to moral degradation?
6. How can real reform of bad moral conditions be attained?
7. What did John Knox say about the relation between religious reform and moral reform?
8. Are bad moral conditions the real disease of humanity, or are they only the outward symptoms of the disease?
9. What is the real remedy for humanity's sickness?

## LESSON 5

### THE NEED FOR SALVATION. 1:18 to 3:20, Continued

#### B. Both Jews and Gentiles are Guilty Before God. 2:1 to 3:20

Since all are involved in sin, no one has a right to pronounce judgment on others. 2:1-3

Paul has shown in chapter 1 that we are all without excuse, for we have sinned against light, knowing that it was wrong. It is human nature to try to find excuses for our sins and failings, but we have no right to do so.

There is another way of trying to evade responsibility for our sins. That is by heaping judgment on the sins of others. Instead of thinking of the sins of which we personally are guilty before God, we make a specialty of denouncing the sins of others — sins in which we personally are not involved. We become loud in denouncing the wickedness of Hollywood, or of Moscow. But proclaiming the wickedness of

others will never cancel our own sins. We cannot escape that way. The old proverb says that "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones". So far as being sinners before God is concerned, we all live in glass houses. There is not one that can claim to be sinless.

We may not have committed exactly the same kind of sins, in detail, as other persons; but we are sinners just the same, for we have broken the same moral law of God, we have violated the same Ten Commandments, we have offended against the same God. So if we judge others, we cannot avoid condemning ourselves. God's Word makes this solemn pronouncement: "For thou that judgest doest the same things" (2:1).

In the ancient world, the world of the Apostle Paul, even among the pagan nations there were

moralists and ethical writers who condemned the sins of men. But it was no use, for they themselves were guilty of the same sins, to a greater or less degree. There have been many religious teachers in the various countries of the world who have taught that wickedness is wrong, but to no avail, for these very moralists and experts were themselves involved in the very sins which they condemned.

"But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things" (2:2). God is a moral Governor who will judge all according to an unchangeable standard. There is no court in this world of which we can always be SURE that the judgment of that court is ACCORDING TO TRUTH. In human courts of justice there is always a possibility of error, and sometimes there exists a deplorable corruption of justice by bribery or political considerations. But the judgment of God, in the court of heaven, is not like that. God's judgment is incorruptible, unalterable, always according to the strict truth of the case.

Human justice at best is only an approximation to real justice. But divine justice is total, perfect justice. For the Judge is omniscient; He knows all the facts and circumstances; and He is omnipotent; He has power to execute His sentence.

Today many people, even Christian people, have a very partial, one-sided, inadequate idea of God. This is largely the result of the common unbalanced emphasis on the Bible truth that "God is love" (1 John 4:16). It is true, of course, that God is love, but that is not all that is true about God. We have no right to say that God is love and nothing but love. God is also righteousness. He is not only a God of love but also a God of justice. He is the moral Ruler of the world and will judge all His creatures according to truth, by the strictest justice.

"And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (2:3). To the righteous judgment of God, both the common sinner and the self-righteous sinner are alike subject. It is easy to think that the common sinner will be condemned, but that we ourselves will somehow escape. We tend to think of the drunkard, the criminal, the gangster, as a sinner, and to forget that the highly educated university professor may be an even greater sinner in God's sight. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. We tend to forget that civilization, education and culture do not give us any preferred standing with God.

The sophisticated sinners of our day think that Christianity may be all right for the type of people reached by the Salvation Army; but for

the educated, the enlightened, the cultured, the refined people — they do not need it. In fact such sophisticated sinners are ready to condemn the sins of the common sinners, forgetting that in God's sight they, too, are guilty. To all such self-righteous sinners Paul's challenge is: "Thinkest thou, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"

**God's kindness ought to lead men to repentance, but is frustrated by the hardness of men's hearts. 2:4,5**

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (2:4). God gives many blessings to the whole human race. He makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and His rain to fall on the just and on the unjust. Life, health, food, clothing, shelter, etc., are all gifts of God to men — to sinful men, who have offended against God. Also by reason of God's LONGSUFFERING, He gives sinful man a REPRIEVE — He postpones the execution of the penalty of death on human sin. This gives sinful humanity a life-span, making human life possible, and permitting the continuance of the human race through the history of the world.

The intent and proper effect of this goodness of God is to lead men to repentance. God's goodness gives men both the opportunity for repentance, and an encouragement to repentance. It ought to lead men to repent and turn from their sins to God. But does it have this effect? Alas, the hardness of the human heart frustrates this effect. As time passes, men become worse instead of better. It takes more than NATURAL blessings to bring people to repentance; it takes SPECIAL DIVINE GRACE by the supernatural, almighty work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

Long ago God appeared to Abraham and promised him the whole land of Canaan. But God told him it would be over 400 years before his descendants would receive the land, because "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16). The Amorites were terribly wicked. Their religious worship was an abomination. But God gave these wicked people four hundred years to repent. Through all that period they enjoyed the blessings of God. But they did not repent; on the contrary, they became worse than before; and finally God destroyed them, at the time of Joshua.

And it is so today. Worldly success and prosperity do not bring men to repentance. Worldly prosperity leads rather to pride and vainglory, not to "a broken and a contrite heart" (Psalm 51:17).

**Questions:**

1. Besides trying to find excuses, what other way do sinners often try to evade responsibility for their sins?

2. Why can judging others not cancel our own sins?

3. Why could the moralists of Paul's day not accomplish anything?

4. What is the difference between human justice and divine justice?

5. Why do many people today have a one-sided view of God?

6. What is the difference between human views of sin and God's view of sin?

7. What is the attitude of sophisticated people of our day toward Christianity?

8. What kind of blessings does God give to all mankind?

9. What is meant by saying that God's long-suffering gives sinful man a reprieve?

10. What should be the effect of God's goodness to sinful people?

11. Why do God's blessings not actually produce repentance on the part of sinners?

12. Besides natural blessings, what is required to produce repentance?

13. Why did God delay the destruction of the Amorites 400 years?

14. What is the usual result of worldly success and prosperity?

**LESSON 6****THE NEED FOR SALVATION. 1:18 to 3:20, Continued****B. Both Jews and Gentiles are Guilty Before God. 2:1 to 3:20, Continued**

The principle of God's moral government is to deal with every person according to his deeds. 2:6-11

"But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against thy day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (2:5). A Day of Judgment is coming. God's kindness and longsuffering will not last forever. Finally they will give place to divine judgment according to righteousness. That day will be a "day of wrath" because then the wrath of God will no longer be held back by God's longsuffering; it will burst forth, and be poured out upon sinful men. We saw in 1:18 that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven". That is going on all the time. But there will be a day of FINAL outpouring of the wrath of God—the Judgment Day.

The principle of the divine judgment will be DESERT. God, who is absolutely righteous, will treat each person exactly as that person deserves to be treated. He "will render to every man according to his deeds" (2:6). This principle involves rewards for righteousness and penalties for sins, as explained in verses 7 to 10. Moreover, God's judgment is not only RIGHTEOUS, but also IMPARTIAL—"For there is no respect of persons with God" (verse 11). The Jew will not be favored because he is a member of the chosen people, or a child of Abraham. On the contrary, divine retribution will be to "the Jew first" (verse 9) because the Jew has enjoyed greater advantages than the Gentile.

This section (2:6-11) does not teach salvation by works, as some wrongly suppose. It

does not deal at all with THE WAY OF SALVATION, which comes later in the Epistle, but with THE PRINCIPLE OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT, that is, the principle that righteousness will be rewarded with eternal life, and sin will be recompensed with tribulation and anguish. This section only lays down that principle; it does not tell us HOW A SINNER CAN OBTAIN RIGHTEOUSNESS. There is, of course, only one way: to believe on Jesus Christ and so obtain Christ's righteousness as a gift, reckoned or "imputed" to the sinner as if it were his own. This truth comes later on in the Epistle. At the point we are now studying, Paul is simply stating the abstract principle of God's judgment of the world. He names the price of eternal life, but he does not yet tell us where the money can be obtained; that comes later on.

**God's judgment will take account of the advantages men have enjoyed. 2:12-16**

Those who have sinned will be condemned for their sin — "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (2:12). Those who have sinned will be judged and condemned for their sin, whether they have known the written law of God or not. Some will be judged and condemned apart from the written law; others, by the written law.

Of course, those who believe on Christ as their Saviour will not be condemned; but that is a truth that comes later in the Epistle (see 8:1).

Mere hearing of God's law will not avail. The Jews placed great stress on their being HEARERS of the law. They were members of the Synagogue; they heard the law of God read

and expounded from Sabbath to Sabbath. They counted heavily on this HEARING of the law to gain them favor with God.

Paul states that the mere hearing of the law is not enough. If we expect to be saved by the law, then we will have to do more than just hear it — we will have not only to hear it but also to OBSERVE it, to “do the law”, that is, to obey its commandments; and this means, of course, to obey them PERFECTLY. “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (verse 13). Paul is not saying that we can be justified by the works of the law. He deals with that error later. At this point he is simply emphasizing that mere HEARING of the law will not get us anywhere with God. The Jews of Paul’s day did not really keep the law; but they counted on God’s favor because they were HEARERS of the law.

A writer on the life of Paul has written: “He only can be happy under a dispensation of law, who can live a life-long lie . . . . But proud, downright, consistent natures cannot be put off with a lie. If they are unable to resist, they die of the lie; if they are strong, it is the lie that dies. The lie inherent in the law” — as trusted in by the Jews for salvation — “was the presumption that it could be fulfilled. Every one of Paul’s associates understood that the commandment could not be kept, but they did not own it to themselves. The elder behaved in presence of the younger as if it could be kept; one believed it on the strength of another, and did not acknowledge the impossibility to himself. They blinded themselves to their own sin by comparing themselves with other just men, and had recourse to remote ages to Enoch and Noah and Daniel, in order to produce advocates for their souls. They hoped God would allow the good works of the saints to cover their deficiencies, and they did not forget occasionally to pray for mercy, yet, on the whole they kept up the lie and went on as if they were well” (H. Weinel, “St. Paul”, English translation, pp. 72, 73; quoted in B. B. Warfield, “The Plan of Salvation”, pp. 37, 38).

The Gentiles, being without the Scripture, will be judged according to the law of nature (2:14,15). Even those who never knew the Bible with its written law of God, have the law of God, that is, the law of nature, written on their heart and conscience. By this law of nature, then, they will be judged. Sin is the transgression of the law — that is, of God’s law. Men will be judged according to the law they have transgressed, whether it be God’s law in Scripture or God’s law in nature (as in the case of the heathen).

God’s judgment will be by Jesus Christ, and will deal with secret matters as well as those openly known (2:16) — “In the day when God

shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel”. That means the great Judgment Day, the Last Day, at the end of the world, the time of Christ’s second coming.

There are many sins that have been kept secret. But Christ’s Judgment will bring them to light in that Day. When that tribunal gets under way the secret plots and plans made behind heavily guarded doors in some of the dark places of the earth will be exposed to the daylight before the whole universe. But not only that kind of “secrets” will be exposed; also the secret motives and thoughts of men’s hearts will be judged by Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is both a SAVIOUR and a JUDGE. He is a Saviour today; He will be the Judge at the Last Day. Those who reject or neglect Him as their Saviour will discover that they cannot evade Him as their Judge. None of us who are reading this page can lay claim to having “sinned without law”. Our advantages have been of the greatest, and our responsibility before God is correspondingly greater than that of others. If the heathen are going to stand before Christ’s judgment seat, how much more we, with our Christian background and training. “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24:44).

#### Questions:

1. What is the Judgment Day called in 2:5?
2. Why will the Judgment Day be a “day of wrath”?
3. What is the principle of the divine judgment?
4. What verse of this section shows that God’s judgment is not only righteous but also impartial?
5. Why is it not correct to say that 2:6-11 teaches salvation by works?
6. How does this section show that God’s judgment will take account of the advantages men have enjoyed?
7. Why does Paul emphasize the truth that mere hearing of the law is not enough to save us?
8. What wrong attitude toward the law was characteristic of the Jews of Paul’s day?
9. On what basis will the heathen, who never had the Bible, be judged?
10. What will be the scope of the divine judgment, according to 2:16?
11. Whom has God appointed to execute judgment?
12. What great tragedy will befall those who by-pass Jesus Christ during their life on earth?

## LESSON 7

## THE NEED FOR SALVATION. 1:18 to 3:20, Continued

**B. Both Jews and Gentiles are Guilty Before God. 2:1 to 3:20, Continued****The Jews, sinning against boasted light, are doubly guilty before God. 2:17-24**

"Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law" (2:17-20). Here Paul gives us in substance the boast of the Jews of his day — their proud claim that they were guides of the blind, instructors of the foolish, teachers of babes, and so forth, in the things of God.

We might be inclined to think that these claims of the Jews were mere empty boasting or bragging. But they were more than that. To a very great extent, these claims were true. In that ancient pagan world, the Jews were not only beyond question the best people that could be found anywhere, but they were the ONLY people that held out the light of divine truth to the heathen people surrounding them. The Jews were no longer limited to the little country of Palestine. By various kings and rulers large numbers of them had been transplanted to Babylonia and other regions to the east. The major portion of these never returned to Palestine. Some were absorbed, in succeeding generations, by heathenism, but a large proportion retained their religion and Jewish identity in the lands to the east. To the west, as Greece, Italy, etc., the Jews had gone of their own accord, chiefly for commercial reasons. In Paul's day there were Jews almost everywhere; it has been estimated that there were about one million in Egypt alone, and possibly eight million in the entire Roman Empire. Of these, only a very small fraction lived in the tiny country of Palestine.

The Jews of that day and age were prosperous, influential and powerful, enjoying special privileges, their religion and their social customs being given legal protection. Even their observance of their Sabbath was sanctioned and protected by the Roman Government. Everywhere the Jews had organized synagogues, which greatly strengthened their social solidarity. Some Jews held high offices under the Romans and other rulers.

By far the greatest influence of the Jew on the heathen society around him was exerted through the synagogue or what we would call

the Jewish church. It is not known when the synagogue originated, but probably it was at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Wherever there were ten Jewish families, a synagogue would be established. In these synagogues the Scriptures were read and expounded, prayer was offered, and the Psalms were sung in praise and worship to God.

Outside of Palestine, the synagogue services would be mostly in the Greek language, for Greek was the common language of the day. We should remember that Paul's Epistle to the Romans, though written to the Church in Rome, was not written in Latin but in Greek. The entire Old Testament Scriptures were available in Greek, and were used by the Jews of the "Dispersion" for their synagogue services. Two features were joined to the synagogue, namely, a school and a library. Through these, many of the surrounding heathen were influenced for good. The Jews were strongly convinced that they had a divine mission to the people of the world. Inasmuch as they knew that in Abraham and his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed, and since they expected the coming of a Messiah, the Jews had a definite religious message. The result was that large numbers of Gentiles were converted to Judaism. Even larger were the numbers of "God fearing" adherents, who attached themselves to the synagogue without actually becoming Jews. Cornelius was an example of such Gentiles who were attracted by the religion of the Jews.

The Jews throughout the Roman world regarded it as their special duty to enlighten the heathen religiously. In this effort, they achieved remarkable success. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote: "Many of the heathen have come over to our law; some have remained, others unable to tolerate its strictness have fallen off"; "Among the masses there has long been a great zeal for our mode of worship; there is no Greek nor barbarian city nor any nation in which our custom of keeping the Sabbath, fasting, the lighting of lamps and many regulations in regard to food, are not observed."

Thus we see that there was much truth in the boast of the Jews set forth by Paul in these verses (2:17-20). Paul was writing to the Christian Church at Rome. There were many Jewish synagogues in Rome; and up to the time when a Christian church was established in Rome, it was certainly true that the Jews were the spiritual lighthouse of the city, as they were of the Empire.

**The Guilt of the Jews. 2:21-24**

Great opportunities mean great responsibili-

ties. The light that the Jews enjoyed vastly increased their responsibility before God. The fact that the boast of the Jews was not false, but true, greatly added to their obligation to live a righteous life before God. Having set forth the boast of the Jews, Paul now discusses their **GUILT**. They boasted especially of the law, with which they had been entrusted by God. But what were they doing with that law?

To be sure, they were publishing it abroad and teaching it to the Gentiles round about them. And, to be sure, they were making an attempt to live according to it. But now Paul looks beneath the surface. Were the Jews really keeping the law of God? Were they really keeping it as it ought to be kept, as God's righteousness requires? God's law requires perfect righteousness of man. Only a perfect obedience is really a keeping of the commandments. Were the Jews doing that?

They certainly were not. They were not keepers of the law, but transgressors of the law. They were breakers of the law of God. Not in exactly the same manner as the heathen, of course; yet in the sight of the holy God, the Jews were breakers of the law. Every Jew that read Paul's words would have to admit, in the bottom of his own heart and conscience, that Paul was stating the plain truth: with all their boasting about the law, after all, each and every Jew was really a **BREAKER** of the law. There was not one of them that could really keep the law.

The apostle mentions various transgressions of the law, starting with the sin of stealing: "Thou that teachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" (verse 21). Probably the reference is not to common theft, robbery or burglary, but to dishonesty, shady financial dealings, legal and respectable according to human notions, but dishonest in God's sight. Among those who made long prayers, there were some who also devoured widows' houses. They were very pious, very religious, and also very sharp in financial matters, taking every advantage, fair or otherwise, as long as it was technically legal. That is **STEALING** in God's sight.

Then the apostle mentions adultery: "Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?" (verse 22). They might be clear of the outward act of adultery, and yet be adulterers as the sin was defined by Jesus. Then "sacrilege" is spoken of (verse 22), the American Revised Version reading: "Dost thou rob temples?" (Compare Acts 19:37, "robbers of churches", ARV "robbers of temples"). Possibly the meaning is that the Jews in their zeal against idolatry stole idols from the temples of the heathen.

In short, the Jew boasted of the law, yet by breaking the law he dishonored God. God's

name was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of the sins of the Jews (2:23,24). Paul himself was a strict Jew, a Pharisee, and he knew what he was talking about. We might illustrate this by a modern parallel. A professing Christian in a non-Christian country such as China or India gets drunk, or becomes involved in a street brawl. As the person is known to make a Christian profession, the name of God is blasphemed by the heathen on account of his sin; while any number of non-Christians may become involved in like sins, and nothing special is thought of it by anyone. So with the Jews of old. Just because the standard held aloft by the Jews was very high, their violation of that standard was extremely serious.

Now let us apply this to ourselves, and see how we fit into this picture. Who holds aloft the torch of truth, the light of God's revelation, today? Who, but those who profess the Christian religion? Who is a teacher of babes, a guide of the blind, etc., in the world of today, except those who call themselves Christians? Even though we may not boast of it as the ancient Jews did, it is true just the same; we are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the city set on a hill, as our Saviour said. Having such great and high privileges how great is our responsibility before God! And how great is our sin, how much greater than other people's sin, when we act contrary to our holy religion and the commandments of God! The name of God is blasphemed every day among the modern heathen and unbelievers, because of the sins of professing Christians. An unbeliever or worldly person may violate God's moral laws, and the world pays but little heed. But let a professing Christian commit some crime, or be caught in some dishonest or unethical act, and the world will never forget it. Our wonderful Christian heritage vastly increases our responsibility before God.

What are we really in God's sight? We are just poor, lost, guilty sinners needing a Saviour, in need of God's saving grace just the same as other people. The fact that we may be able to trace our personal or ecclesiastical ancestry to the martyr church of the Scottish Reformation does not make any difference, except to increase our guilt before God. When we are honest with our own consciences, we must admit that it is true of us as it was of the Jews of Paul's day: we are not keepers of the law but breakers of the law.

Even if we have a fine reputation among our neighbors, still we must confess that before God we are great sinners. We are not law keepers but law breakers. Our great opportunities, the light we have enjoyed, only increase our responsibility and guilt before God.

Through this section of the Epistle, Paul is

hammering away to drive one point home — that we are lost sinners and need a Saviour. Let us admit it. We need Christ.

**Questions:**

1. What claims did the Jews of Paul's day make for themselves?
2. Were these claims warranted by the facts, or were they merely conceited boasting?
3. How many Jews may there have been in Paul's day, and where did most of them live?
4. What was the position of the Jews in the Roman Empire? What privileges did they enjoy?
5. What institution of the Jews greatly increased their influence in the ancient world?
6. Why was Paul's Epistle to the Romans written in Greek instead of in Latin?
7. What did Josephus say of the success of

the Jews in influencing their pagan environment?

8. What kind of obedience does God's law require of man?
9. When judged by God's standard of righteousness, were the Jews of Paul's day keepers of the law or breakers of the law?
10. What particular sins does Paul imply the Jews were guilty of?
11. What kind of "stealing" is probably meant in the phrase "dost thou steal" in verse 21?
12. What is the probable meaning of the phrase "commit sacrilege" in verse 22?
13. Why did the sins of the Jews specially occasion blaspheming of God's name by the Gentiles?
14. How does the teaching of 2:17-24 apply to Christians of the present day?
15. What point is Paul trying to drive home in this section of the Epistle?

**LESSON 8**

**THE NEED FOR SALVATION. 1:18 to 3:20, Continued**

**B. Both Jews and Gentiles are Guilty Before God. 2:1 to 3:20, Continued**

**The Spiritual Nature of True Godliness. 2:25-29**

Profession without possession is of no avail in God's sight. Sacraments and rites without divine grace give us no standing with God. "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly. . . ." (2:28). In like manner we may say "He is not a Christian which is one outwardly; nor is the true baptism that with water alone". He is a Christian which is one INWARDLY, and the true baptism is that of the Holy Spirit, of which baptism with water is the outward sign, the token of the reality of divine grace in the heart, which is called "the new birth", regeneration or becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). There is, moreover, a test by which we can assay our religion, to discern what is gold and what is mere dross. Paul gives us this test in the closing words of Romans 2, "Whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Enoch had this testimony, that he pleased God (Heb. 11:5). The true Jew, Paul says, is the one who pleases God, not the one who seeks and receives the praises of men. And the true Christian is the one who pleases God, not the one who is commended and praised by men. Samuel anointed David as the one chosen by God to be king, after rejecting seven of Jesse's sons one after another. Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord

seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). When we realize this truth, we will be more convinced than ever that we are guilty sinners needing a Saviour. And Christ is the Saviour we need, the only Saviour who can meet our need. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

**The Advantages Enjoyed by the Jews. 3:1-4**

This section (3:1-4) is somewhat difficult to understand, in part because the language of the King James Version of the Bible is somewhat different from that which we are accustomed to using today. While it is not the present writer's practice to quote often from modern translations of the Bible, it is sometimes advantageous to do so, for we can sometimes get help from translations of the Bible into modern English, provided we use them with due discernment and discrimination. The following is the translation of Romans 3:1-4 in the "Twentieth Century New Testament":

"What is the advantage, then, of being a Jew? or what is the good of circumcision? Great in every way. First of all, because the Jews were entrusted with God's utterances. What follows then? Some, no doubt, showed a want of faith; but will their want of faith make God break faith? Heaven forbid! God must prove true, though every man prove a liar! As Scripture says of God: 'That thou mayest be pronounc-

ed righteous in what thou sayest, and gain thy cause when men would judge thee.'"

In the first eight verses of chapter three, Paul takes up two objections that might be raised against his argument in chapter 2. The first objection is that if the Jews are sinners, and have broken God's law as other men have, then there is no advantage in being a Jew. The objection is, in effect, that according to Paul the Jew has no advantage over the heathen, since both are breakers of God's law. Paul answers this objection in the first four verses of chapter 3.

If the Jews are sinners as other men are, then, after all, what advantage has the Jew? "Much every way", replies Paul. The advantage of the Jew is both real and great. Though both Jews and heathen were transgressors of the law and guilty in God's sight, still the Jew had great advantages over the heathen.

Then Paul proceeds to name one advantage possessed by the Jew — the chief and most important advantage — "Chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." In other words, the Jew had a tremendous advantage because he had been entrusted with the Scriptures, the spoken and written Word of God. God had revealed Himself to the heathen in the works of nature and in the human heart and conscience; but to the Jews, to Israel, He had spoken with a much clearer voice, the voice of His Word, the Holy Scripture. Scripture was what the Jew had and the heathen lacked. Where the heathen did have it, it was only by reason of contact and association with the Jew.

Note that Paul calls Scripture "the oracles of God", that is, the UTTERANCES of God. With these utterances, he says, the Jew was entrusted. They were committed unto the Jew. So far as we know, every book of the Old Testament was written by Jews. According to the prevalent modern (liberal) view of the Bible, the Old Testament Scriptures were the PRODUCT of the religious experience of the Hebrew people. As the religion of Israel developed and improved through the centuries, the best was preserved in these Old Testament books. This regards the Old Testament as the product of the religious evolution or development of the people of Israel. But Paul had no such belief. On the contrary, he held a very different view of the Old Testament. Paul knew, of course, that the Old Testament books were written by Jews. Yet he did not regard them as a product of the Jews' religious development.

For Paul says that these books were COMMITTED to the Jews; they were entrusted with them. A person cannot be entrusted with something which he has himself produced. If a farmer has grain stored in buildings on his farm,

grain that was produced on his own land by his own effort, he could not say that the grain was "committed" to him. If he were storing grain for a neighbor, that would be committed to him. But the product of a man's own activity cannot be said to be "committed" to him. The Scriptures were the oracles, the utterances, of God. They did not originate with the Jews; they came from God by the special work of the Holy Spirit; the Jews were not really their authors, in the ultimate sense, but their custodians.

The Jews, though sinners like other men, held in their hands the guide book pointing out the way of salvation from sin. This guide book contained two elements, LAW and GOSPEL. The law told them that they were sinners; the Gospel told them of God's remedy for sin. In the Old Testament the Gospel was set forth in various ways — by promises, prophecies, and especially by the sacrifices, and the lamb of the Passover feast. All these pointed forward to Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The law said "DO", meaning to live perfectly according to God's commandments. This no one could really do, not even the Jews.

But the Gospel says "DONE", meaning that what we could never do for ourselves, God Himself has done for His people through His Son Jesus Christ. The law proclaims the justice and righteousness of God; the Gospel proclaims His mercy and love. All this is contained in the Old Testament Scriptures, which were committed to the Jews. They held in their hands the chart and compass which could point them to forgiveness, salvation and eternal life.

But what use did the Jews make of this road map of the highway to heaven? Well, Paul admits right away that "some" failed to believe. A portion of the Jewish people failed to walk the highway of eternal life. Paul does not say how large a portion, for that has no bearing on his argument here; he only concedes that "some did not believe". From our own reading of the Old Testament, we know that this was true. Then, as now, some believed and some disbelieved. There were men like David, and there were also men like Saul. There were men like Elijah, but there were also men like Ahab. There were women like Ruth and Naomi, but also women like Jezebel. Some did not believe.

But what of it? Did that make the Old Testament a failure? Was God's program a failure? Had God's plans fallen to the ground because part of the people of Israel served the devil instead of serving God? Some people raise very similar objections today. They say that such-and-such a church member is (in their judgment) a hypocrite, and therefore Christianity is a failure. Or, because of the prevalence of war and the general bad condition of interna-

tional affairs, Christianity is a failure. But such objections are not new. Such talk was going on in Paul's day. Against those who held that by the failure of "some" of the people of Israel to accept God's way of salvation, God's plan was a failure, Paul replies: "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" Or, as in the Twentieth Century New Testament, "Will their want of faith make God break faith?" And the apostle answers this question by saying, "God forbid", or, as we might say, "Far from it".

God is not a failure. The Old Testament was not a failure. Christianity is not a failure. Some people are not what they should be; some do not have real saving faith; but God keeps faith. God's plan will not fail.

As a matter of fact, there were always a goodly number of the people of Israel who believed, and lived the life of faith. The apostasy of Israel, even in the darkest days of idolatry before the exile to Babylon, was never total. Always there was a remnant left to serve God faithfully. Elijah thought he alone was left to serve God, but God revealed to him that there were seven thousand others, unknown to him, that had never bowed their knee to Baal nor worshipped his image.

Even today there are more Jewish Christians than we realize. Some of the most outstanding Christian leaders of the past 100 years have been converts from Israel. A Polish Jew, converted to Christ, was one of the first to translate the whole Bible into the Chinese language, to name but one example. It is estimated that no less than 100,000 Jews became Christians between 1800 and 1875 (Delitzsch).

Paul goes on to defend the righteousness and integrity of God. God has not failed; God can never fail. "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar" — "God must prove true, even though every man should prove to be a liar". Even the Jews that did NOT believe had their place in God's righteousness. God's perfect righteousness and justice would be manifested, by way of contrast, in judging and condemning them for their sin and their unbelief. When a person believes

and is saved, that glorifies God by manifesting God's mercy and love. When a person disbelieves, continues in sin, and is finally condemned in the Judgment, that also glorifies God, by manifesting another side of God's character, namely, God's justice which condemns and punishes sin. So we see that the fact that some did not believe is no real objection to God's way of doing things. Even those who did not believe glorified God in spite of themselves.

#### Questions:

1. What is necessary, in addition to a profession of faith, in order to please God?
2. How can we test the genuineness of our religious profession?
3. What objection was raised to Paul's teaching that the Jews, like other men, were sinners?
4. What was the most important advantage possessed by the Jews?
5. What is meant by the phrase "the oracles of God"?
6. What view of the Old Testament is implied in the use of the word "committed" in 3:2?
7. What is the common "liberal" view of the Old Testament, and why is it wrong?
8. What two elements are contained in the Old Testament Scriptures?
9. How is the Gospel set forth in the Old Testament?
10. What is the difference between the law and the Gospel?
11. How does Paul answer the argument that some of the Jews did not believe?
12. What similar objection is often raised against Christianity today?
13. What results have been attained by missionary work among the Jews?
14. How did even the unbelieving Jews have a place in God's plan and program?

## LESSON 9

### THE NEED FOR SALVATION. 1:18 to 3:20, Continued

#### B. Both Jews and Gentiles are Guilty Before God. 2:1 to 3:20, Continued

##### Shall we sin to glorify God? 3:5-8

Paul now takes up the second objection, which follows from what he has been saying about the first objection. He has just been telling us that God is going to be justified in His sayings, even in the matter of the wicked who reject the way of salvation. In effect, as we read in verse 5, "our unrighteousness commends

the righteousness of God". That may sound like a strange thing to say, yet it is strictly true. God is glorified, the Bible plainly teaches, in His righteous condemnation and punishment of sin.

Abel glorified God by a life of faith and service to God; Cain glorified God in spite of himself, because God's righteousness was displayed in the punishment of Cain for his sin.

Well, the objection continues, if that is the way it is — if human sin glorifies God — then

why should God punish the sinner? If man's sin glorifies God, then what right has God to pronounce judgment on the sinner?

Paul says, "I speak as a man". This does not mean that he is not speaking as an inspired apostle of Christ; it only means that at this particular point of his discussion, he is stating the objection from the common human point of view. To the person who does not understand the ways of God, it might seem that if human sin glorifies God, then God ought not to "take vengeance", that is, God ought not to judge and punish sin.

Of course the objection is a very shallow, superficial one. It is true that human sin glorifies God by manifesting His justice in the punishment of sin. But for all that, God is right in punishing sin, because the MOTIVE of the sinner is never to glorify God, but always to follow his own lusts and desires. Cain killed Abel. In punishing Cain for this sin, God's righteousness was displayed, His justice was manifested. But Cain DESERVED to be punished. His intention had not been to glorify God, but to have his own way.

Human sin glorifies God by manifesting God's justice, but the sinner never acts with a desire to glorify God. The person who sins always intends to please himself; he never intends to please God. And God, who looks on the heart, judges according to people's character and motives, not merely according to their outward actions.

So Paul rejects this objection with another "God forbid". And he adds, "For then how shall God judge the world?" That God is going to judge the world is a truth that all Paul's readers already believed. This was believed by Jews as well as by Christians. Now the Judge who is going to judge all the world certainly must be a just Judge. That God is absolutely just is an axiom; it does not require any argument to prove it. If God were not absolutely just and righteous, He would not be God.

But Paul takes up the same objection over again, in verse 7, "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" The Twentieth Century New Testament translates: "But, if my falsehood redounds to the glory of God, by making his truthfulness more apparent, why am I, like others, still condemned as a sinner?"

If I tell a lie, and this falsehood of mine glorifies God by making His truthfulness more apparent by way of contrast, then why should God treat me as a sinner? Why not tell ten lies, and glorify God ten times as much? Or why not tell a thousand lies, and glorify God a thousand times as much? Or why not tell nothing but lies, all the time, for then the more lies we

tell, the more God will be glorified. So ran the objection. And there were some that went even further than that. They slandered Paul and his fellow Christians, and claimed that Paul actually taught that we should do evil that good may come.

Of course, we may never do evil that good may come. We may not commit one little sin; we may not tell one little lie, that good may come. Sin is what God HATES, and we may not do what God hates in order to please God! Certainly not!

God has the power to turn evil into good. Joseph's brothers sold him to be a slave in Egypt. That was evil, a sin. They meant it for evil, but God turned it to good. By it the whole land of Egypt and many people in neighboring countries were saved from starvation during the seven year of famine. But still it was WRONG for Joseph's brothers to sell him as a slave, and they deserved to be punished for doing it.

It was a vicious slander against Christianity to allege that it taught the devilish doctrine of "Let us do evil that good may come". That is the doctrine, not of God, but of Satan. Satan has always been suggesting this same thought to people. He started by suggesting it to Eve long ago — "Do evil that good may come." He told Eve that great good would come from disobeying the command of God. God had forbidden Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was therefore wrong to eat the fruit of that tree; it involved the sin of disobedience to God.

But Satan came and said, "Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" — in effect, "Go ahead and eat the fruit, and you will accomplish a splendid, wonderful result. A great deal of good will come out of it. Why not do a little evil for the sake of so much good?"

And there have always been plenty of people working for Satan who suggest the same thing. For example, that it is sometimes right to tell a lie. Or that it is right to break one of the Ten Commandments, if you do it for a good purpose. People were no doubt saying to Paul, and about Paul, "If human sin results in glorifying God, why, then we might just as well go ahead and sin. The more the better. Do evil that good may come, the more evil we do, the more good will come." Thus they slandered Paul, and represented him as a preacher of Satan's gospel.

How does Paul answer these slanders? He does not stoop to argue with them. He just says about them, "Whose damnation is just". People who talk like that deserve to be condemned. Those who do evil that good may come deserve to be condemned; those who slander Christianity

by saying that it teaches such a doctrine, deserve to be condemned.

When someone suggests compromise with evil for the sake of some good purpose, remember what this verse says about those who try to do evil that good may come. Their damnation is just. We may not commit one little sin, we may not tell one little lie, to keep the whole world from going to pieces.

God is glorified even by wicked people. They glorify God in spite of themselves, without intending to glorify God. God is glorified in punishing their wickedness. But such people bring eternal ruin and loss upon themselves. God is glorified, but they are the losers, for ever and ever, because of their own sin.

How much better to glorify God by obedience and righteousness! Especially by accepting and believing on Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and following Him through the days and years of our life in this world! How much better to glorify God by embracing His offers of grace and mercy, and becoming His children!

#### Questions:

1. What is meant by saying that our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God?
2. What was the difference between the way God was glorified by Abel and the way He was glorified by Cain?
3. What objection to his teaching does Paul mention in verse 5?
4. What is the meaning of Paul's statement, "I speak as a man", in verse 5?
5. Why was God just in punishing Cain, even though Cain's sin resulted in glorifying God?
6. Why is it true that the person who sins never does so with the intention of pleasing or glorifying God?
7. How does Paul answer the objection mentioned in verse 5?
8. Why is it always wrong to do evil that good may come?
9. Show from the history of Joseph that God has the power to turn evil to good in the end.
10. Why were Joseph's brothers deserving of punishment?
11. What is the real source of the doctrine "Let us do evil that good may come"?
12. When was this doctrine first introduced into the world, by whom and with what result?
13. What does Paul say about those who advocate doing evil that good may come?
14. What is the best and only safe way of glorifying God?

### LESSON 10

#### THE NEED FOR SALVATION. 1:18 to 3:20, Continued

#### B. Both Jews and Gentiles are Guilty Before God. 2:1 to 3:20, Continued

#### Summary of Argument: Both Jews and Gentiles Guilty Before God. 3:9-18

The Jew had great advantages, but these did not enable him to stand on his own feet before God. Like the Gentile, he too was a guilty sinner at God's judgment bar. Paul sums it all up in verse 9. All are under sin. Humanity as a race is lost in sin and guilty before God. The Jew, in spite of his advantages, is not an exception. Having stated this conclusion of his argument, Paul next supports it by a number of texts quoted from the Old Testament. There are some half dozen of these given one after another, all with the same teaching, namely, the universal sinfulness and wickedness of the human race. Most of these Old Testament texts are quoted from the Book of Psalms. One is from Isaiah. Thus Paul shows that he was not preaching anything strange or new. It agreed perfectly with the Old Testament. The Jew could not claim to be sinless, for his own Scrip-

tures emphasized the universal sinfulness of the human race.

Since all humanity is guilty and lost in sin, the question must be faced: What is the remedy for this state of affairs? Paul next proceeds to this, but first he carefully tells us of something which is NOT the remedy, by rejecting what may be called THE OLD DELUSION.

#### The Old Delusion Rejected. 3:19, 20

The "old delusion" is the ancient, popular, ingrained error that man can somehow save himself. It is properly called "salvation by works", but in our day it is more likely to be labelled "salvation by character", "character building", or perhaps "the religion of the Golden Rule".

Paul rejects this old delusion, the idea that sinful man can save himself by living a good life, reforming, changing his habits, or "turning over a new leaf". Salvation by human works, which Paul calls "the works of the law", is forever impossible. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight:

Ps. 14:1,2 Ps. 51:1,2 Ps. 5:9  
Ps. 140:3 Ps. 10:7 Isaiah 54:7,8

for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (3:20).

There is no more serious religious fallacy than this "old delusion". It is an age-old error, yet ever new, ever recurring, never dying. It is Satan's most effective snare for keeping millions of people from Christ. "Be good and you will go to heaven"; "Live a good life"; or "Be religious; go to church and you will be saved." Obviously such a program is not Christianity, for it is common to all the heathen religions of the world. There is not a false religion or heathen cult in the world that does not teach that man can save himself by good works or a good life.

God's holy law cuts off all such expectations at the root. Why? Because God's law cannot be satisfied with a **PARTIAL, IMPERFECT OBEDIENCE**. God's law demands **MORAL PERFECTION** — to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength, and to love our neighbor as ourself. That is moral perfection. Falling short of that is **SIN**. Hence the law of God not only cannot save us; it reduces us to an admission of our guilt before God: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: **THAT EVERY MOUTH MAY BE STOPPED, AND ALL THE WORLD MAY BECOME GUILTY BEFORE GOD**" (3:19). The law, and works performed in obedience to the law, cannot save us. They cannot justify us before God. The law is for diagnosis, not for cure. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (3:20). The law of God is a mirror, showing us ourselves as we really are in God's sight. It reveals that we are deathly sick of an incurable disease, the disease of sin. For the remedy we must go to God who alone has the power to work miracles and to accomplish impossible things.

God's law is, to the sinner, not **GOOD ADVICE**, but an **INDICTMENT**. It declares him guilty, it convicts him of sin.

#### **Application to Ourselves**

In applying these truths to ourselves, we may ask ourselves three questions, namely:

1. Do we rebel in our hearts against the statements of 3:10-18? Do we feel that we cannot be as bad as that? If we do, then it is our **FEELINGS** against the testimony of **GOD'S WORD**. We are fighting against God. It is only God's grace that has kept any of us from being in full detail as wicked as the description given in these verses. Our nature and our sinful heart are exactly as described in 3:10-18; only God in His mercy has held the outward expression of our sin partly in check. We need the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and then we can read these verses over and say "Amen" to them verse by verse.

2. Have we finished with the old delusion of self-salvation? A drowning man must quit struggling before he can be rescued. We must stop trying to save ourselves before we can receive salvation from Christ. We might as well try to swim across the Atlantic Ocean as try to save ourselves from sin and gain eternal life by our own works or character. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). That means, first and foremost, rest from the futile struggle of trying to save ourselves by our own actions and efforts. We are to stop trying to save ourselves, and to rest in Christ's salvation.

3. Have we learned the great lesson of the law of God? "By the law is the knowledge of sin". If we have learned this great lesson we will realize that the law has a **PERSONAL** meaning for us individually. We can read over the Ten Commandments and ask ourselves after each one, How do I plead, guilty or not guilty? And if we have learned the great lesson of the law of God, we will plead guilty after every single commandment. We will realize and confess that there is not one of them that we have not broken in word, thought and deed. We will realize that our only hope is to throw ourselves on the mercy of the court — that is, on God's mercy. When a person gets to that point, he soon finds out what it is to experience God's salvation. For if we have really learned the great lesson of the law of God, we will go to Christ and trust Him as our Saviour. If the law of God has done us any real good, it will drive us to Christ.

#### **Questions:**

1. What conclusion of his argument does Paul state in 3:9?
2. Why does Paul cite several texts from the Old Testament in support of this conclusion?
3. What is the truth set forth in all these Old Testament texts?
4. What is "The Old Delusion" which Paul rejects in 3:19, 20?
5. What are some of the names by which this old delusion is called in our own day?
6. How is this old delusion used by Satan?
7. How can it be shown that this old delusion is not Christianity?
8. How does God's law cut the root of all schemes of self-salvation?
9. What kind of obedience is demanded by the law of God?
10. If the law cannot save, what is its function in relation to the sinner?
11. If our hearts rebel against the teaching

of 3:10-18, what does this indicate as to our spiritual state?

12. What is the meaning of Jesus' invitation in Matt. 11:28?

13. What is the great lesson of the law of God for sinners?

14. If we have really learned the great lesson of the law of God, what will we do next?

## LESSON 11

### GOD'S WAY OF JUSTIFYING SINNERS. 3:21 to 5:21

#### A. Justification by Faith Defined and Expounded. 3:21-31

The apostle has already shown that we are all sinners needing salvation. The Jews and the Gentiles are alike in this respect. People may differ in the kinds of sin they are involved in, and in the degree of their sin, but not in the FACT of their being sinners against God. All are lost sinners; all need salvation.

Paul has also pointed out the great mistake of supposing that we can somehow save ourselves by being good or by doing good. It is no use. All attempts to save ourselves by a good life — "the deeds of the law" — are bound to result in dismal failure, because we cannot obey God's law perfectly. The law cannot save us; it can only convince us that we are sinners. Paul sums it all up in 3:20, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin". These words are a stone wall, against which all schemes of self-salvation must inevitably crash.

Having exposed the hopelessness of self-salvation, Paul now proceeds to explain God's way of salvation for lost sinners. He calls it "justification" or "being justified". We shall now proceed to study this.

#### Justification Introduced. 3:21-23

We can never attain or achieve righteousness by our own efforts. But there is ANOTHER KIND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, which Paul begins to explain in verse 21. He calls it "the righteousness of God". That is by way of contrast; it is the righteousness which we get from God, not from ourselves. When a person thinks himself pretty good, we say that such a person is "self-righteous". Now the "righteousness of God" is the opposite of "self-righteousness". The self-righteous person tries to be righteous by his own efforts. But the person who has the righteousness of God gets it as a gift from God.

Paul goes on to say that this righteousness of God is "without the law". People try to be self-righteous by strenuous efforts to obey the law of God. They think that the harder they try, the more righteous they will be. Self-righteousness is "with the law"; it is an attempt to attain righteousness by law-observance. But the righteousness of God is "without the law". No matter how lawless or wicked a person has been, he can still receive the righteousness of God. And

no matter how hard a person has tried to obey the laws of God, he cannot contribute the least bit to the righteousness of God. We get it, perfect and entire, as a GIFT OF GOD, quite apart from any efforts of our own at keeping God's law.

Paul adds that this righteousness of God is "witnessed by the law and the prophets". That is, this righteousness of God that he is speaking of is not a NOVELTY, not a strange, new doctrine; it is something described and illustrated in the Old Testament Scriptures. Not so fully as in the New Testament, of course, but still the essence of the truth was there in the Old Testament.

In introducing the righteousness of God, Paul tells one more thing about it. It is "by faith" — by faith in Jesus Christ, to all believers. All need it; it is available to all; all who really want it can have it, not by struggling and working, but by believing on Christ as their Saviour.

#### Justification Defined: Its Meaning Stated. 3:24

It is very clear that the words "justify" and "justification" in Paul's writings have a LEGAL meaning. Justification is explained by Paul as A JUDICIAL SENTENCE.

The word "justify" means literally TO PRO-NOUNCE OR DECLARE RIGHTEOUS. It means more than "pardon", more than "forgive", even more than "acquit". If a person is accused of some crime, and tried in a court of justice, and finally the jury brings in a verdict of acquittal, the members of the jury will say, "Not guilty". In other words, that the accused person is not a bad citizen, because he has not broken the law by committing the crime of which he was accused. But "justification" means more than that. When God JUSTIFIES a person, he does more than pardon that person, more than forgive that person's sins, more than pronounce that person "Not Guilty".

When God justifies a person, He not only pronounces that person "Not Guilty", but He goes on and pronounces that person "Positively Righteous".

Suppose a mother is going out for the afternoon and leaves two children alone in the house for a couple of hours. Before leaving, she says, "Don't play with the dishes; don't play with the water; and don't touch the sugar bowl". If the

children are careful to leave all those things alone, they will be "Not Guilty" of disobeying their mother. But suppose they want to please their mother very much, so while she is out they pick up all the toys and playthings from all over the house and carefully put them where they belong, and then get rags and dust all the furniture in the living room. Now when the mother returns she can pronounce them not only "Not Guilty" but also "Positively Righteous".

Someone has said that "Justified means just-as-if-I'd". Of course this is not the derivation of the word. But it may help us to grasp the meaning of the term. If I am justified, it is just-as-if-I'd never done anything wrong, and it is just-as-if-I'd always done everything that is good and right. Because I am a sinner, I have not only done many things that I ought not to have done, but have also neglected the things that I ought to have done. But when I am justified, it is just-as-if-I'd always done everything that it was my duty to do. God not only forgives my sins, and declares me "Not Guilty", but He goes further than that and says that it is just-as-if-I'd always done all kinds of good things, just-as-if-I'd always lived A PERFECT LIFE, a life of perfect righteousness.

To live a perfect life (which of course is impossible for us sinners to do) means to love God supremely, with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love our fellow man as ourself. Of course we have fallen far, far short of that ideal. But when we are justified, God Him-

self declares that it is JUST AS IF we had always lived a perfect life.

#### Questions:

1. What verse in Romans 3 is a stone wall against which all schemes of self-salvation must crash?
2. After explaining that we cannot attain righteousness by our own efforts, what other kind of righteousness does Paul speak of?
3. What is the opposite of "the righteousness of God"?
4. What is meant by saying that the righteousness of God is "without the law"?
5. What statement of Paul shows that the truth of the righteousness of God is not a novelty?
6. What is the literal meaning of the word "justify"?
7. Why is it true that justification means more than pardon, forgiveness or acquittal?
8. What is meant by saying "Justified means just-as-if-I'd"?
9. In addition to declaring a person "Not Guilty", what further declaration does God make in justifying a person?
10. What is involved in living a perfect life?
11. How can a sinner be credited with the righteousness of a perfect life?

## LESSON 12

### GOD'S WAY OF JUSTIFYING SINNERS. 3:21 to 5:21, Continued

#### A. Justification by Faith Defined and Expounded. 3:21-31, Continued

##### Justification is Free

In defining justification, Paul goes on to tell us three facts about it. In the first place, justification is FREE. "Being justified FREELY" (3:24). When something is free, we get it without paying for it, or working for it; we get it for nothing. The most important thing in life can be had for nothing, as a free gift, without money and without price.

The most important thing in life is A LEGAL STANDING WITH GOD. By nature, as sinners, we are outlaws and rebels against God. We need a legal standing with God, that will make us citizens of His kingdom and thus open the way for the other blessings that only God can give us.

Suppose a man comes to the United States from some foreign country, by hiding on a ship as a stowaway. When the ship reaches the shores of America, this stowaway watches his chance, evades the immigration officers, and sneaks into

this country like a thief. He is in America, but he has no legal standing in this country. All around him he sees opportunities; he would like to get a job and improve his condition. But he cannot because he has no legal standing in the country. As soon as he applies for a position of any importance he will be investigated and it will be discovered that he entered this country illegally. Before he can take advantage of the opportunities of America, he must have a legal standing in the country. The U. S. Government does not bestow a legal standing as a free gift on people who have entered the country illegally. There is only one way such a person can get the legal standing he needs: he must give himself up to the officers of the law, be deported back to his native country, wait his turn for immigration papers, and come to the United States all over again as a legal immigrant.

Our greatest need is for a legal standing with God, for God to pronounce us righteous. And He does it FREELY, as a gift. It is not something that we deserve; it is not something we can ever earn or achieve; it is just a free GIFT.

### Justification is by Grace

Paul adds that we are justified "by his grace" (3:24). This means that justification is not only a free gift, but a free gift TO THE UNWORTHY, and not only to the unworthy, but to those who have offended against God and deserve to be punished. Before God, we are not merely undeserving; we are actually ILL-DESERVING. As the Shorter Catechism says, we deserve God's wrath and curse. God takes sinners who deserve His wrath and curse, and declares that they are righteous persons, that it is just as if they had always lived a perfect life! That is the meaning of GRACE.

Suppose a beggar comes to your door and asks for something to eat. You give him a sandwich and a cup of coffee. That is a GIFT, it is free, because he has not earned it. But now suppose that this same person has broken into your house, stolen some of your property, then taken your automobile and wrecked it. Later he is arrested by the police and you are given an opportunity to bring legal charges against him, and also to sue him for civil damages. But instead of that, you refuse to press any charges; you give the man a new suit of clothes and \$100 in cash, and find a job for him so that he can become a respectable member of the community. That would be not merely a gift, but a gift of GRACE; it would be favor given not merely to the undeserving, but to the ill-deserving.

God's gift of justification is like that, only we have offended against God far more seriously than the burglar mentioned above has offended against the property owner. We have offended so seriously against God that we actually deserve to die and go to hell forever. Yet God not only does not condemn us to hell; He actually declares that we are as righteous as if we had always done all the good He had a right to expect of us; and He makes us citizens of His Kingdom and bestows all blessings, temporal and eternal, upon us. That is GRACE.

### Justification is through Christ's Redemption

Thirdly, in defining justification, Paul states that it is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (3:24).

At the creation, God said, "Let there be light", and immediately "there was light" (Gen. 1:3). Just like that, just by a word of divine creative power. God could make light come out of darkness the way, but even God could not forgive sinners that way. Even God could not just say "Let there be forgiveness", "Let there be salvation", "Let there be justification", and have all those things come to pass just by speaking a word of divine power.

God is almighty, but there is one thing that God cannot do, the Bible teaches us. It teaches

us that God cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13). Again the Bible says that God cannot tell a lie (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). Why cannot God tell a lie? He cannot tell a lie because to tell a lie would be to deny Himself. It would be contrary to His holy nature to tell a lie. God could not tell a lie any more than He could create a square circle or a five sided triangle; it would be contrary to His nature to do so. He cannot deny Himself. God is almighty, but He cannot justify sinners by simply speaking a word of divine power, like saying "Let there be light". For that would be to deny Himself. It would be a contradiction of HIS ABSOLUTE JUSTICE.

If God were to justify sinners by simply saying "Let them be justified", then God's justice, which demands that sin be punished, would be denied. No, God does not and cannot justify sinners by simply speaking a word of power. It is not so simple as that. He saves sinners by a PLAN OF SALVATION, and the central fact of that plan is "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (3:24).

God is an honest God. Sinners are not smuggled to heaven by trickery. We believe in an HONEST God. Because God is absolutely honest, the penalty of the sinner's sin had to be borne, if not by the sinner personally, then by a divinely-provided Substitute. Jesus Christ is that divinely-provided Substitute, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross to save us from our sins. Salvation is free to us, but look what it cost God to make it free! It cost the sacrifice, the sufferings and death of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Redeemer, to make salvation free to sinners. Truly, salvation is A PURCHASED GIFT. It was purchased at an infinitely costly price, so that it could be bestowed on you and me as a free gift, without money and without price. And that purchase price was the sacrifice on Calvary of the Son of God!

### Questions:

1. What is meant by the statement that we are justified "freely"?
2. What is our great need as sinners?
3. What is the meaning of God's "grace", and how does it go beyond a mere gift?
4. What is the difference between being undeserving and being ill-deserving?
5. How seriously have we as sinners offended against God?
6. How did God make light at the creation?
7. According to the Bible, what is there that God cannot do?

8. Why can God not tell a lie?
9. Why can God not justify sinners by simply speaking a word of divine power?
10. What is the central fact of God's plan of salvation?
11. What is meant by saying that God is an

honest God, and what is the relation of this to the salvation of sinners?

12. What do we mean by calling salvation "a purchased gift"? In what sense is salvation a gift and in what sense is it purchased?

13. What was the price by which the salvation of sinners was purchased?

### LESSON 13

#### GOD'S WAY OF JUSTIFYING SINNERS. 3:21 to 5:21, Continued

##### A. Justification by Faith Defined and Expounded. 3:21-31, Continued

###### The Ground of Justification. 3:25

"... Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (3:24, 25). The wages of sin is death (6:23). But so far as God's law is concerned, the Christian has already suffered that penalty, he has already been put to death, not in his own person, but in the person of his Substitute, Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us that Jesus Christ was set forth to be "a propitiation through faith in his blood". "Propitiation" means A SACRIFICE TO CANCEL SIN so that God could justify sinners and still be righteous. The just claims of the law have already been satisfied by Christ on behalf of His people. In him was no sin; on him were our sins (Isa. 53:6).

"In his blood". Blood shed stands for DEATH. It was not just the life, or the teachings, or the example of Christ, but the DEATH of Christ that laid the foundation for our salvation. It was by His DEATH, bearing the penalty of sin in our stead.

Scripture says that we are justified "by faith" and "through faith", but it never says that we are justified "on account of faith". Faith is not the GROUND of our justification, though without faith we cannot be justified. Nor is the ground of our justification any kind of human merit, such as good works, repentance or sorrow for sin.

The real ground of our justification is the finished work of Jesus Christ as our Substitute—His blood and righteousness. This is shown by Romans 3:25, and also by many other Scripture texts, such as 1 Peter 2:24, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." Also Rom. 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life THROUGH JESUS Christ our Lord."

###### The Means of Justification. 3:25

We are justified "by" or "through" faith, but not "on account of" faith. This is as clear as crystal from the usage of the Greek New Testament. Faith is not the ground or cause of our justification; it is just the connecting link between us and Christ.

We should realize that faith is a channel, not a force. There is a great deal of unscriptural and very foolish talk today about the power of faith. People talk about faith as if it were a force comparable to electricity or atomic energy. We are told that faith has more power than dynamite, and so forth. This is all extremely false and foolish. The truth is, that faith itself has no power at all. It is not a force; it is a channel which connects us to the source of power. An electric wire is not a force; it is the channel of connection with the dynamo which is the real source of the power. The electric energy comes from the dynamo, not from the wire; but the wire has to be there as the channel for the energy to flow through.

Faith as a connecting link or means of contact with Christ is illustrated by Christ's miracles during "the days of his flesh". The power to work the miracles was in Christ alone. Yet he would often ask whether the person believed or not; and sometimes he would specify some action to be performed that would serve as a token or evidence of faith — to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam, to roll away the stone from the door of the tomb of Lazarus, for example. These actions in themselves had no power to perform any mighty work, but they manifested the FAITH which connected these persons with Christ who had all the power that was needed.

There is today no end of vague talk about "faith". Some say "We must have faith in the things we believe in" (a round-about way of saying nothing at all); some say that we must have faith in our fellow men; while others say that we must have faith in ourselves. But in the Bible we are commanded to have faith IN CHRIST. Faith in ourselves will not save us; faith in our fellow men will not save us; the only faith that can save us is faith in Christ as our Saviour.

### **The Aim of Justification. 3:26**

"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (3:26).

The aim of justification is to manifest God's glory in the salvation of human beings. Justification brings no credit whatever to us; all the glory goes to God, who is the Source and Author of it. It **DECLARES** or brings out plainly two things about God's character: his **LOVE**, and His **JUSTICE**.

For God merely to forgive sin would be unrighteous, it would be a contradiction to His justice, for He cannot clear the guilty. God's love leads Him to forgive and justify sinful man; but His justice demands that sinners be condemned and punished. How can this problem be solved? Only by the cross of Jesus Christ, who suffered the penalty which justice demanded, so that we can receive forgiveness as the gift of God's love.

So it appears how God can both be righteous, and also justify sinners; how he can be just, and at the same time be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. This is very different from the easy-going modern idea that God is too kind and loving to punish anyone for sin. According to the Bible, sin was such a serious matter and such a terrible contradiction of God's character, that the only way God could justify sinful human beings was for God's own Son, Jesus Christ, to bear the penalty of the broken law in the sinner's stead.

### **The Effect of Justification. 3:27-31**

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? or works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (3:27,28).

The effect of God's way of justification is, in a word, to humble man and exalt God, which is exactly the opposite of the popular religion of the present day. "Boasting" or self-righteousness is excluded, Paul affirms, because what we receive in justification is simply a free gift to which we had no claim whatever. If we could earn our salvation by living a good life, then we might have something to be proud about, to boast about. It is not so.

The popular religion of today ("character building", etc.) approaches God saying "Something in my hand I bring" — good works, social service, a good character, and so forth. But the true Christian approaches God saying "**NOTHING** in my hand I bring". And if we bring nothing, then we have nothing to boast about. The lie of self-righteousness is cut off at the root.

Another effect of justification is that it **ESTABLISHES THE LAW**.

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (3:31). Some of Paul's Jewish opponents would accuse him of "making void" (nullifying) the authority of the law of God, by his doctrine of salvation by free grace through faith. Paul repudiates the criticism. The doctrine of justification by faith does not in any way cancel, or even minimize, the claims of the law of God. For the justification of sinners is not accomplished by any evasion or by-passing of the law. God does not somehow relax the demands of His law, and agree to take sinners into heaven on lower terms than an absolute and perfect obedience. On the contrary, God demands a perfect obedience and no one will ever get into heaven any other way. But by God's plan of salvation, that perfect obedience is rendered, not by the sinner personally, but by the divinely-provided Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. The law required that the death penalty be paid for sin: "The wages of sin is death" (6:23). But the penalty, in full, was paid on Calvary. The claims of the law were not disregarded or by-passed; they were **SATISFIED** to the full. Hence God's way of justification actually **ESTABLISHES** the law. It provides for the salvation of sinners, while maintaining the absolute sanctity of the law of God.

Today many people have no real sense of guilt before God. That is what is really the matter with the modern church. It is not that we do not have good enough methods, or that we have too little evangelism, but that the sense of guilt has been thoroughly undermined and subverted by modern thought, which is today percolating clear through to the "grass roots" level of our culture. Christ did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The church that attempts to call the righteous to repentance is engaging in an impossible task. Human self-righteousness must be cut off at the root and sinners humbled before God.

The doctrine of justification is the heart of the Bible, the center of Christianity and the very core of the Gospel. In essence it is taught in the Old Testament, but it is set forth more fully and more clearly in the New Testament, especially in Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. This great truth was known by the early Church, but gradually lost and forgotten. For about a thousand years it was practically unknown. At the Reformation, beginning with Martin Luther (1517) it was recovered and preached with power. The result was the greatest revival the world has ever known.

Today the truth of justification is all but forgotten again. Many church members and professing Christians have never even heard of it. But we have received it as a torch of divine truth from those who knew and believed it before us. It is ours to hold it high, not only for the present, but for transmission to the future. It

is the bulwark of our Christian faith and the rock of our liberties. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). There is no freedom like the freedom from the guilt and condemnation of sin.

#### Questions:

1. What is the wages of sin, and how has the Christian already suffered that penalty?
2. What is the meaning of the term "propitiation"?
3. Why is the phrase "in his blood" added to "propitiation"?
4. What is the difference between being justified "by" or "through" faith and being justified "on account of" faith?
5. What is the real ground of our justification?
6. Why is faith not the ground of our justification?
7. What is meant by saying that faith is a channel, not a force?
8. How is the truth that faith is a channel, not a force, illustrated by Christ's miracles?
9. What is the only kind of faith that can save us?
10. What is the aim of justification?
11. What two facts about God's character does justification bring out?
12. What is the effect of justification, with reference to human pride?
13. Why does justification by faith exclude human boasting?
14. What is the effect of justification, with reference to the claims of the law of God?
15. How does justification establish the law?
16. Why is it that many people today have no sense of guilt before God?
17. Why are all church programs and endeavors futile unless people are brought to a sense of guilt before God?
18. What reformer was prominent in reviving the doctrine of justification by faith after it had been forgotten for centuries?
19. What is the importance of the doctrine of justification in the Bible?
20. In what books of the Bible is the doctrine of justification most clearly and fully set forth?
21. What is the present status of the doctrine of justification?
22. What is our duty with respect to the doctrine of justification?

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

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## *Reviews of Religious Books*

The favorable reviewing of a book here is not to be understood as necessarily implying an endorsement of everything contained in it. Please purchase books from your local book dealer or direct from the publishers; do not send orders to the publisher of "Blue Banner Faith and Life."

**THE LIFE STORY OF DR. LEE S. HUIZENGA**, by L. J. Lamberts. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 194. \$2.50.

This is an intensely interesting biography of a missionary of the Christian Reformed Church who was called to be present with the Lord in the summer of 1945, just a few days before the end of the war in the Pacific. At the time of his death he was a prisoner of the Japanese in Shanghai.

Dr. Huizenga had the rather uncommon distinction of being both a minister of the Gospel and a doctor of medicine. Born in the Netherlands of Frisian stock in 1881, he was brought to

America by his parents in 1883. By earnest and heroic effort he was able to complete his studies for the Gospel ministry and later, for the practice of medicine. For a time he worked among the Navajo Indians in New Mexico. But his ambition was to serve on the foreign field, preferably in South America or in Africa. When his church decided to open a new field in China, he went there with the first party of missionaries in 1920.

Never in his quarter century of service in China did that country have real civil peace for long. Always there was crisis, war, calamity or the imminent threat of these and other evils. Through these years of turmoil and strife, Dr. Huizenga gave his best to the service of Christ

in China. He became a noted authority on the treatment of leprosy. But he never allowed his medical work to crowd out his concern for the salvation of souls.

This is a story of sustained courage and sacrificial devotion in the face of overwhelming obstacles. To read it is to have one's faith strengthened and one's zeal fired. An excellent book for missionary societies or other groups to read. There is not a dull page in it.—J. G. Vos

**THAT YE MAY BELIEVE: MESSAGES ON THE APOSTOLIC CREED**, by Peter H. Eldersveld. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 172. \$2.50.

The author of this book is the radio minister of the "Back to God Hour", the radio voice of the Christian Reformed Church. The volume consists of eighteen messages which were broadcast during 1949 and 1950 over the Mutual Network and many independent stations. Following the order of the "Apostles' Creed", these messages are simple, pointed, doctrinally sound and truly edifying. They are the work of one who has shown outstanding ability in presenting the Gospel to the unsaved. Unlike much of the evangelism of our day, these messages are not Arminian in character, but thoroughly Calvinistic. They honor the Triune God, the infallible Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ. They uphold the sovereignty of God in the salvation of men. Besides these characteristics, they are interesting, not "dry as dust" as doctrinal studies are often said to be. This would make an excellent book to give to an unsaved friend. It will present to such a person the pure truth as it is in Jesus.—J. G. Vos

**THE CASE AGAINST THE FEDERAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES;**

**THE CASE AGAINST THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**, by Chester E. Tulga. Conservative Baptist Fellowship, 2561 North Clark Street, Chicago 14, Ill. 68 and 61 pages. Price of each booklet, 25 cents.

These are two in a series of six booklets exposing unbelief and its fruits. In a dispassionate yet very convincing way, the author reveals the apostasy of the ecumenical movement as conceived by the Federal Council of Churches (now the National Council) and the World Council of Churches. These booklets will produce a strong reaction in the mind of the reader! Either you will "see red" and refuse to believe, or you will accept as trustworthy the quotations and documentary proof offered, and be cured forever of any temptation to flirt with the "ecumaniacs".

**THE CASE AGAINST THE FEDERAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES** (copyrighted 1948)

may seem dated since the Federal Council has been extended and enlarged and given a new name: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. However, early indications are that the information of this little book will apply just as pertinently to the National Council. There has been no repentance. There has been a change of name — conveniently, considering the strong and telling attacks upon the Federal Council — but not a change of heart. The emphasis continues to be placed upon organizational union rather than upon spiritual unity; upon politics and economics rather than upon revealed Truth.

**THE CASE AGAINST THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES** is written to show that "the World Council of Churches is not an answer to the prayer of Jesus for the unity of true believers, but the fulfilment of the dark prophecies of the New Testament that in the latter days men will depart from the faith"; and further that "membership in the World Council of Churches is a betrayal of the faith of historic Christianity and a departure from the testimony of historic Protestantism, and consent to that form of ecclesiastical union which counts adherence to historic Christianity a secondary thing. This is contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures and believers can have no fellowship with it."

The Temperance Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod might be interested in the quotation from Guy Mayfield in the Christian Standard (October 23, 1948). The author makes the quotation as an indication of the spiritual level of the Council meeting:

"When I give every allowance that I can for the difference in national customs and the understanding of important things, it is difficult for me to appreciate the spiritual depth of meetings where the great doctrines of the Bible are discussed in a haze of cigar and pipe smoke. Needless to say, there was no smoking in the large sessions of the congress, but it was common in the section, press and committee meetings. A refreshment stand was provided in the convention hall. I do not know under whose auspices, but the building was open to no one but those attending the assembly, and beer was sold along with coffee and soda water and sandwiches."

Unlike much pamphlet literature, these books are beautifully printed. While the author is of the Conservative Baptist Fellowship, and writes with Baptist readers in mind, his booklets ought to be widely read and quoted everywhere. I heartily recommend them.

— Robert W. McMillan

**CHRISTIANITY AND CLASSICAL CIVILIZATION** by Ralph Stob. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 198. \$3.00.

The fusion of Hebrew idioms and Greek thought-forms into an adequate means of channeling the revelation that God has made to man, has long intrigued the inquiring Christian. Professor Stob, of Calvin College, in examining the relationships between the Christian and pagan elements in our modern life, emphasizes the distinctly supernatural element of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The author summarizes the object of such a study. It is in the first place, "an historical investigation as to the nature of the relation of original or primitive Christianity as incorporated in the Scripture and the pagan culture of Greece and Rome which preceded it." But it is more. It is also an analysis of the "constant interaction of the Hebrew and Hellenic principles which together make the main sources of our culture." It is the latter element which deserves emphasis. For "it is the conviction of the author that the present age is one which is much more Hellenic than Christian. Within the Christian church much of purely pagan thought has supplanted the Scripture teaching" (p. 14).

It is in the field of Ethics that Dr. Stob makes the most penetrating analysis of a modern tendency to confuse the real source of our accepted standards of right and wrong. The struggle that consumed so much of the attention and energies of the Church Fathers in asserting the uniqueness of Scriptural standards was sharpened because they recognized certain basic and fundamental differences between the revelation of Scripture and even the best in the purely pagan thought of their day. We, today, are in danger of accepting the pagan "grounds" for individual and social living and being satisfied with less than the fullness of the special revelation of God through Jesus Christ. Perhaps this may explain the secularists' desire to be known as "Christian" while passionately denying the "supernatural" in the connotation of the term Christian.

— S. Bruce Willson

**BIBLE LESSONS FOR JUNIORS: BOOK I**, by Andrew Van Der Veer. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1950, pp. 80, paper cover. \$.75 each; \$7.50 per dozen.

It is notorious that the International Uniform Sabbath School lessons have failed to provide pupils with any real grasp of the historical structure and continuity of the Bible story. Pupils who have been taught them for years are still all mixed up, having only the vaguest and most sketchy ideas of the historical contents of the Bible; many of high school and even college age cannot guess the date of Abraham within a thousand years, and quite fail to realize that Abraham, David and John the Baptist were not contemporaries. Such is the dark night of sheer

ignorance that has settled upon large sections of American Protestantism.

As an educational institution, the Sabbath School at best operates under a tremendous handicap, having only a half hour or so each week for instruction. This makes it imperative that the available time be used to best advantage, and that the historical contents of the Bible be taught in an orderly and systematic way, rather than by a "hop, skip and jump" system. Only after the outline and main facts of the Bible story are firmly in mind can there be any real benefit from more advanced lessons on doctrinal and ethical subjects. There must be a framework of historical structure in the pupil's mind, or lessons on such subjects as worship, missions, social justice, etc., will be left hanging in the air.

The book under review is the first of a four book series for children of junior age (9-12 years), and this first book is intended especially for the 8-9 year old group of children (third and fourth grade in school). However it can easily be used with older groups.

This series of books is an attempt to provide Sabbath School lesson material for children that will be Biblically sound, practically usable, and that will provide the historical continuity which is so notoriously lacking in the International Uniform Lessons.

Book I contains 28 lessons, thus providing material for approximately six months. The material is very interestingly and attractively put up, with excellent questions and written work accompanying each story. The lessons start with the Creation (Genesis 1) and continue to the Death of Moses (Deut. 34). These lessons are thoroughly true to the Bible, and if used consistently will enable the children to get a connected idea of the Bible story.

The printing is beautifully done, in large, easily readable type on good paper. The cover is of stiff glossy paper, and the size of the book is about six by nine inches. It is a pleasure to recommend these lessons heartily. The Baker Book House is doing a real service by publishing them. The congregation of which this reviewer is the pastor is now using these lessons for its children of junior age.

— J. G. Vos

**TALKS WITH GABRIEL**, by Arjen Miedema, translated from the Dutch by Henry Zylstra. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 253. \$3.00.

This book is an excellent English translation of a Christian novel which has enjoyed the remarkable circulation of six editions in one year

in the Netherlands. Though called a novel, it is really a mixture of story and allegory. It is really remarkable in that it moves in the sphere of orthodox Reformed or Calvinistic Christianity—the truth of the Calvinistic system of theology is the assumption on which the novel is based.

It is only necessary to read a few pages to realize that the author is a literary genius. But it is clear that he is also a man of deep spiritual experience, and that this story is to a great extent a veiled autobiography. There is not a dull paragraph in the book; the reader will feel unable to put it down until he has finished it, and then he will keep thinking about it for weeks afterwards.

The principal character of the story is one Jacobus Vander Stupe, a real but very weak and very human Christian. Vander Stupe is an office worker in post-war Holland, and the frustrations and shortages of a war-ravaged country really "get him down". While Jacobus' wife is a mature Christian who can love and trust God in spite of privations and disappointments, it is different with Jacobus himself. If Christianity is true, it seems to him that God's people ought not to have to suffer as they do. Among his other troubles, Jacobus has stomach ulcers, the pain of which he can relieve to some extent with a "comfort" of raw eggs beaten up. But eggs become unobtainable, and he suffers his pain uncomforted, and this becomes a real crisis in his Christian experience.

Another matter is the "runner" of carpet in his front hall, which is worn to shreds. The fact that a new one cannot be obtained is a trial to Jacobus' faith. If God answers prayer, why can the Vander Stupes not get a new hall carpet in answer to prayer? Does not God care about His children's lack of such things?

To Jacobus Vander Stupe there comes a mysterious visitor. Finally guessing that it may be an angel, Jacobus asks, "Are you Gabriel?" but is told in reply that the name is a secret; however, this much can be told: the bigger the sinner, the greater the angel assigned to minister in the case. Jacobus realizes that it is indeed Gabriel: "It was clear as day to me that I was dealing with nobody less than Gabriel. A bigger sinner than I am still has to be born. Nobody — and in spite of better knowledge — can swear such a blue streak as I sometimes do."

The book proceeds with Jacobus Vander Stupe's experiences and reflections, interspersed with "talks with Gabriel", who reappears from time to time and coaches Jacobus along to spiritual maturity.

Jacobus often loses his temper and swears "a blue streak", but on the other hand he is utterly bored and disgusted by the vegetable-like dullness and complacency of his pious Christian

neighbors. When they get together they seem to talk only about the weather and other trivialities, without the slightest interest in spiritual things or the real issues of life. Jacobus, on the other hand, in spite of his bad habit of swearing, has a kind of spiritual sensitivity which his neighbors completely miss — to them, he seems only queer. Once in a gathering of friends he speaks of the wonder of God's work of creation as displayed in the many different shades of green observed in nature. His almost poetic enthusiasm is met by uncomprehending blank looks on their faces. Jacobus again loses his temper and walks out in a huff.

Through Gabriel's patient coaching, Jacobus finally reaches a higher plane. He comes to see the smallness and selfishness of his former praying, and has the very encouraging experience of seeing a desperately sick child restored to health in answer to his prayers. At the same time, he learns from Gabriel that he would have received a new hall carpet and a very badly needed new pair of garters in answer to prayer, if he had only not become discouraged and stopped praying for them.

Two things in the book especially impressed this reviewer as unfortunate. In the first place, there are repeated pot-shots at "dogmatism". Presumably this reflects the present church situation in the Netherlands, but it seems quite out of place in the world of American Protestantism. If any one thing is desperately needed in American church life today, it is precisely more dogma. The membership of the churches is deplorably ignorant of Christian doctrine. For example, it is reported that a seminary student of a Calvinistic denomination was being examined for licensure to preach the Gospel. On being asked "What was the Covenant of Works?" he betrayed a total ignorance of that basic doctrine, only being able to reply: "It means that Adam had to work for a living" (!) What we need in America is not less "dogmatism", but vastly more.

Secondly, in one of the allegorical sections of the book (pages 241-2) there occurs what impresses this reviewer as a polemic against denominationalism:

"'Know what you did tonight, Jacobus?' he (Gabriel) asked.

"'No', I said, 'except that I cleared something out of the way that stood in the road of Paradise.'

"'Exactly — tonight you wrecked all the churches.'

"'I froze, as though I had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. 'That's terrible,' I said; 'then there isn't a church on the earth anymore. Good thing I did it unwittingly.'

"I knew what you were doing, Jacobus, and it was a good thing, very necessary even. Didn't you hear those bickering voices overwhelmed by that one soft litany? An over-dogmatized faith held the *Una Sancta* captive in its walls — and you liberated it. . . Of course, there's faith underneath dogmatics too, but the odium of that science is that you always have to be militant about it, and the *Una Sancta* can't live on battle-hymns. And now the time for the *Una Sancta* has come."

The emphasis which occurs in the above dialogue between Jacobus and Gabriel impresses this reviewer as most unfortunate and unwise. It will give many readers the impression that the ecumenical movement of the World Council of Churches is the path to true Christian testimony and progress.

There are a number of typographical errors, mostly unimportant. On page 103 the word "pantheist" appears as "panthiest". On page 83 the word "censorship" occurs, referring to an act of church discipline. The correct English term is "censure".

In spite of the criticisms registered above, this is an excellent book. It will help any serious Christian to realize the significance of our earthly lives in God's eternal plan. And in particular, it will help any serious Christian to understand and appreciate the very great importance and function of prayer in the working out of God's eternal counsel.

— J. G. Vos

**THE CASE FOR THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST**, by Chester E. Tulga. Conservative Baptist Fellowship, 2561 North Clark St., Chicago 14, Ill. 1950, pp. 60, paper cover. 25 cents.

This study, though brief, is a thorough and scholarly defence of the Biblical doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ, over against liberal denials of that truth. There is here none of the easy superficiality that marks much "Fundamentalist" literature. Dr. Tulga is a scholar and he is thoroughly at home not only in orthodox theology, but in the writings of the liberals and modernists of our day. Aply he shows that Christ's birth of the Virgin Mary is part and parcel of the Biblical portrait of the supernatural Christ, and that the Virgin Birth and supernatural Christianity stand or fall together. The Scriptural truth is presented in contrast to the statements of modern unbelief, and it is shown that the supernatural, virgin-born Christ is the only Christ presented in the Bible. The author points out clearly that the real obstacle in the liberals' minds to believing in the Virgin Birth is not any matter of evidence concerning the fact, but their naturalistic philosophy which rules out any and all miracles as inherently impossible. In short, the liberals do not believe in the Virgin

Birth because they do not believe in a really ALMIGHTY God who controls all that comes to pass and can perform miracles if and when He chooses to do so. Very truly Dr. Tulga says:

"What the modernists call natural law is simply the behaviour-pattern of Deity. They are not laws which He cannot break, for He is free. They are not laws which cannot be suspended, for He made them and can use them for His own purpose. His freedom over His own laws does not destroy the stability of the universe for He is not a capricious God but a God of infinite wisdom. The unchanging God who expresses himself in uniformity of nature and faithfulness in grace is not compelled to be unchanging. His unchangeableness in nature and in grace is a manifestation of love and wisdom but not an abdication of freedom and sovereignty. The Scriptures reveal a God who is in perfect command over the universe, expressing Himself in both stability and miracle" (pp. 21,22).

— J. G. Vos

**THE CASE AGAINST THE SOCIAL GOSPEL**, by Chester E. Tulga. Conservative Baptist Fellowship, 2561 North Clark Street, Chicago 14, Ill. 1949, pp. 64, paper cover. 25 cents.

The sub-title of this booklet is: "A Study in the Social Theology of the Prophets". Following an introduction, the outline of the booklet is as follows: I. The Social Gospel is deeply rooted in a false theology. II. The Social Gospel is based upon a false social theology. III. The Social Gospel is based upon a false eschatology. IV. The social Gospel depends upon a worldly eclesiasticism undermined by unbelief to give moral stamina to society. V. The Social Gospel is more social than personal. VI. The Social Gospel vs. prophetic religion in national affairs. VII. The prophets of Israel, the ministry of today and the Social Gospel. VIII. The true minister of the Word has much in common with the prophets. IX. The Church and the social problems of today. Conclusion: What is the social responsibility of a New Testament Church?

Dr. Tulga abundantly shows that the so-called Social Gospel, as exemplified by its principal spokesmen, is based upon a thoroughly unsound type of theology — a theology radically contrary to the Biblical doctrines of human sinfulness, divine sovereignty and gracious redemption. Over against the superficial liberal claim to voice the social teachings of the Old Testament prophets, Dr. Tulga gives a very good survey of the real teachings of the prophets and shows that these were rooted in views of God, man, sin and salvation which are entirely alien to the ideology of the "Social Gospel" of today. The following paragraph is eminently worth quoting in full:

"The modern social gospel, while paying lip

service to the prophets, rejects the sovereign God of the prophets. The supernaturalism of the prophets is denied by the naturalism of the modernists. The God of the modernist is limited by denying Him that sovereignty ascribed to Him by the prophets whereby He can and does act independently of man, motivated by His own will alone. The modernist limits God by his definition of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, omitting from the character and personality of God some of His essential attributes, and compelling Him to act toward man in accordance with their own formula. Since the doctrine of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man has become a liberal dogma, then perforce God must not do anything that violates this relationship. This automatically excludes the God of the Old Testament who was the God of the prophets, for He cannot be fitted into the framework of his sentimental humanism, neither can He meet the demands of sinful men who presumptuously call themselves children of God — therefore they reject Him for a god of their own devising. Under modernism man has acquired sovereign rights which he uses to remodel God Himself — a more subtle form of the sin of Lucifer. The social message of modern liberalism has only a remote relationship to the social message of the prophets, for it is not based upon the same conception of God and does not agree on the nature of man — these are fatal divergences” (pp. 12, 13).

Let it not be supposed tht Dr. Tulga holds that the Church should have no social message. His concern is not to deny that the Church should have a social message, but rather to insist that the Church's social message must be a Biblical one, not one derived from the assumptions of modern liberalism. In his concluding section (pages 61-64) he gives specific statements as to his view of the real social responsibility of the Visible Church. We shall quote parts of this section:

**“1. A New Testament church has a fundamental responsibility to the world: it must set forth and exemplify the righteous will of God for all men. It must not accept as its standard the ethical relativities of the modernists, the endless compromises of democracy, the party cries of the nationalists, the partisan lies of the politicians, the plausible trappings of economic greed, the mouthy ravings of shallow patriotism, the prejudices and fanaticisms of racism, or the pollyanna deliverances of its own pink-tea prophets. It must continually check and correct its basic positions by the eternal principles laid down in the Word of God. . . .**

**2. A New Testament church must not only be separate from the secular state in name, but it must refuse to be used by the secular state for secular ends. . . The true church must refuse**

to pronounce benedictions upon the sinful policies of the secular state, but on the other hand it should not give aid and comfort to others equally sinful who would overthrow the state. The church should endeavor under God, under the guidance of the Word of God, to give to Caesar all that belongs to Caesar.

**“3. A New Testament church must not devote its energies to changing basic economic and political systems, which is not within its mission, but to bring under Christian criticism all systems. Here again the prophets point the way. They had nothing to say about the value of the political, economic and cultural forms taken by their times, but they had much to say about those who, expressing themselves through these activities, violated the will of God and were guilty of selfish and unjust practices. They judged all things in their times by the will of God for men, and the effect of certain forms of sinful behaviour upon persons. Neither did they, like many modern liberals, conceive of a model state as a place where everyone has sufficient bread. The prophets would never have consented to exchanging spiritual and moral freedom for a totalitarian state with plenty of bread. On the other hand, they would have unsparingly condemned poverty in the midst of plenty.**

**“A New Testament church will note that private property, the right to engage freely in trade for profit, the relationship of employer and employee, are all recognized in the Scriptures and without objection as such. The Scriptures do not invest these practices with peculiar sanctity, but the testimony of history is that it is difficult to abolish these economic fundamentals and enjoy that liberty in which the Christian life thrives. . . .**

**“4. A New Testament church will keep constantly in mind that the hope of the church is not the building of the Kingdom of God by a world church with a confused message, but the return of the King to set up His Kingdom. . . . The true church, keeping its eyes fixed on the eternal, remembering continually its evangelistic and moral responsibility in the world of men, will remain the salt of society and the light in a sin-darkened world. On the other hand, religious apostasy has no spiritual dynamic in its idealism, no certainty in its message, and consequently no solution for the problems of a world in the grip of demonic forces and persistent in rebellion against God.”**

In the last quotation above (4) it should be noted that Dr. Tulga is speaking, not of the social duty of the Church, but of the HOPE of the Church. The present reviewer believes firmly that the Kingdom of God is present as well as future. Yet it is certainly true, as Dr. Tulga asserts, that the HOPE of the Church — THE hope of the Church, that is, the GREAT hope of the

Church — is not in the products of "kingdom building" but in the second coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

On page 30 the author speaks of "the converted world of post-millennialism" as one of a number of false "panaceas" that have in the past been offered to the Church. The reviewer considers this statement not quite fair to orthodox, supernaturalistic postmillennialism (as represented, for example, by the eminent theologian Charles Hodge). It would have been wise for Dr. Tulga to make a distinction between historic orthodox supernaturalistic Postmillennialism, and the naturalistic idea of heaven-on-earth by a process of evolution, which sometimes passes by the name of "Postmillennialism" today.

This booklet is certainly worthy of commendation. It should do much to expose the superficiality and un-Biblical character of the common liberal "Social Gospel" propaganda of the present day.

— J. G. Vos

**BIBLE ANACROSTICS**, by Rose A. Huston. The Board of Publication of the Reformed Presbyterian Church 1209 Boswell Ave., Topeka, Kansas. 1950, 8½ x 11¼ inches, paper cover with plastic spiral binding. Pp. 62. \$1.00.

Miss Rose Huston is a missionary who is well known to many readers of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". She has prepared a very ingenious book of Bible puzzles for children. The book contains 52 puzzles, which are of such a nature that the Bible must be used diligently to obtain the information required for filling in blank spaces. The result in each puzzle is a text of Scripture built up letter by letter as the child solves the puzzle. This book is eminently worth while, not only for the sheer fun that children will have in solving the puzzles, but for the practice in looking up Bible references that they will gain in the process. The solution of all the puzzles is given at the end of the book. The plastic binding is very satisfactory as it enables the book to lie perfectly flat when open. These are much more interesting and ingenious than cross-word puzzles. Every Christian family with children of school age should have a copy of "Bible Anacrostics".

— J. G. Vos

**THE BRETHERN OF THE COMMON LIFE**, by Albert Hyma. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 222. \$3.50.

This is a book especially for students of Church History. Gerard Groote (the name is variously spelled) lived from 1340 to 1384 in the Netherlands. After studying at the University of Paris and elsewhere, in 1374 he experienced a great spiritual change, and in 1379 began preaching as a missionary in the Netherlands. His success was marvellous; people left their business and their pleasures and flocked to hear him as he rebuked sin of all kinds without fear or favor. Before his death Gerard decided to form his followers into a religious order, though this was fully accomplished only after his death.

The present volume is the story of this little-known chapter of the Church History of the later middle ages. It is an important part of the background of the Protestant Reformation.

In this volume, the author also discusses the origin of the famous book **THE IMITATION OF CHRIST** by Thomas a-Kempis, maintaining that the true original was a work of the same name by one Gerard Zerbolt, which was later adapted and added to by Thomas a-Kempis.

Dr. Hyma is professor of History in the University of Michigan, and his work is of a very thorough and scholarly quality. There is an extensive bibliography of the subject at the end of the book.

— J. G. Vos

**Note:** Reviews of the following books, previously listed as "Books Received", will be published, D.V., in our July-September 1951 issue:

**THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES**, by Oswald T. Allis

**THE CASE AGAINST MODERNISM IN FOREIGN MISSIONS**, by Chester E. Tulga

**THE CASE AGAINST COMMUNISM**, by Chester E. Tulga

## **Books Received**

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

**TRIED BY FIRE: EXPOSITIONS OF I PETER**, by F. B. Meyer. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1950, pp. 218. \$2.50.

**WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY? AND OTHER ADDRESSES**, by J. Gresham Machen. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950. pp. 317. \$3.00.

AN EXPOSITION OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, by Arthur W. Pink. Bible Truth Depot, I. C. Herendeen, Swengel, Union Co., Pa. 1950, pp. 442, \$3.75.

THE MINOR PROPHETS: A COMMENTARY, EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL, by E. B. Pusey. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy Street, S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. Two volumes, pp. 427 and 504. Per volume \$3.50.

THE THEOLOGY OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR, by Edward J. Carnell. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1951, pp. 250. \$3.50.

OUR HOPE OF SURVIVAL, by George L.

Murray. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1951, pp. 133. \$1.50.

THE SEED OF ABRAHAM, by Albertus Pieters. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 161. \$2.50.

NOTES ON THE OLD TESTAMENT, EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL: PSALMS, by Albert Barnes. Three volumes, pp. 432, 448 and 408. 1950. Per volume, \$3.00.

A FOURFOLD SALVATION, by Arthur W. Pink. Bible Truth Depot, I. C. Herendeen, Swengel, Union Co., Pa. 1951, pp. 31, paper cover. 30 cents.

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## *Blue Banner Question Box*

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

### Question:

How general will be the visibility of Christ's second coming? Will "every eye" be able to see Him at the same moment? Will the last great day be an ordinary 24-hour day?

### Answer:

The Scripture strongly emphasizes the publicity, including the visibility, of Christ's second coming. Acts 1:11, 1 Thess. 4:16, 2 Thess. 2:8, Rev. 1:7 are relevant texts. One of the Greek terms used to describe our Lord's second coming is the EPIPHANEIA ("appearing"), a word which brings out the visibility of His coming. This word is used in 2 Tim. 1:10 of the first coming of Jesus Christ, and in 1 Tim. 6:14, 2 Tim. 4:1,8, Titus 2:13 of His second coming in glory. Our Lord Himself compared His second coming to a flash of lightning: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so also shall the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:27; compare Luke 17:24).

As the second coming of Christ will be an event of cosmic significance, we believe that the statement "every eye shall see him" (Rev. 1:7) is to be interpreted literally. But when we inquire as to whether, and how, every eye on this spherical planet can see Him at the same moment, it can only be replied that here we enter the realm of deep mystery concerning which we are hardly warranted in making assertions. The second coming of Christ is the end of history and the beginning of eternity; it is the boundary line between what Scripture calls "this age (world)" and what it calls "the age (world) to come". It is clear that in eternity we will not be subject to natural law exactly as we are subject to it now.

Things which today would be miracles, may be normal events in the life eternal. Now as the second coming of Christ is the boundary line between history and eternity, it is inevitable that it should be veiled in mystery and that some features of the prophecies concerning it should be impossible for us to understand or explain in terms of our present everyday experience of life and consciousness under the laws of time and space which now condition our existence. Of course it is not beyond the power of God to enable "every eye" to see Christ in the same moment of time.

The same observations would apply to the question as to whether the last great day will be an ordinary 24-hour day. The present writer is hesitant to affirm anything of this kind. The usage of the word "day" in the Bible would perhaps seem to indicate that it will not necessarily be limited to 24 hours. And since it is called "the last" day, it will manifestly not be "ordinary", but extraordinary, since there will never be another "ordinary" day after it. It is this writer's belief that the second coming of Christ will mean the end of the usefulness of clocks and calendars such as exist in the world today. It will mark the beginning of a new mode of existence, which will be very different from our life here and now. 2 Cor. 12:1-4 may help us in this connection. The apostle Paul was caught up into the third heaven, "into paradise", where he "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter". Why unspeakable? Presumably because his experience in paradise could not be related to our present life on earth in such a way as to make it intelligible. We know something about the life eternal, but we cannot know it fully, as it really is, until we experience it. — J.G.V.

**Question:**

If Infant Baptism is Scriptural, why was Jesus not baptized as a child?

**Answer:**

Jesus was not baptized as an infant because the sacrament of Christian Baptism was not instituted until about 33 years after His birth. He gave the command to baptize in "The Great Commission" (Matt. 28:18-20). This command of Christ was given after His resurrection from the dead, and not long before His ascension to heaven.

If the query refers to the baptism administered by John the Baptist, then the answer is that John's Baptism also did not exist during the infancy and childhood of Jesus. John himself was only a few months older than Jesus; when Jesus was an infant, so was John. It was when Jesus was 30 years old that John began his work of preaching and baptizing. See Luke 3:1-3, 23.

As far as recorded in the Bible, John baptized only persons of adult age, who came confessing their sins. This has nothing whatever to do with the question of infant baptism. John's baptism was not the same thing as the sacrament of Christian baptism. John's baptism, though recorded in the book called "The New Testament", was a temporary rite of the last days of the Old Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace. He was the last of the prophets of Israel, as shown by the fact that he was called "Elias" (Elijah).

For proof that John's baptism was distinct from Christian baptism, see Acts 19:1-7, where a group of men who had already been baptized with John's baptism were required, in addition, to receive Christian baptism. For a further discussion of this, see "Blue Banner Faith and Life", January-March 1951, pages 51, 52.

Actually, Jesus received the rite which was the Old Testament counterpart of infant baptism, namely, circumcision, as an infant, when He was eight days old (Luke 2:21). Under the New Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, circumcision of infants has been abolished, and its place is taken by infant baptism. — J.G.V.

**Question:**

An evangelist stated that Psalm 1:1 should be translated: "Blessed is the man that NEVER walked in the counsel of the ungodly, NEVER stood in the way of sinners, NEVER sat in the seat of the scornful." He claimed that the verse refers to Jesus Christ and to Him alone. Is this correct?

**Answer:**

Some commentators hold that these verbs of Psalm 1:1 should be translated in the past tense. For example, Alexander Maclaren translates the verse as follows: "Happy is the man who has not

walked in the counsel of the wicked, And has not stood in the way of sinners, And in the session of scorers has not sat."

As to the claim that if translated in the past tense, the verse must refer to Christ alone, it would seem that the same could be said even if the verbs are translated in the present tense. That is, only of Christ could such language be used in the fullest and most absolute sense, for only Christ is without sin. The Christian not only has a sinful past; he also has a sinning present; as the Shorter Catechism truthfully affirms, he "doth daily break them (God's commandments) in thought, word and deed".

It is the belief of this writer that in the First Psalm, as in many of the Psalms, statements are made which are RELATIVELY true of every godly person (every Christian), but which are ABSOLUTELY true only of Jesus Christ.

For instance, in Psalm 8, "man" is spoken of, and the Psalm speaks of the dominion over the world of nature which God committed to the human race at its creation. Yet we know from Heb. 2:6 ff. that this Psalm speaks definitely of Jesus Christ. Evidently the explanation is that the Psalm, like the commission given to the race in the time of Adam, speaks of MANKIND, but Jesus Christ alone is the ideal, perfect and truly representative man; therefore the statements of the Psalm are true in their absolute sense of Christ alone. — J. G. V.

**Question:**

In the January-March 1951 issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" (page 43) you spoke of the view that God is "a part of the universe" as leaning "far in the direction of Pantheism". But since the word "universe" clearly means "one" or "totality", why is it not proper to speak of God as a part of the universe? Surely God is a part of all that exists.

**Answer:**

It is a mistake to seek a definition of the term "universe" by a consideration of the etymology of the word. The etymology of the word "God" would not give us the Biblical or Christian idea of God, and the etymology of the word "universe" will not give us the Biblical or Christian concept of the universe. Our language is a heritage from a non-Christian past, when our ancestors groped ignorantly as blind men if haply they might feel after God and find Him. Just as we do not men by "God" or "Deity" what our pagan ancestors meant by these terms, so we should not define "the universe" etymologically. We should form a definition in dependence upon the revelation given in the Bible.

To say that God must be a part of the universe because "universe" means "one" or "totality", is to give a non-Christian and non-Bibli-

cal content to the term "universe". The difficulty can be avoided, of course, by using the Greek term "cosmos" ("world"; "orderly world-system") instead of "universe". "Cosmos" is a Biblical term, while "universe" is not. However, there is no reason why we should not use the common term "universe" provided we put a Biblical content into the term.

To define "the universe" as "the sum-total of all that exists" is to disregard the absolute distinction between THE INFINITE and THE FINITE. God is INFINITE IN HIS BEING (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q.4). "Infinite in his being" means the same as "infinite in his existence". Infinite existence (of God) and finite existence (of the "cosmos") are qualitatively different, and therefore there cannot be a "sum-total" which adds them together as "the total of all that exists". The infinite God and the finite cosmos cannot be added together to make up a "total of all that exists", any more than two bushels of potatoes and the spirit of Gothic architecture can be added together in one column to make up a total.

Every attempt to lump God and the creation together, as jointly making up "the universe", the "total of all that exists" must, in the end, run into one or the other of two errors: (a) either it will lead eventually to a denial of the real infinity of the Infinite, and hence it will regard God as a finite being; or (b) it will lead eventually to a denial of the real finitude of the creation, and hence will come to regard the cosmos as boundless and eternal, as never having had any beginning.

Thus the attempt to add God and the cosmos into one sum of "all that exists" must lead in the end either to the denial of the infinite God of the Bible, or to a denial of the finite cosmos of the Bible (that is, of the doctrine of Creation, that at a particular time, called "in the beginning" (Gen. 1:1) God by a fiat of His will called the finite cosmos into being OUT OF NOTHING.

In the end, the definition of the universe as "all that exists" (including God) will come to an a-cosmic Pantheism (all God and no world) or else it will come to a pan-cosmic atheism (all world and no God). Between the infinite and the finite there is a great gulf fixed, which can never be disregarded or broken down. Genesis 1:1 teaches that God created the cosmos, therefore God cannot be a part of, nor in any sense bound by or dependent upon, the cosmos (the universe). — J.G.V.

**Question:**

Is Psalm 68:11 correctly translated in the King James Version? I am informed that the correct translation speaks of a great company of WOMEN who published the word.

**Answer:**

The American Revised Version translates the verse as follows: "The Lord giveth the word: The women that publish the tidings are a great host." This is certainly correct, for in the Hebrew the word for "publish" is a feminine participle — "women publishers", "publisheresses".

Albert Barnes' "Notes" on the Psalms gives the following comment: "Great was the company of them that published it. Marg., army. More literally, 'The women publishing it were a great host.' The word used is in the feminine gender, and refers to the Oriental custom whereby females celebrated victories in songs and dances. See Ex. 15:20,21; Judges 11:34; 21:21; 1 Sam. 18:6, 7. The idea here is, that when there was a proclamation of war, — when God commanded his people to go out to battle, and to take with them the ark, the females of the land — the singers — were ready to make known the proclamation; to celebrate the will of the Lord by songs and dances; to cheer and encourage their husbands, brothers, and fathers, as they went out to the conflict. The result is stated in the following verse." — J.G.V.

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## *Only A Word!*

(Author unknown)

Only a word of anger,  
 But it wounded one sensitive heart;  
 Only a word of sharp reproach,  
 But it made the tear-drops start;  
 Only a hasty, thoughtless word,  
 Sarcastic and unkind,  
 But it darkened the day before so bright,  
 And left a sting behind.

Only a word of kindness,  
 But it lightened one heart of its grief;  
 Only a word of sympathy,  
 But it brought one soul relief;  
 Only a word of gentle cheer,  
 But it flooded with radiant light  
 The pathway that seemed so dark before,  
 And made the day more bright.

# *The Grief of Jesus*

By J. G. Vos

"Jesus wept". John 11:35.

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

## JESUS' GRIEF SHOWS HIS TRUE

### HUMANITY

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

## JESUS' GRIEF SHOWS HIS SYMPATHY

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

## JESUS' GRIEF SHOWS HIS INDIGNATION AT EVIL

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

## JESUS' GRIEF GUARANTEES THAT EVIL WILL BE ABOLISHED

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

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

(Reprinted by permission from "The Covenanter Pastor")

## Our Fathers -- Where Are They?

By William McComb

Our Fathers, where are they — the faithful and wise?  
They are gone to their mansions prepared in the skies;  
With the ransomed in glory, forever they sing,  
All worthy the Lamb, our Redeemer and King.

Our Fathers, who were they? Men strong in the Lord,  
Who were nurtured and fed with the milk of the Word;  
Who breathed in the freedom their Saviour had given,  
And fearlessly waved their blue banner to heaven.

Our Fathers, how lived they? In fasting and prayer,  
Still grateful for blessing, and willing to share  
Their bread with the hungry, their basket and store,  
Their home with the homeless that came to the door.

Our Fathers, where knelt they? Upon the green sod,  
And poured out their heart to their covenant God;  
And oft in the deep glen, beneath the wild sky,  
The songs of their Zion were wafted on high.

Our Fathers, how died they? They valiantly stood  
The rage of the foeman, and sealed with their blood,  
By faithful contendings, the faith of their sires,  
'Mid tortures, in prisons, on scaffolds, in fires.

Our Fathers, where sleep they? Go search the wild cairn,  
Where the birds of the hill make their nests in the fern;  
Where the dark purple heather, and bonny blue bell  
Deck the mountain and moor, where our forefathers fell.

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### J. G. VOS, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

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**BLUE  
BANNER  
FAITH  
AND  
LIFE**

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VOLUME 6

JULY-SEPTEMBER, 1951

NUMBER 3

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**“The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error: and some have so degenerated, as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth, to worship God according to His will.”**

**The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXV.5**

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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 Covenanter (Reformed Presbyterian) Church.**

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J. G. VOS, Editor and Publisher

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Clay Center, Kansas

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## *The Wigtown Martyrs*

(Author unknown)

On Solway sands the tide flows fast,  
 The waters swiftly rise;  
 Alas for him whom lingering there  
 The rushing waves surprise!  
 Full quickly must he hurry thence,  
 Full swiftly must he ride,  
 Who tempts his fate on Solway shore  
 And races with the tide.  
 Past Wigtown Borough to the sea  
 The Blednoch River goes,  
 With many a pool and shifting shoal  
 Across the sand it flows.  
 Ah! Blednoch's stream and Wigtown bay  
 Have sights of sorrow seen,  
 When ships were stranded on the shore,  
 And boats have shipwrecked been.

There many a time has woman wept,  
 And wrung in grief her hands,  
 When loved ones she longed for have been  
 Found dead on Solway's sands.  
 But sight so strange was never seen  
 As when those martyrs died,  
 And gave their life on Wigtown shore,  
 And perished in the tide.  
 For many years ago 'tis now,  
 'Twas in the month of May;  
 The level sands were smooth and dry,  
 The tide out in the bay:  
 'Twas then the brother of fierce Graham  
 Of Claverhouse rode down,  
 With Winram, Strachan, and with Cultron  
 The Provost of the town.

And cruel Grierson of Lagg  
 The persecutor came,  
 To do that day by Blednoch's bank  
 A deed of sin and shame.  
 At ebb of tide two stakes of wood  
 Were driven in the sand,  
 And fastened there two prisoners were,  
 At Grierson's command.  
 An aged widow one of them,  
 And one a maiden young;  
 And thus amid the rising waves  
 The virgin martyr sung:  
 "To Thee I lift my soul, O Lord,  
 My God, I trust in Thee;  
 Let me not be ashamed; let not  
 My foes triumph o'er me."

The aged widow was the first  
 Drowned by the rising tide.  
 "What think you of her now?" in scorn  
 The persecutors cried.

"What think I of her? In that saint  
 Whose soul is on the wing  
 I see but this", the maid replied:  
 "My Saviour suffering."  
 Still ever deeper flowed the tide;  
 The billows higher rose,  
 As there that young defenceless girl  
 Was tempted by her foes  
 To buy her life by breach of faith  
 To Him who was her Lord;  
 Oh, she was young, and life is sweet,  
 And it was but a word.

Yet was temptation vain. She chose  
 For Christ to suffer wrong;  
 And still amid the rush of waves  
 The men could hear the song:  
 "Let not the errors of my youth,  
 Nor sins remembered be.  
 In mercy, for Thy goodness, Lord,  
 Do Thou remember me."  
 By this the waves rose to her lips;  
 The voice that sung was still.  
 They raised her head: "Pray for the King!"  
 "God save him if He will",  
 She answered. Then they dragged her forth  
 Half drowned amid the tide.  
 "Will you renounce the Covenant?  
 Abjure your faith!" they cried.

She raised her eyes nigh dimmed in death:  
 "Renounce my Saviour? No!  
 I'm one of Jesus' little ones.  
 I pray you, let me go!"  
 They let her go. The waters closed  
 Above her youthful head.  
 One of the glorious martyr throng,  
 One of the deathless dead.  
 Her name shall never be forgot,  
 While Blednoch's waters run,  
 And Solway kindles into gold  
 Beneath the setting sun.  
 They speak it oft in Scotland's homes;  
 'Tis told in far-off lands,  
 How in the bloom of youth she died  
 Upon the Solway sands.

And souls are thrilled, and hearts beat high  
 To hear the story told,  
 How nobly she maintained her faith  
 In days that now are old;  
 And how she kept her trust in God,  
 And how she scorned the foe,  
 And how she lived, and how she died,  
 So many years ago.

**Note:** Margaret MacLachlan, a widow aged 63, and Margaret Wilson, a girl of 18, were drowned in the tide at Wigtown, Scotland, in the year 1685, because of their loyalty to Christ, His Crown and Covenant.

# BLUE BANNER FAITH AND LIFE

VOLUME 6

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## *Concerning Our Editorial Policy*

As stated on the cover of every issue, "Blue Banner Faith and Life" is "A quarterly publication devoted to expounding, defending and applying the system of doctrine set forth in the Word of God and summarized in the Standards of the Covenanter (Reformed Presbyterian) Church". This publication is, therefore, an organ, not a forum. It exists for the propagation of a definite body of truth, not for the publication of views contrary to that body of truth. To "Blue Banner Faith and Life" the truth and Scriptural character of the system of doctrine set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith and other official standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church is not an open question. We accept that system, and those standards, as true and Scriptural, and will not knowingly publish any views contrary to them except in order to distinguish between truth and error, defending the truth and refuting the error.

In every denomination the doctrinal status quo always, inevitably, lags behind the ideal represented by the church's official standards. There is always some failure to grasp the truth, some dissent from the truth, some indifference to the truth. It is, therefore, always wrong and sinful to regard the doctrinal status quo as ideal. It is even sinful to regard the doctrinal status quo as legitimate. Just as every Christian must continually strive after more perfect holiness, so every Christian, and every church, must continually strive after more perfect orthodoxy, a fuller, deeper, more consistent knowledge and confession of the truth. It would be sinful to single out the status quo of 1560, or of 1643, or of 1951, and say, "Thus far, but no farther." Reformation is not an act but an endless process. To Augustine of Hippo is attributed the saying: "Every lesser good involves an element of sin". This is certainly true of the doctrinal condition of every church on earth. The status quo is always a sinful status quo — there is always room for improvement, and that room for improvement is sinful, it constitutes a falling short of the divine ideal.

Therefore it is not the purpose of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" to reflect the doctrinal status quo of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, or of the generality of its readers. We have a higher aim. We are not particularly concerned

about what majorities think, or believe, or favor. Our concern is rather to call our readers to true progress in reformation along lines in harmony with our accepted doctrinal standards. True progress in reformation can never be revolutionary; it must always involve building on the solid foundations laid in the past. We are indeed called upon to advance beyond the men who formulated the Westminster Confession of Faith, but we can never advance beyond them until we first stand on their shoulders. The Westminster Confession of Faith is assuredly not the final word in reformation, but it is a monument of true progress and we cannot advance beyond it until we first stand firmly on that platform.

The first half of the Twentieth Century was a period of the ebb tide in knowledge and confession of Christian truth. Theology was in ill repute, while the Liberal notion that Christianity is not a matter of doctrine but of life gained wide popularity. There are some signs today that the tide is turning and that knowledge of Christian doctrine is coming to its rights again. But a tremendous amount of ground was lost during the half-century that has just closed. Today, instead of being in a position to advance beyond our accepted doctrinal standards, we are rather in need of catching up to them again. Before there can be any real new progress in knowledge and confession of the truth, there must be a recovery of the old knowledge which has been lost through neglect and indifference. There must be a general return to doctrinal preaching, teaching and reading if the lost ground is to be recovered. Inspiration and enthusiasm will not do it; there must be information. To regard the present status quo in doctrinal knowledge as normal or legitimate would be to let the real progress of the past remain buried in oblivion, and to sin against the God of Truth. The aim of "Blue Banner Faith and Life", therefore, is not to reflect the doctrinal status quo, nor to echo the opinions held by the majority of the church's membership, but to expound, defend and apply Christian truth in consistency with our accepted standards. We will not knowingly deviate from this.

"Blue Banner Faith and Life" is published, too, with the conviction that every individual Christian ought to have a constantly growing knowledge of Christian truth. Just as the Church

may not complacently accept the status quo as legitimate, so the individual Christian may not say: "I now know enough. From now on until I die I need not add anything more to my stock of Christian knowledge". Perhaps no one would make such a statement explicitly. But many show by their attitude that they make it implicitly. There are many Christians of adult age who have not added a new truth or a new idea to their store of Christian knowledge in the last ten years. Their pitifully meager stock of Christian doctrine consists of a few bare "essential truths" that they learned when they first professed faith in Christ. They are inhibited from acquiring anything more by a foolish — and certainly sinful — notion that anything beyond these few bare "essential truths" is necessarily "too deep" for them. The spiritual condition of such Christians is similar to that described in Hebrews 5:11-14. They are always afraid of the "strong meat" (ARV, "solid food") and always want to receive nothing but the "milk" which is really a baby food. They will complain that their minister's sermons are "too deep", and never suspect that the real trouble may be their own condition of arrested spiritual development which causes them to put up a barrier against learning anything new.

If the contents of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" were to be limited to what all readers could understand without effort, the result would be stagnation. It would mean an endless moving around and around in a circle, saying the same things over and over again and never adding anything new. If the paper is to serve its intended purpose, it is inevitable that some readers will find some parts of the contents hard to understand. But there would be no point in devoting money and effort to publishing a paper which would only repeat what all the readers already know. What is "too deep" for one, another will take in his stride. What is new and interesting to one, another will regard as without special value or interest because he has been familiar with it for years. Among the readers of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" are young Christians in Japan, Hong Kong, Syria, Cyprus and other mission lands, church members in the United States, Canada, Ireland and other countries, missionaries, ministers and others. Our aim in publishing the paper is to provide something for all readers. To provide material all of which will be equally suitable for all readers is manifestly impossible. No paper can be equally suitable for all readers; and any paper which contains nothing "too deep" for any of its readers is suitable only for beginners in Christian truth — babes in Christ.

However, "Blue Banner Faith and Life" is not intended to be a technical journal for experts. Some have referred to it as a "theological journal". Such is not its intended character or purpose. It is meant for Christian people in

general. The aim is to make the main body of the contents suitable for Christian people in general. But we hope that the occasional use of a technical term will not frighten any of our readers. After all, ideas have to have handles to pick them up by. In past issues, many definitions of religious terms have been published. The use of an ordinary English dictionary is also helpful. Why not learn some new words from time to time? You will not find "Blue Banner Faith and Life" filled with such words as "epistemology", "metaphysics", "supralapsarianism", "trichotomy", "soteriology", for they are, for the most part, carefully avoided. Other terms, such as "justification", "atonement", "inspiration", "regeneration", "repentance", "dispensationalism", "Arminianism" are used, because they are necessary for dealing with the doctrines of our standards or with the religious situation of our day. To avoid such terms as these, it would be necessary in every case to use a long, roundabout detour; instead of "justification", it would be possible to use the phrase "divine judicial pronouncement that a person is legally righteous" — but think how cumbersome this would be if used over and over again. For our part, we think it is far better to learn the word "justification" and what it means — and after all, it is a Bible term, anyway. In short, we wish to encourage our readers to make an effort to learn something new, to keep up a steady progress in Christian knowledge.

The present issue of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" contains the first instalment of an article entitled "The Visible Church: Its Nature, Unity and Witness". Some of our readers will find parts of this article difficult, but we believe it is relevant to the question of church union which is so prominently before the Protestant world today. If some of our readers find this article "too deep", the editor hopes that the series of Bible lessons on the Epistle to the Romans will be simple enough for all readers. We have deliberately tried to keep them simple and to avoid technical questions and terms.

Finally, we are aware that humility is most necessary, because the editor of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" is keenly conscious of being himself involved in the very evils which it is sought to correct. No more than any one else can he lift himself above everything involved in the present doctrinal status quo. We are all products of the past and conditioned by the present. We cannot look upon the status quo as if we ourselves were not a part of it. Our only real hope is that the Spirit of Truth, whom our Saviour promised and gave to His Church to guide His people into all truth (John 16:13) will lead us forward in sound knowledge and faithful confession of His Truth. "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly" (Heb. 13:18).

J. G. Vos

# *The Visible Church:* *Its Nature, Unity, and Witness*

By J. G. Vos

**Note:** This article is reprinted by permission from *The Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. IX, No. 2 (May, 1947).

## I. THE NATURE OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH

"The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation." (The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXV,2.) Thus according to the Westminster Confession the criterion of membership in the visible Church is profession, whereas the divine election and gathering "into one, under Christ the Head thereof" is the criterion of membership in the invisible Church. (*Ibid.*, XXV, 1.)

While of course the ideal condition of the visible Church would be complete coincidence with the invisible Church (or more precisely, with that portion of the invisible Church which at a given time is present on earth), still it must be recognized that this ideal will not and cannot be attained in this age, but must await its full realization in the age to come when the distinction between the visible and the invisible Church will have passed away in the state of glory. The visible Church, being visible, must of necessity be essentially a **professing** body, for profession is a visible phenomenon, whereas divine election and vital spiritual union with Christ are not. For this reason all the attempts which have at various times and in various circles been made to limit the membership of the visible Church to the regenerate, or to such as profess to have assurance of regeneration or real piety, must be adjudged to be wrong in principle and harmful in tendency. No doubt these attempts have been motivated by a praiseworthy and pious desire to promote the purity and holiness of the visible Church by excluding unregenerate persons from her membership. But such attempted exclusion of the unregenerate is, and always has proved, impossible to carry out in practice. Who shall say with certainty whether a particular applicant for membership is regenerate or not? Certainly no Protestant ecclesiastical judicatory can claim to be infallible. The Scriptures teach that it is possible for a Christian to attain full assurance, or certainty, concerning **his own** salvation, but this is something quite different from attaining certainty about another person's salvation. If it be admitted

that ecclesiastical judicatories cannot pronounce concerning an individual's regeneration, what shall we say about the proposal to throw the burden of responsibility on the applicants, and admit to membership only such as profess to have assurance of their own regeneration? Not only is there no warrant in the Scriptures for such a criterion of Church membership, but the effect in actual practice must be, as it has been, to exclude many who no doubt are true believers, but who, because of diffidence, or because of misunderstanding of the grounds of assurance, or because of lack of spiritual maturity, do not or cannot claim assurance of their own regeneration. Thus persons who ought to be members of the visible Church, and who need the benefits of such membership even more than those mature Christians who have attained full assurance, are excluded from the household of God and placed on a par with unbelievers. The practical evils which must result from such a condition are obvious.

The visible Church, then, is a society composed of those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their minor children, and the criterion of membership in it is not election, regeneration or "real saintship", but a credible profession of faith in the true religion. By a credible profession is not meant a profession which compels belief, but one which it is **possible** to believe, that is, a profession which is adequate in content and which is not contradicted by known facts of the applicant's life. In *The Larger Catechism* the Westminster Divines affirm that "Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's supper, may and ought to be kept from that sacrament. . . ." (*The Larger Catechism*, Q. 173.) Thus those who are found to be ignorant, that is, whose profession lacks an adequate and correct content, and those found to be scandalous, that is, those whose profession is contradicted by their manner of life, are to be authoritatively debarred from the Lord's supper, and no doubt such persons should also be excluded from actual membership in the visible Church until their ignorance or scandalous living has been corrected. But apart from persons whose profession is rendered incredible by reason of ignorance or scandal, those who profess the true religion are to be received as members of the visible Church. The fact that there has been, and no doubt will continue to be, diversity of opinion as to what constitutes ignorance or scandal of such a nature and degree as to render a

person's profession incredible, does not militate against the validity of the principle outlined above. As in all matters of faith and practice the Scriptures must be the source of guidance, but obviously reasonable latitude must be allowed ecclesiastical judicatories in the difficult task of applying the Scriptures to this problem. Although some deficiencies or aberrations of faith and life can with general agreement be pronounced "ignorance" or "scandal", yet there are many matters of faith and especially of life concerning which it is far from easy to decide confidently, and about which there is little unanimity even in "the best Reformed Churches". The temptation to try to formulate a cut-and-dried, classified list of all forms of ignorance and scandal must be resisted because in the nature of the case such a formulation cannot be complete, and moreover cannot take account of the varying circumstances of life which may affect the question of the credibility of an applicant's profession.

The Scriptures teach, and it has been generally accepted throughout the history of the Church, that the members of the visible Church are to be associated in particular local congregations under officers who sustain a special relation to their respective congregations. The Church being a visible body must necessarily have some form of organization or government. Although it seems to be common at the present day to regard the form of Church government as a matter of indifference, to be determined according to human prudence or preference, the Reformed Churches historically have taken higher ground than this, and have held that the government of the Church is a matter of divine appointment in Scripture, and that the form appointed in Scripture is to be continued in the Church by divine right until the end of the world. Of the four historical forms of Church government, episcopal, papal, congregational and presbyterian, generally only the last two have claimed to be founded exclusively on the teachings of the Scriptures. While a superficial reading of the New Testament might seem to favor the congregational or independent polity, a more careful study reveals data which cannot be reconciled with independency, and discloses the basic elements of presbyterian government in the New Testament documents and in the apostolic Church which they portray. It is well known that the Westminster Assembly spent a great amount of time wrestling with the problem of the divinely appointed form of Church government. The product of the Assembly's labors, **The Form of Presbyterial Church-Government and of Ordination of Ministers**, sets forth, with a closely reasoned discussion of the relevant portions of Scripture, the Bible basis for the presbyterian form of Church government. Clearly the Westminster Divines believed that presbyterian government exists by divine right; their view of the matter was far removed from that of a professor in a well-known American

Presbyterian seminary who said to his students: "Presbyterianism is a form of Church government set forth in Scripture, but that is very different from affirming that presbyterianism is the form of Church government set forth in Scripture".

Yet to affirm that the presbyterian form of Church government is appointed in Scripture and to be continued by divine right in the Church does not imply that this form of government is **essential to the being** of a Church. No doubt every adherent of the Westminster Standards will agree that presbyterian government is essential to the well-being of a Church. But it would be going too far to assert that bodies of professing Christians which maintain other forms of Church polity are therefore no Churches, nor parts of the true visible Church of Christ. The true Presbyterian will avoid, on the one hand, the error of allowing that Church government is a matter of indifference to be arranged according to human prudence, and, on the other hand, the error of insisting that presbyterian government is essential to the being of a Church. Avoiding both of these extremes, he will stand on solid Scriptural ground.

It should be said that the modern trend toward independency, whether in fact only or in name also, is wrong and to be deplored. That such a trend exists, and among Christians whose heritage has been Presbyterian for generations, can hardly be questioned. There are today not a few but very many persons, including a considerable number of ministers, who are members of denominations holding the presbyterian form of government, who yet conduct themselves very much as if they were independents. This attitude may be termed the delusion of virtual independence. There is a widespread tendency on the part of conservatives in some formerly conservative denominations to disclaim all responsibility for the acts and policies of presbyteries, synods, general assemblies and their boards and agencies, and to take refuge, so to speak, within the four walls of a comparatively orthodox congregation which exists as an evangelical island in a denominational ocean of Modernism. This delusion of independence may go so far that ministers and elders seldom or never attend the stated meetings of presbyteries and higher judicatories, and claim that by reason of non-participation in the deliberations of these bodies they are exempt from responsibility for their acts and policies. Such an attitude can only be regarded as wishful thinking. A denomination having the presbyterian form of government has a **corporate** existence as a denomination, and is no mere loose voluntary association of separate independent congregations. Every member and minister of such a denomination sustains a necessary relation to the denomination as a **whole**, and is by that very fact responsible, to a greater or less degree, for the

doctrines, policies and acts of the denomination as a whole. The idea that a member, minister or congregation may be enrolled in a denomination having presbyterian government and yet be virtually independent is simply a delusion, which may perhaps be explained psychologically as a rationalization by which evangelical Christians seek to justify their continued membership in denominations which have corporately succumbed to the deadly virus of modern unbelief.

Somewhat less ominous than the widely cherished delusion of virtual independence, but still serious, is the widespread trend, among persons with a Presbyterian background and training, to forsake the presbyterian polity altogether and join independent Churches. There exist today even such anomalies as "independent" or "denominationally unrelated" "Presbyterian Churches". It is hard to see wherein such "Presbyterian" Churches differ greatly in polity from the Congregational Churches established by the Puritan settlers in New England in the early years of the seventeenth century. These Churches were indeed originally "presbyterian" in the sense that each possessed a number of ruling elders associated with one or more ministers of the Word; but historically it has always been recognized that normal presbyterian polity involves the association of a plurality of congregations in a corporate life under common superior judicatories, although of course exceptional circumstances may exist under which such association is impossible, at least for the time being. (Cf. the section entitled "Touching the Power of Ordination" in the *Form of Presbyterial Church-Government and of Ordination of Ministers* adopted by the Westminster Assembly.)

It is obvious that a great many Christian people whose background and religious nurture have been Presbyterian are today in independent congregations of varying doctrinal complexion which may generally be classified as "Fundamentalist" Churches. No believer in the divine

right of presbyterian government can justify this state of affairs. But how is it to be explained? Certainly it must be regarded as the end-product of a long and gradual declension from the strictly Reformed view of Church government held by Presbyterians in general in times past. Presbyterian government could not be so easily and so completely abandoned in favor of independency unless those who make this change had already lost their conviction of its Scriptural character as a matter of divine appointment for the Church. Along with this gradual loss of conviction which must have taken place, there may exist in many cases a certain illogical conclusion drawn from the premises of existing conditions. Because certain denominations, while adhering, in general, to the presbyterian or some other form of government, have been guilty of apostasy from the essential truths of the Gospel itself, the conclusion has apparently been drawn by many persons that apostasy from the Gospel itself is somehow inevitably linked with the fact of a corporate denominational organization as such. Because some denominations in their corporate capacity have become apostate, many earnest Christians have become disgusted with corporate denominational organization itself and have taken refuge, with other like-minded persons, in independent congregations of a generally "Fundamentalist" character. This tendency to forsake denominations as hopelessly corrupt, and on forsaking them to establish independent congregations rather than to combine congregations in doctrinally sound denominations, is one of the major developments in the ecclesiastical situation of our day. A great multitude of such independent congregations have sprung up across America during the past few years. This tendency is to be deplored, because in many cases it marks the end of a decline from Calvinism to a general evangelicalism, and from presbyterian government, regarded as existing by divine right, to independency held on grounds of mere expediency.

(To be continued)

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## *The Scottish Covenanters*

### THEIR ORIGINS, HISTORY AND DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES

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

#### PART III

#### THE DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES OF THE COVENANTERS

#### CHAPTER I

#### THE CONTINUING OBLIGATION OF THE SCOTTISH COVENANTS

##### 1. The Origin of Covenanting at the First Reformation.

The earliest religious covenant of which we have a record in Scotland was a "Band" made in 1556 by the "gentlemen of Mearns" under the

leadership of John Knox. What is commonly called "The First Covenant" was made in 1557, and was a mutual bond for the renunciation of Popery and the defence of the Gospel. The "Second Covenant" or "Band for Mutual Defence" was

signed at Perth, May 31st, 1559. This was followed by the "Third Covenant", which was signed at Stirling on August 1st of the same year. The "Fourth Covenant" or "Band for Expelling the French" was signed at Edinburgh, April 27th, 1560. In 1562 the "Fifth Band" was signed by the "Barons and Gentlemen" of Kyle, Carrick and Cunningham. The "Sixth Covenant" was signed by the citizens of Edinburgh in 1572. From these facts it will be seen that the godly in Scotland, from the beginning of the Reformation, adopted the practice of signing covenants or "bands" for mutual protection and for the defence of Protestantism.

The first covenant of epoch making significance in Scotland was the National Covenant, which was written in 1580. The occasion for this covenant was the public fear of Jesuit plots and attempts to restore Popery and destroy the Reformation. At the request of King James VI the document was written by John Craig, an Edinburgh minister. It was first signed by the King and his household, in 1580, and then by persons of all ranks in Scotland in 1581. It was again signed by all classes in 1590. It became the basis of the National Covenant as adopted in 1638, in which year it was signed in its new form by great numbers of people, as it was again in 1639. In the form drawn up in 1638, it was ratified by the General Assembly in 1638 and again in 1639, and by an act of Parliament in 1640, and was accepted by King Charles II at Spey in 1650 and at Scone on his coronation, January 1st, 1651.

The Solemn League and Covenant was drafted by Alexander Henderson, and approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in August, 1643. It was then sent to England, where it was adopted and sworn by the House of Commons and the Westminster Assembly of Divines jointly. After this it was sent back to Scotland, where it was signed and sworn by the Commission of the General Assembly and by the Committee of Estates of the Parliament. It was distributed throughout Scotland and signed with great unanimity by all classes of people excepting those who favored Popery or Prelacy. With an "Acknowledgment of Sins, and Engagement to Duties", it was again sworn by all ranks in Scotland in 1648, and by the Parliament in 1649. Finally, it was subscribed by King Charles II at Spey in 1650, and on the occasion of his coronation at Scone, New Year's Day, 1651.

## 2. Analysis of the Covenants of 1580, 1638 and 1643.

The National Covenant as adopted in 1580, sometimes called the "King's Confession" or "Confession of Faith", is a document of about 1,000 words. It is a profession of faith in the Gospel, of acceptance of the Scots Confession of Faith (1560), and a renunciation of the whole Roman Catholic system, which is plainly called Anti-

christ. It contains a very long and full list of the errors and abuses of Romanism, all of which are condemned and rejected in no uncertain terms. The Covenant opens thus: "We all and every one of us underwritten, protest, That, after long and due examination of our own consciences in matters of true and false religion, we are now thoroughly resolved in the truth by the word and Spirit of God: and therefore we believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirm, before God and the whole world, that this only is the true Christian faith and religion, pleasing God, and bringing salvation to man, which now is, by the mercy of God, revealed to the world by the preaching of the blessed evangel" . . . The Covenant closes with an oath to defend the person and authority of the King "in the defence of Christ his evangel, liberties of our country, ministration of justice, and punishment of iniquity, against all enemies within this realm or without, as we desire our God to be a strong and merciful defender to us in the day of our death, and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory eternally. Amen".

When the National Covenant was renewed in 1638 it consisted of three parts. The first of these was the Covenant of 1580 verbatim. The second was a legal section, which was prepared by Archibald Johnston, who later became Lord Wariston. This section lists a large number of acts of former Parliaments which are cited to prove that the course taken in adopting and renewing the Covenant was not illegal or unconstitutional, but in harmony with the law of the land. The third part was prepared by Alexander Henderson and constituted the application of the Covenant to the conditions existing in 1638. This part contains a rejection of Prelacy, of "novations" or corruptions in the worship of God, and of the civil places and power of kirkmen, "till they be tried and allowed in free Assemblies and in Parliament". The innovations in the government and worship of the Church are rejected as having no warrant in Scripture, contrary to the Scots Confession of faith, contrary to "the intention and meaning of the blessed reformers of religion in this land, and contrary to the acts of Parliament which had been enumerated in the second part of the Covenant. The third part continues: "And therefore, from the knowledge and conscience of our duty to God, to our King and country, without any worldly respect or inducement, so far as human infirmity will suffer, wishing a farther measure of the grace of God for this effect; we promise and swear, by the GREAT NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD, to continue in the profession and obedience of the foresaid religion; and that we shall defend the same, and resist all these contrary errors and corruptions, according to our vocation, and to the uttermost of that power that God hath put in our

hands, all the days of our life". After this comes a qualified pledge to support and defend the King: "we promise and swear, That we shall, to the uttermost of our power, with our means and lives, stand to the defence of our dread Sovereign the King's Majesty, his person and authority, in the defence and preservation of the foresaid true religion, liberties, and laws of the kingdom; as also to the mutual defence and assistance every one of us of another, in the same cause of maintaining the true religion, and his Majesty's authority, with our best counsel, our bodies, means, and whole power, against all sorts of persons whatsoever; so that whatsoever shall be done to the least of us for that cause, shall be taken as done to us all in general, and to every one of us in particular". The Covenant closes with a promise to accompany a covenanted profession with a godly life, and with a call for "the LIVING GOD, THE SEARCHER OF OUR HEARTS, to witness, who knoweth this to be our sincere desire and unfeigned resolution, as we shall answer to JESUS CHRIST in the great day, and under the pain of God's everlasting wrath, and of infamy and loss of all honour and respect in this world; most humbly beseeching the LORD to strengthen us by his HOLY SPIRIT for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with a happy success; that religion and righteousness may flourish in the land, to the glory of GOD, the honour of our King, and peace and comfort of us all. In witness whereof, we have subscribed with our hands all the premises".

The Solemn League and Covenant consists of an introductory paragraph, six articles, and a concluding paragraph. The introduction reads: "We Noblemen, Barons, Knights, Gentlemen, Citizens, Burgesses, Ministers of the Gospel, and Commons of all sorts, in the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland, by the providence of GOD, living under one King, and being of one reformed religion, having before our eyes the glory of GOD, and the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, the honour and happiness of the King's Majesty, and his posterity, and the true public liberty, safety, and peace of the kingdoms, wherein every one's private condition is included: And calling to mind the treacherous and bloody plots, conspiracies, attempts, and practices of the enemies of GOD, against the true religion and professors thereof in all places, especially in these three kingdoms, ever since the reformation of religion; and how much their rage, power, and presumption are of late, and at this time, increased and exercised, whereof the deplorable state of the church and kingdom of Ireland, the distressed estate of the church and kingdom of England, and the dangerous estate of the church and kingdom of Scotland, are present and public testimonies; we have now at last, (after other means of supplication and remonstrance, protestation, and sufferings) for the preservation of ourselves and our religion

from utter ruin and destruction, according to the commendable practice of these kingdoms in former times, and the example of GOD'S people in other nations, after mature deliberation, resolved and determined to enter into a mutual and solemn League and Covenant, wherein we all subscribe, and each one of us for himself, with our hands lifted up to the most High GOD, do swear."

Article I binds the swearers and endeavor the preservation of the Reformed religion in Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, the reformation of religion in England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, "according to the Word of God, and the example of the best reformed Churches", and to endeavor to bring the Churches in the three kingdoms to the nearest possible uniformity "in religion, confession of faith, form of church government, directory for worship and catechising".

Article II binds the swearers to endeavor, without respect of persons, the "extirpation" of Popery, Prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, "and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness".

ARTICLE III binds the swearers to endeavor with their estates and lives, to preserve the rights and privileges of the Parliaments, and the liberties of the kingdoms, "and to preserve and defend the King's Majesty's person and authority, in the preservation and defence of the true religion, and liberties of the kingdoms; that the world may bear witness with our consciences of our loyalty, and that we have no thoughts or intentions to diminish his Majesty's just power and greatness".

Article IV binds the swearers to "endeavour the discovery of all such as have been or shall be incendiaries, malignants, or evil instruments, by hindering the reformation of religion, dividing the King from his people, or one of the kingdoms from another, or making any faction or parties amongst the people, contrary to this League and Covenant; that they may be brought to public trial, and receive condign punishment", etc.

Article V binds the swearers to endeavor that the three kingdoms "may remain conjoined in a firm peace and union to all posterity; and that justice may be done upon the wilful opposers thereof", etc.

Article VI binds the swearers to mutual assistance, and not to suffer themselves "directly or indirectly, by whatsoever combination, persuasion, or terror, to be divided and withdrawn from this blessed union and conjunction, whether to make defection to the contrary part, or to give ourselves to a detestable indifferency and neutrality, in this cause which so much concerneth the glory of GOD, the good of the kingdom, and honour of the King", etc.

The concluding paragraph of the Solemn League and Covenant contains a confession of sins and promise of amendment, and ends with the words: "And this Covenant we make in the presence of ALMIGHTY GOD, the Searcher of all hearts, with a true intention to perform the same, as we shall answer at that great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed; most humbly beseeching the Lord to strengthen us by his HOLY SPIRIT for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with such success, as may be deliverance and safety to his people, and encouragement to other Christian churches, groaning under, or in danger of, the yoke of anti-christian tyranny, to join in the same or like association and covenant, to the glory of GOD, the enlargement of the kingdom of JESUS CHRIST, and the peace and tranquillity of Christian kingdoms and commonwealths".

The Solemn League and Covenant was a very definite engagement. In the first instance it was binding on the individual swearers and subscribers: "We all subscribe, and each one of us for himself", etc. Being formally adopted by the Parliaments of England and Scotland, as well as by the Church of Scotland and the Westminster Assembly, it became binding on the nations as such. Lastly, as it was subscribed by Charles II on the occasion of his coronation, it became binding on him, not only in his private capacity as a man, but in his official capacity as King. The content of the document is also very definite; its six articles are brief and to the point. The only point left somewhat unclear is in Article I, where it is stated that the swearers bind themselves to endeavor the reformation of religion in England and Ireland, according to the Word of God, and the example of the best reformed Churches. This does not state which Churches were the best re-

formed Churches, but it appears to have been generally understood at the time that the Church of Scotland and the Continental Churches holding the Calvinistic faith and Presbyterian system of government were meant.

It will be seen at once that in addition to what is stated in the Solemn League and Covenant, something is presupposed. The Covenant takes for granted that there is to be but one Church in each of the three kingdoms, that that church is to be by law established, and that no other Church can be tolerated within the territorial limits of the kingdoms. Indeed, Article II expressly binds the swearers to the "extirpation", not only of Popery and Prelacy, but also of heresy and schism, that is, of all dissent from the legally established Church. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland still adheres to the Solemn League and Covenant, and holds that it is binding on the Church and nation, but that the world "extirpation" is not to be taken as involving force or violence. When we remember that it was almost universally believed at that time that it is the duty of the civil magistrate to suppress schism and heresy, and that the Solemn League and Covenant was taken by the Parliaments of England and Scotland, and not merely by religious bodies, it is difficult to believe that "extirpation" meant anything milder than legal suppression enforced by the power of the civil magistrate. The sense put upon the word by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland today is doubtless far more compatible with sound principles than the original sense, but it is historically less accurate. Probably no adherent of the Covenants today believes that schism and heresy should be "extirpated" by any other method than persuasion, but that is certainly not the natural and proper meaning of the Solemn League and Covenant.

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## *Sketches from Our History*

### *Contending for the Faith Through the Ages*

#### CHAPTER VI

#### THE DAWN OF THE REFORMATION

##### 3. Tetzl the Indulgence Peddler

Pope Leo X needed plenty of money to defray the cost of repairing and remodelling St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome. As a means of raising funds for this project, the pope commissioned men to peddle indulgences, or certificates of remission of the temporal penalty of sin. The medieval Catholic theory was that every sin has a double penalty, eternal and temporal. The eternal penalty of sin is paid by Christ's atonement and is

therefore remitted by the priest when he grants absolution to a sinner who confesses his sin. But the temporal penalty remains and must be borne by the sinner himself. Part of this temporal penalty could be satisfied by "penances" performed by the penitent sinner, but almost every Christian, at the time of his death, has an unsatisfied remainder of temporal penalty which must be paid by himself in purgatory. (The Roman Catholic theology regards the pains of purgatory as part of the temporal penalty of sin). Indulgences re-

mitted all or part of this temporal penalty of sin, hence they had the effect — so it was believed — of shortening or terminating a person's stay in purgatory.

Roman Catholic theology had lost sight of the Biblical truth that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses the believer from all sin. Thus the idea had arisen that Christ's death on the cross is not sufficient to save men from all penalty of sin. The cross could save men from hell but not from purgatory. To be saved from purgatory, the sinner must himself add something to the merit of Christ. It was held that many of the eminent saints of past times had not only lived up to all that God required of them, but had actually exceeded what God required of them. Hence they had a surplus of merit from good works, more than they themselves needed. This surplus of merit was said to be accumulated in a "Treasury of Merit" which was at the disposal of the pope to use as he might see fit. If some Christian was deficient in the merit of good works, the pope could draw on the Treasury of Merit and place some of the surplus merit of the saints to his credit. This was the theory which lay back of the practice of issuing indulgences. The person who received an indulgence received some surplus merit of the saints, drawn from the Treasury of Merit.

In theory, indulgences were supposed to be given free of charge to those who could not pay, but those who were able were expected to make a money payment for the benefit they received. In actual practice, however, few if any indulgences were given out free, and the traffic became a money raising "racket" of the crudest and most offensive type. The certificates could be made out in the name of the purchaser, or in the name of some other person for whose benefit they were purchased. An indulgence could be obtained for a person already dead and supposed to be suffering in the flames of purgatory. Although according to Roman Catholic doctrine contrition (sorrow for sin) was required that an indulgence should be effective, this was often forgotten by the ignorant people who purchased indulgences, and they thought of it as a commercial transaction pure and simple.

To Wittenberg, where Martin Luther was professor of theology, came one of the pope's indulgence peddlers, John Tetzel by name. Licensed by the pope himself, these indulgence merchants could disregard the authority of the bishop and priests of the district where they operated; they came from somewhere else, carried on their traffic and then went away taking the money with them. Indulgences were bad enough even in theory; but in practice, John Tetzel was particularly offensive. He had a chest for the money, and told the people that as soon as their money clinked on the bottom of the chest the soul of the person for whom it was paid would be released from purgatory and enter heaven.

The serious-minded Luther was horrified by this crude and shameless traffic. This outsider, Tetzel, coming with authority from the pope, was imposing on the ignorant and simple-minded people, and undermining the preaching and teaching of Luther and all faithful pastors. Luther resolved to do something to oppose the traffic in indulgences.

#### 4. The Ninety-five Theses

Luther began by preaching against the sale of indulgences. Then he went further. On October 31, 1517, Luther posted on the door of the Church of All Saints, Wittenberg, ninety-five theses against the doctrine and practice of selling indulgences. These "theses" were sentences or propositions challenging the doctrine of indulgences, and offering to debate the matter publicly with all comers, at a specified time and place. Some of Luther's theses were as follows:

27. "Those who say that the soul flies out of purgatory as soon as the money thrown into the chest rattles, preach vanity."

36. "Every Christian who feels sincere repentance and sorrow for his sins has complete remission of penalty and guilt even without letters of indulgence."

37. "Every true Christian, whether still living or already dead, partakes of all the benefits of Christ and the Church, given to him by God, even without letters of indulgence."

50. "Christians should be taught that if the Pope knew the ways and deeds of the preachers of indulgences, he would rather have St. Peter's Cathedral burnt to ashes, than that it should be built up of the skin, flesh and bones of his lambs."

54. "To spend as much or more time in the same sermon on indulgences as on the word of the Gospel, is to do wrong to the Word of God."

62. "The real and true treasure of the Church is the most holy Gospel of God's glory and grace."

The gist of Luther's ninety-five theses was a challenge of the pope's power to remit any penalties except the ones he had himself imposed. The posting of the theses was a bold attack on the Catholic doctrine of indulgences, and on the authority of the pope and the priests. The false system which had grown up through hundreds of years was now openly challenged on the basis of the Word of God.

Luther at this time had no idea of leaving the Roman Catholic Church. Even the ninety-five theses were only propositions for debate. At the end of them Luther stated that he affirmed nothing, but left everything to the judgment of the Church. It was only slowly, by the development of events, that he became convinced that he must separate from the Church of Rome.

The posting of Luther's ninety-five theses proved to be the explosion of a theological bomb. Great excitement followed, and men began to take sides for or against Luther. Soon the theses became the topic of barber-shop conversation all

over Germany, and in other countries as well. Some wanted to silence Luther at once, but others rallied to his defence. The pope ordered Luther to appear at Rome within sixty days.

(To be continued)

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## *Psalm Thirty*

### *A Thanksgiving for Life from the Dead*

By the Rev. Frank D. Frazer

The heading of this Psalm is, "A Psalm; A Song of Dedication of the House; (spoken) to David". By an exhaustive study of "The Headings of the Psalms", Dr. Robert Dick Wilson demonstrated that, by all the objective evidence available, these headings are correct and to be taken at their face value. This demolishes the subjective speculations of critics that deny the reliability of the headings. It also adds evidence that the Psalms are largely prophetic, for so many of the experiences related and thoughts expressed transcend those of men like David and the other Psalm-writers whose time and place is fixed in history.

The noun here translated "DEDICATION" occurs on occasion of the dedication of the altar of the Tabernacle (Num. 7:10, 11, 84, 88), and of the altar of Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 7:9). Wherever the altar was, there was the House of God. David had it in his heart to build a House for Jehovah, and although not permitted to do so, he provided abundantly for it; even a song for its dedication. The cognate verb, meaning "to dedicate", is used to describe the dedication of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:63; 2 Chron. 7:5), and that of the temple rebuilt after its destruction by the Chaldeans (Ezra 6:16,17).

The rendering of these words in the ancient Greek version is by words meaning renewal, or restoration; to renew, to restore. This is proper because the dedication of every altar, or House of God, according to God's appointment, is in fact a restoration of an acceptable place of worship where such had been unused, desecrated, or destroyed by sin.

In 164 B. C., after the temple had been defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes, a new altar was built, and the whole sanctuary repaired, cleansed, and dedicated. From this event dates the Jewish "Feast of Dedication", appointed by Judas Maccabeus, and referred to in John 10:22 (see 1 Maccabees 4:36-5:1).

Thus historical fulfilments, indicated by the heading, enable us to recognize the central theme of the Psalm, and to appreciate its pro-

phesy fulfilled many times during almost a millennium of Old Testament history; fulfilled in Christ, in His Church, and in each individual Christian; and comprehending in its scope that "restoration of all things" at the end of time to which all prophecy points. It was fulfilled in Christ, in accord with His later prophecy, "Destroy ye this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. . . . But he spake of the temple of his body". It has been fulfilled in every reformation and revival of an apostate Church; in every genuine conversion of the individual dead in his sin. For every such event is a resurrection — God's giving life to the dead — to the end that a new temple may be dedicated to His service (1 Cor. 3:16,17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22). And, wherever there is life, there is heard "the joyful sound". Augustine was right in calling this Psalm, "A Song of the Joy of Resurrection . . . of the renewing of the body . . . not only of the Lord but also of the whole church."

#### I. Praise to Jehovah in Realization of His Resurrecting Grace and Power

**"I will greatly extol thee, O Jehovah, for thou hast raised me up, And hast not made my foes to triumph over me. O Jehovah, my God, I cried unto thee, and thou didst heal me. O Jehovah, thou hast brought up my soul out of Sheol; Thou hast revived me from among those that go down into the pit. Sing praises to Jehovah, ye saints of his, And give thanks in remembrance of his holiness. For a moment (passeth) in his anger; a lifetime in his favor. In the evening weeping turned in for the night, But in the morning there was shouting for joy. Then, as for myself, I said, in my security, I shall never be moved" (verses 1-6).**

As we realize the depths to which we had fallen, so we appreciate God's saving mercy and power. The person who does not know he is a fallen sinner is self-righteous, and thinks of little to thank God for. He does not see that enemies are laughing at him while they push him farther down. He thinks they are his friends. He does not ask for help. He does not pray. But when God gives life to the dead, a cry goes up to God.

"O Jehovah, my God, I cried unto thee, and thou didst heal me". The word here rendered "heal" means first to "repair", as to repair a building, to "heal the breaches thereof", and so holds the thought of a house restored.

In the Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries the Reformed Churches were raised up, among which was the Covenanter Church of Scotland. The glory of these Churches was in the Scripturalness of their doctrines, the purity of their worship and the cleanness of their life, in contrast with world and papal corruption.

"O Jehovah, thou hast brought up my soul out of Sheol." His soul had been in Sheol, among those that go down into the pit. His trouble was not merely a sickness that might sometime end in death; it was sin that had already brought forth death. But there is One who is stronger than death; One who "turneth the shadow of death into morning".

"Sing praises to Jehovah, O ye his saints". "Saints" are those upon whom God has had mercy, renewing and restoring them, making them holy, and dedicating them to His service. Saints are holy temples dedicated to God. And, collectively, "know ye not that ye are a temple of God?" Therefore, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God". "Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, forever". "Evil shall not dwell with thee. Fools shall not stand in thy sight."

"Be ye holy, for I, Jehovah your God, am holy". If the house be God's dwelling place, it must be holy. To this end it is needful that we have such a conception of God as will lead us to "give thanks in remembrance of his holiness". For, it was His holiness, His hatred of sin and His love of righteousness, that necessitated a way to remove sin from His temple. It was His holiness that guaranteed that this should be done promptly, by a decisive act, nothing short of a resurrection from the dead.

His anger passed in a moment; life in its fulness is His gift. Weeping in the darkness of His averted face gives way to rejoicing when the light of His countenance is turned again to us. But, do we recognize, not His goodness only, not His power only, but His HOLINESS which is manifested in everything He does and says? Is it holiness we desire, or merely outward prosperity, increase of numbers, and popularity?

"But, as for myself — (he has a confession to make) — "As for myself, I said in my security, I shall never be moved". Self-confidence cut off his hold on God. Satisfied in the abundance of God's House, he forgot the Giver and the holiness of His gift.

## II. Recital of the Experience and Its Design

"O Jehovah, in thy grace thou didst appoint strength for my mountain:—Thou didst hide thy face; I was terrified. To thee, O Jehovah, I cried; And to Jehovah I made supplication. What profit is there in my blood? In my going down to the grave? Shall the dust give thee thanks? shall it declare thy truth? Hear, O Jehovah, and have mercy upon me: Jehovah, be thou my helper.

Thou didst turn for me my mourning into dancing; Thou didst put off my sackcloth, and gird me with gladness, To the end that glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent" (verses 7-12a).

Jehovah had said: "I, even I, have established my king upon the mountain of my holiness". This He did by a firm decree that shall never be moved. (Psalm 2:6-9). But sinful man misinterpreted the decree. He imagined that the mountain of God's holiness was "MY mountain", the mountain of MY holiness. He neglected to guard the holiness of God's House. Sin crept in. Then suddenly, "Thou didst hide thy face; I was terrified".

The face of God is God Himself; His presence in the glory of His holiness shining through His gracious favors. There is only one thing from which God hides His face; that is SIN. "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity". He sets His face against the wicked, but from sin He turns away. Sin is the abominable thing He hates and abhors. Yet He still turns His face in mercy toward sinners that they may turn to Him.

When the sun is hidden there is the darkness and chill of death. Life, health, and growth are interfered with; nothing prospers. When God's face is hidden, there is trouble. This was what Christ so greatly feared, and endured on the cross with agony to the uttermost — not for Himself, but for us.

David and the people of Israel, in the very midst of their greatest prosperity, yielded to the sins of their pride. Then, suddenly, dark clouds of judgment threatened them. David, as their leader, had to choose between famine, war, and pestilence, any one of which would accomplish the destruction of that in which they had put their trust. Then David repented of his sin and folly. He built an altar on the mountain of Israel's pride, and it became "the mountain of Jehovah's House" (2 Sam. 24:1-25). To Jehovah he cried and made supplication through THE SACRIFICE. He was no longer concerned for himself, but only for the glory of God. Whatever death may mean for an individual, or for a church, it is as nothing in comparison with the silencing in them of thanksgiving to God and of faithful testimony to God's truth. "The Lord was entreated, . . . and the plague was stayed".

"To the end that glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent". Not MY glory merely, not only the best that is in ME, but all GLORY, the best that is in all the saints. This is the end for which the Church is built, for which it is raised up when fallen, and repaired when broken.

But, if God be praised, He must be praised for what He really is, therefore, "in remembrance of His holiness". And all the earth is called to worship and to tremble before Him in the beauty of holiness (Psalm 96:9). We are to mingle trembling with our praise, because God is holy. Holiness is intolerant of sin. It permits no compromise with sin, nor with falsehood which mediates such compromise. Therefore, the holiness of God requires of us separation from false doctrine as well as from overt wickedness. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are".

As professing Christians, and as a Christian Church, we know we need revival. We want growth in numbers and in all the attractive signs of prosperity. Could it be that it is of God's mercy that we are not prospered, when He sees that we would not be able to stand prosperity? For, in this world there is such a thing as prospering in an evil way; of getting success in sin. Are we willing to be revived if that means new obedience to the holy laws of God, further separation from sin, stopping compromises with evil? If that means a building up in our most holy faith by a diligent study of its doctrine, and a more earnest contending for that faith as once for all delivered to the saints? Are we willing to attend to these things first, and wait for God to give the growth and prosperity that comes from Him alone?

We may, in self-confidence, say that the Covenanted Church shall never be moved; but consider Israel. Religious pride and self-confidence were

their undoing. Their downfall did not come all at once, but after many warning experiences. For one thing they had refused to drive out all the Baal worshipers, or to be separate from them. They made covenants with them, and soon became worshipers of Baal themselves, and eventually shared in the destruction decreed by the Lord. They were deceived by the broad conception that, after all, Baal was the Lord; and the Lord was Baal. Why quibble about names? Baalism was an inclusivist religion, which, by power politics, gained the ascendancy over other religions and molded them to its own pattern. Such is Modernism today. It aims to be the universal religion. Also let us take warning from other churches that once were "Reformed", but which are now involved in compromises and fellowship with evil in the refuge of lies, in covenants with death and Sheol, which shall be swept away in the day of Jehovah's anger. Unless the Covenanter Church holds its position on the basis of truth and Scriptural order, by clear-cut separation, without compromise, it can never win others to that position, but shall itself be swallowed up by an inclusivism that will silence its covenanted testimony.

Modernism tells us there is no resurrection of the body. But Jehovah's ear is not so heavy that it cannot hear, nor His arm shortened that it cannot save. Let us cry to Him, and to Him make supplication. Let us use this Psalm as the song of our re-dedication.

### III.. The Word of Self-Dedication

"O Jehovah, my God, forever will I give thee thanks" (verse 12b).

That is, "forever I will give thee thanks in remembrance of thy holiness". With trembling we may say "forever", because, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; upon such the second death hath no power."

## *A Misunderstood Scripture*

"The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" — 2 Cor. 3:6b. This is perhaps the most terribly mis-applied text in the entire Bible. It is often quoted triumphantly in an effort to justify denial of explicit statements of God's Word, or to extenuate disobedience to clearly revealed commandments of God. This text is misunderstood when it is regarded as setting forth a contrast between a strict interpretation which takes the words of Scripture at their face value, and a free or "liberal" interpretation which holds that the Bible means something different from what it says.

Thus, for example, the Modernists and Liber-

als of our day say, "Do not insist on the letter, that Jesus really rose from the dead in the body in which he suffered; such a literal interpretation is dead; rather, take a spiritual interpretation, that Jesus' resurrection means that his principles and his ideals live on in the world, for such a spiritual interpretation is vital."

By this imagined contrast between "the letter" and "the spirit", "the letter" is everywhere sacrificed to "the spirit"; every miracle and supernatural feature of historic Christianity is eliminated, and we are left with a religion which consists merely of general principles and ideals. And this betrayal is carried out with an air of enlight-

enment and very superior piety, and great contempt for those who still believe that the Bible means exactly what it says.

This interpretation of 2 Cor. 3:6 is of course entirely wrong. It quite disregards the context of the verse. The apostle Paul in this passage is not contrasting two different methods of interpreting the Bible, one called "the letter" and the other called "the spirit". The subject under discussion in this passage is not methods of interpreting the Bible at all. Paul is discussing the superiority of the new dispensation of the Covenant of Grace over the old dispensation of the Covenant of Grace. He is contrasting, not two methods of interpreting Scripture, but two historical epochs of God's dealing with His people. Verse 3 proves that "the letter" means the **Old Testament law** (the Ten Commandments) written on tables of stone, while "the spirit" refers to the Holy Spirit, "**the Spirit of the living God**". The translators of the King James Version should have capitalized "spirit" in verse 6 as they did in verse 3, for the reference is clearly the same, and if the word "Spirit" in verse 3 means the Holy Spirit, so must the word "spirit" in verse 6.

The word "spirit" is not used in the Bible in the modern sense of the essence or inner meaning of something, as in such phrases as "the spirit of democracy", "the spirit of capitalism", etc. In the Bible, a spirit is a PERSON. It may be the spirit of man, the spirit of God, an angelic spirit, or an evil spirit, but it is a person, not an abstraction. In the text we are dealing with, the context clearly shows that the spirit meant is the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of the Living God" (verse 3).

Of course not every statement of Scripture is to be interpreted **literally**; some are symbolic, figurative, etc. When we read that Christ came to lay down His life for His sheep, we understand that in this statement "sheep" stands for "people". It would be very foolish to insist on interpreting "sheep" literally. We are to seek the true, intended meaning of each statement of the Bible, according to sound principles of interpretation. To insist that "sheep" stands for "people" is not forsaking "the letter" in favor of "the spirit"; it is just interpreting according to sound principles, recognizing that the subject of our Saviour's dis-

course (John 10:1-18) concerns the salvation of human beings, not the culture of domestic animals. Verse 15b ("I lay down my life for the sheep") teaches the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement. But the Modernist comes and says that this verse must be interpreted according to "the spirit", not according to "the letter", because "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life". Therefore, he says, we are not to insist that Christ really laid down His life as a substitute for sinners; we prefer to interpret the verse to mean that Christ laid down His life to reveal the love and fatherhood of God to sinners; or, that Christ laid down His life to influence sinners and move them to repentance; or, that Christ laid down His life to set people an example of self-denial and devotion to ideals. Any or all of these false theories of the atonement are justified on the plea that "the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life". Plain statements of the Bible are "interpreted" to mean whatever the Modernist wants them to mean. The statement that Christ laid down His life for the sheep is "interpreted" to mean that Christ did NOT lay down His life for the sheep.

Why must men who wish to tamper with the Word of God claim the sanction of Scripture for their dishonest deeds? Why must they handle the Word of God deceitfully, and then claim that they are justified by Paul's statements about "the letter" and "the spirit"? When we hear an unsound interpretation of Scripture advocated on the plea that "the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life", we should not let this pass. We should challenge this, we should resist it, pointing out that in 2 Cor. 3 "the letter" means the Ten Commandments written on stones in Moses' day, whereas "the spirit" means "the Spirit of the living God" who writes God's law on the hearts of Christian people today. We should not tolerate the common terrible misuse of this great text of Scripture. And we should always be on our guard against the attitude toward Scripture of which the misuse of this particular text is a symptom — the attitude that regards the Scripture as something that can be twisted and bent as we please, until it fits in with our own preferences, prejudices and ideas. We must be on guard lest, being unwilling to subject ourselves to the judgment of the Scripture, we subject the Scripture to our human judgment instead. — J.G.V.

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"If the Word of God be heeded, the Christian battle will be fought both with love and with faithfulness. Party passions and personal animosities will be put away, but on the other hand, even angels from heaven will be rejected if they preach a gospel different from the blessed gospel of the Cross."

J. Gresham Machen

"I have so fixed the habit of prayer in my mind that I never raise a glass of water to my lips without asking God's blessing; never seal a letter without lifting my thoughts heavenward; never change my classes in the lecture room without a petition for the cadets who go out and for those who come in."

General Stonewall Jackson

## *Religious Terms Defined*

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

**GOSPEL.** The good news of salvation provided for sinners by the grace of God through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ the Mediator. (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

**GRACE OF GOD.** The Favor of God bestowed on human beings who deserve His wrath and curse on account of sin.

**SPECIAL GRACE OF GOD.** That grace of God which is bestowed on His elect only, and which brings about their eternal salvation.

**COMMON GRACE OF GOD.** That grace of God which is bestowed on all mankind alike, both the elect and the reprobate, bringing certain benefits during this life, but not bringing about eternal salvation.

**HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS.** A book which combines the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John into one continuous narrative, avoiding repetition, or which arranges the contents of the four Gospels in such a way that the reader can easily see what parts are peculiar to a particular Gospel and what parts are common to two, three or all four Gospels.

**HEAVEN.** (1) The sky (Gen. 1:1). (2) That place in the created universe where the presence and glory of God are specially revealed (Matt. 6:9). (3) The eternal home of the redeemed (2 Cor. 5:1; Heb. 10: 34).

**HELL.** The place of eternal punishment, originally prepared for the devil and his angels, where all human beings who are out of Christ will for ever be isolated from the favorable presence of God and from all that is good (Matt. 25:41, 46).

**HERESY.** (1) In the New Testament, originally a party or sect (translated "sect" in Acts 5:17; 15:5); later, false doctrine stubbornly adhered to (2 Pet. 2:1). (2) In church government today, false doctrine which is definitely contrary to the accepted creed or doctrinal stand-

ards of a church. (Note: doctrine which is alleged to be contrary to the Bible, but not contrary to definite statements of the Church's creed, is called "error", whereas doctrine which is not only alleged to be contrary to the Bible, but is also contrary to definite statements of the Church's creed, is called "heresy").

**HERETIC.** A person who adheres to a heresy.

**HERODIANS.** A Jewish party of the time of Christ, who supported the political power of the Herod family and favored the Romans, thus being opposed to the Pharisees (Matt. 22:16; Mark 3:6).

**HETERODOX.** Unsound or erroneous; the opposite of orthodox (used of either a doctrine or a person).

**HOLINESS.** The state of freedom from sin, with the heart in conformity to God; a state of the heart which is manifested in the life.

**HOLINESS OF GOD.** (1) God's supreme majesty and exaltation far above and beyond the universe and all created beings. (2) God's infinite, absolute separation from all that is sinful.

**HOPE.** The Christian's sure expectation and eager anticipation of the supreme glory and blessing which shall be his in the life of eternity, following the second coming of Christ and the resurrection (Rom. 8:18-25; Heb. 6:18-20).

**HUGUENOTS.** A name, originally given in contempt, for the Reformed or Calvinistic Protestants of France.

**HUMANITY OF CHRIST.** The human nature of Christ, consisting of body and soul, which He took into union with His divine person and nature. "Christ, the Son of God, became man by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin" (S.C. 22).

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## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

"The great distinction of a true Christian is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. How careful he be, lest anything in his thoughts or feelings would be offensive to this divine guest!"

Charles Hodge

"The connection of the forgiveness of sin

with repentance is so certain and indissoluble, that wherever sin is forgiven there is a true penitent; and wherever there is repentance, it is accompanied with the pardon of sin. We should, however, never forget that repentance has no efficacy to atone for sin; nor any merit to de-

serve the favor of God. This blessing is entirely the fruit of Christ's death, which becomes ours as soon as we sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Archibald Alexander

"In fact the broad foundation of all later Messianic prophecy was laid in the Psalms — to wit, on the ground of the promise given by Nathan in 2 Samuel 7, and it is from the Psalms that we can best understand the character and mission and glory of David's Son."

Rudolph Stier

"Before its fulfilment in history there is no perfect understanding of the Scripture; while the history itself is not to be understood without the Scripture."

Rudolph Stier

"I charge you, citizens of the United States, afloat on your wide wild sea of politics, there is another King, one Jesus: the safety of the State can be secured only in the way of humble and whole-souled loyalty to His person and of obedience to His law."

Archibald Alexander Hodge

"In Christ we have love that can never be fathomed, life that can never die, righteousness that can never be tarnished, peace that cannot be understood, rest that can never be disturbed, joy that can never be diminished, hope that can never be disappointed."

Anonymous

"The approaches of sin are like the conduct of Jael; it brings butter in a lordly dish! But when it has fascinated and lulled the victim, the nail and hammer are behind."

Richard Cecil

"As a river leads a man through sweet meadows, green woods, fertile pastures, fruit-laden fields, by glorious buildings, strong forts, famous cities, yet at last brings him to the salt sea; so the stream of this world carries along through rich commodities, voluptuous delights, stately dignities, all possible content to flesh and blood, but after all this brings a man to death, after death to judgment, after judgment to hell."

T. Adams

"As over against all attempts to conceive the operations of God looking to salvation universalistically, that is as directed to mankind in the mass, Calvinism insists that the saving operations of God are directed in every case immediately to the individuals who are saved. Particularism in the process of salvation becomes thus the mark of Calvinism."

B. B. Warfield

"There are fundamentally only two doctrines of salvation: that salvation is from God, and that salvation is from ourselves. The former is the doctrine of common Christianity; the latter is the doctrine of universal heathenism."

B. B. Warfield

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## *Studies in the Epistle to the Romans*

### LESSON 14

#### GOD'S WAY OF JUSTIFYING SINNERS. 3:21 to 5:21, Continued

##### **B. Justification by Faith Illustrated from the Life of Abraham. 4:1-25**

In chapters 1-3 of this Epistle, Paul has established the universal need for salvation, and has defined and expounded God's way of justifying sinners. We come now, in chapter 4, to an illustration of the truth of justification by faith, taken from the life of the patriarch Abraham.

##### **The Old Testament Teaches that Abraham was Justified by Faith. 4:1-3**

If Abraham had been justified by works, he would have had something to glory about. If his standing with God was a matter of performance, achievement, character, works, then he would have had something to be proud of. But Paul immediately says, "but not before God". That is to say, one thing is clear, namely that Abraham did NOT have anything to glory of be-

fore God. For the Scripture said plainly "Abraham BELIEVED God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (4:3, quoted from Genesis 15:6). Therefore it is plain that the Old Testament teaches that Abraham's standing with God was not obtained by DOING something but by BELIEVING something; it was by faith, not by works.

##### **Therefore Abraham was not Justified by Works. 4:4-8**

In teaching that Abraham was justified by faith, the Old Testament at the same time teaches that he was NOT justified by works, for these two principles, grace and works, exclude each other. It is a case of "either...or", not of "both...and". In verses 4-8 Paul brings out this antithesis between faith and works, and supports it by the statements of David in Psalm 32.

First of all, GRACE is contrasted with DEBT. If a person is justified by works, then his salvation is not a matter of grace, but of debt. In that case salvation is not a gift but a payment; not God giving us a gift, but God paying us a debt; not something that comes to us from the free mercy and love of God, but something that comes from God's honesty in meeting His obligations.

But, according to the Bible, salvation is not like that. It is not a matter of God paying debts; it is a matter of God's grace. Therefore it comes "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly". Salvation is not a debt that God pays to good people; it is a free gift that He gives to bad people, to "the ungodly". To such bad people who believe God counts their faith for righteousness. Thus verse 5 proves that, according to the Bible, FAITH IS NOT A WORK IN THE SENSE OF HAVING ANY MERIT OR DESERVING ANY REWARD. Some people say that God no longer requires of people today the perfect obedience that He originally required of Adam; that it is impossible for us sinners to obey God's law perfectly; so God has graciously condescended to lower His requirements, and now requires of us only faith, or believing, and that our act of believing is a substitute for the perfect works of righteousness that we cannot render. According to this idea, God is like a creditor who cannot collect the full amount of a debt from a debtor, so he says, "Since this man obviously cannot pay the full amount of his debt, I will be satisfied with a token payment of one dollar, and when that one dollar is paid, I will just regard the whole debt as paid and close the account." So, some people say, "We cannot perfectly obey the Ten Commandments, but we CAN believe; that, at least is a work within our power to perform, and God is willing to accept our act of believing as a token payment and close the account."

The interpretation we have just been mentioning is of course entirely wrong. God has never lowered his requirements of the human race. He still requires a perfect righteousness, a perfect obedience to His law, and no one will ever receive eternal life on lower terms. What God has done is not to lower His requirements, but to accept the perfect obedience of a Substitute, Jesus Christ, instead of the sinner's personal obedience. God's plan of salvation involves, not a lowering of God's requirements, but a substitution of the person who complies with the requirements.

That believing is not regarded as a work, and is not accepted by God as a token obedience to His requirements, is proved by the first part of verse 5, which directly contrasts "working" and "believing": "But to him that worketh not, but believeth. . .". That is, salvation is NOT a matter of working, BUT a matter of believing; not a matter of doing something, but a matter of re-

ceiving something. Therefore believing is not a token form of working. Believing is the OPPOSITE of working; it is the negation of working; believing is not an activity at all, it is a receptivity.

In verses 6-8 this truth is confirmed from the words of David, quoted from Psalm 32:1,2. David describes the blessedness of the saved man. He says that this man's iniquities are forgiven, his sins are covered, the Lord will not impute sin to him. Therefore, says Paul, David is describing the blessedness of the man to whom God IMPUTES righteousness without works. Here "imputeth" (verse 6) is contrasted with the idea of "works". God imputes righteousness without works. Righteousness, therefore, does not come by our earning it, or deserving it, but by God IMPUTING it to us when we have not earned it and do not deserve it.

This word "impute", and the corresponding noun "imputation", is one of the great terms of the Scriptures. We cannot understand the Gospel without understanding the meaning of "impute" and "imputation". To impute means to reckon, to place something to the credit or debit of someone. When God imputes sin to a person (verse 8), He holds or regards that person guilty of sin. When God imputes righteousness to a person, He regards that person as righteous, He reckons righteousness to the credit of that person. Paul is telling us that righteousness comes, not by our earning it, but by God imputing it to us.

We have seen, in 4:4-8 grace contrasted with debt, faith contrasted with works, and imputation contrasted with earning. Salvation comes to a person by grace, by faith, by imputation; it does not come to a person as payment of a debt, nor by works, nor by earning it.

#### Questions:

1. What truths has Paul established in the first three chapters of the Epistle?
2. What is the subject of chapter 4?
3. What text of the Old Testament proves that Abraham was justified by faith?
4. Why could not Abraham have been justified by both faith and works?
5. What is the difference between giving a gift, and paying a debt?
6. Is salvation given to good people, or to bad people? What phrase in verse 5 proves this?
7. What wrong interpretation of verse 5 has been advocated by some?
8. What is wrong with the idea that "believing" is accepted by God as a token payment of the obedience which we owe to His law?

9. How does verse 5 prove that believing is not a token form of working and does not involve any merit?

10. Instead of lowering His requirement of a perfect righteousness, what has God done to make it possible for sinners to receive eternal life?

11. What is meant by saying "Believing is

not an activity at all, it is a receptivity"?

12. From what Psalm does Paul quote in 4:7,8?

13. What is the meaning of the words "impute", "imputation"?

14. What contrast is set forth in verse 6?

## LESSON 15

### GOD'S WAY OF JUSTIFYING SINNERS. 3:21 to 5:21, Continued

#### B. Justification by Faith Illustrated from the Life of Abraham. 4:1-25, Continued

##### Abraham was Justified Apart from Sacraments. 4:9-12

In verses 9-12 Paul proceeds to show that Abraham was justified apart from sacraments. He carefully shows that Abraham was pronounced righteous by God (Gen. 15:6) BEFORE he received the rite of circumcision (Gen. 17:26). Therefore he was not justified because of circumcision. He received justification first, and circumcision afterwards. Therefore justification does not depend on circumcision.

The rite of circumcision was the seal of the covenant relationship in Old Testament times (Gen. 17:11). It was the Old Testament counterpart of the sacrament of Baptism. Just as Abraham was justified apart from circumcision, so we today are justified apart from baptism and apart from the Lord's Supper.

Many people today are not clear on this point. There are formalists who count heavily on their careful observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper to give them a standing with God. In the case of some people, this becomes a form of salvation by works very much like that of the Pharisees of Paul's day. It is easy to see that they look upon their baptism with a complacent feeling, and regard their regular attendance upon the Lord's Supper as entitling them to some credit with God.

But the Bible is against them. Sacraments are appointed in God's Word; they are real means of grace; it is our duty to observe them conscientiously. But they do not constitute a form of "works" and they do not bring about our being pronounced righteous by God.

Abraham was justified prior to his circumcision. This establishes the principle. Sacraments are our duty, but they cannot contribute anything to our justification. We are justified apart from sacraments, by faith.

##### Abraham was Justified Apart from Law. 4:13-16

Here a new contrast is added. Paul contrasts

"the law" with "the righteousness of faith" (verse 13). He tells us that God's promise to Abraham was not "through the law" but "through the righteousness of faith".

The effect of added and particularized law is to increase transgression, therefore it cannot be the means of Abraham or his seed becoming heir of the world (verses 14, 15). God made to Abraham AN ABSOLUTE PROMISE "that he should be the heir of the world" (13). Now if Abraham was justified by the law, then this absolute promise of God must have fallen to the ground. "Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression" (15). Consider, for example, the Income Tax law. If there were no Income Tax law, then there would be no violations of the Income Tax law. The more comprehensive and particularized the law is made, the more occasions for violations there will be. The more law, the more transgression of law. This is especially true in the case of God's absolute, perfect, holy law. Since it is true that "the law worketh wrath", the law cannot be the source of Abraham's justification. And as a matter of fact, the law was not the source of his justification. Actually, he was justified apart from the law, as a matter of free grace or promise.

Since it was a matter, not of law, but of promise, it was also "of faith" and "by grace" (verse 16). And the same thing is true today. Justification is not obtained by carefully obeying God's commandments; it is in fulfilment of God's promise, a matter of faith, by grace. We receive it just as Abraham did, not by works, not by sacraments, not by law-obedience, but through faith, by God's grace or gift.

##### The Nature of Abraham's Faith. 4:17-22

We are next given a summary of the nature of Abraham's faith. First of all, it was faith in God, that is, of course, in the living and true God. It is not just "faith" that saves people, not just "faith" as a psychological trait or attitude, but faith in the living and true God. In the Bible faith is never considered in the abstract, apart from its object. Always it is considered as faith IN something or someone. It is the object of

faith that makes all the difference. Abraham did not merely believe; he believed GOD. That was why his faith had such wonderful consequences.

Then, Abraham's faith was faith in God's SUPERNATURAL working — "God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (verse 17). { Abraham was not a pantheist like the Modernists and Liberals of the present day, who think of God as caught and meshed in the laws of the universe, so that He is limited by natural laws. } Abraham believed in a supernatural God, a God who can and does work miracles, a God in whose hands the universe with its laws is absolutely obedient, a God who can act directly, apart from natural laws, if He chooses to do so. He is a God that gives life to the dead — something CONTRARY to nature. There is no life in death, but God, being almighty, can give life to the dead. He is a supernatural, miracle-working God. (Compare Hebrews 11:17-19).

Also, Abraham's faith was a faith that believed in spite of apparent impossibility (19,20). According to human experience, it was impossible for Isaac to be born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. But this was what God had promised, and though humanly it would be regarded as impossible, Abraham believed the promise. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God".

His faith was not founded in probability, but on the reliability of God, regardless of appearances or probabilities (21). He was fully persuaded that God was able to perform what He had promised, even though the promise concerned something which human experience would regard as impossible. And it was this faith which "was imputed to him for righteousness", that is, it was this faith in the almighty, miracle-working God, that resulted in God's accounting Abraham righteous.

**We are Justified in the Same Way that Abraham Was. 4:23-25**

The principle is the same in Abraham's case as in our own. He believed on the strength of a promise concerning future redemption; we be-

lieve on the promise already fulfilled, on a Saviour who has already come and accomplished our redemption — Jesus Christ "who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification". In both cases justification is by faith, and this faith in both cases is faith in the almighty, miracle-working God.

#### Questions:

1. How can it be shown from the Book of Genesis that Abraham was justified apart from sacraments?
2. What is the true place of sacraments in a person's salvation?
3. What do we call those who place their trust in their observance of the sacraments?
4. What promise did God make to Abraham? Was this an absolute promise, or a conditional one?
5. If Abraham had been justified by law, what would have happened to God's promise?
6. What truth about God's law is taught in 4:15?
7. What is the true place of obeying God's law in a person's Christian life?
8. What is meant by saying that in the Bible faith is never considered in the abstract?
9. What is pantheism and what is wrong with its idea of God?
10. What false system of the present day is largely dominated by a pantheistic idea of God?
11. How was Abraham's faith different from that of a pantheist?
12. What is God's relation to the natural laws of the universe?
13. What was the character of Abraham's faith concerning the promised birth of Isaac?
14. In what respect is the Christian's faith the same as Abraham's faith?
15. In what respect is the Christian's faith different from Abraham's faith?

## LESSON 16

### GOD'S WAY OF JUSTIFYING SINNERS. 3:21 to 5:21, Continued

#### C. The Results of a Legal Standing Before God. 5:1-11

In chapters 1-4 Paul has discussed, first, the NEED for Justification or a legal standing before God; second, the MEANING of Justification; third, he has illustrated the truth of Justification

from the life of Abraham, showing that Abraham was justified by faith, not by sacraments or law observance. Beginning with chapter 5 the apostle passes on to consider the FRUITS of Justification, or what we may call the Results of a Legal Standing before God.

### Peace with God. 5:1

Scripture speaks of two kinds of peace: (1) the peace of God, which passes all understanding; (2) peace with God. We must have peace WITH God before we can enjoy the peace OF God.

Verse 1 tells us that the person who has been justified by faith has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This assumes that formerly we were at war with God. If we had never been at war with God, we could not talk about obtaining peace with God.

If someone were to tell us that next week a treaty of peace will be made between Canada and the United States, we would rightly reply: "Why, Canada and the United States are not at war with each other; they are at peace with each other and have been for more than 100 years". But if someone speaks of making a peace treaty between Germany and the United States, that makes sense, because a few years ago Germany and the United States were at war with each other, and no final peace treaty has yet been made between them.

Before sinful human beings can have peace with God, the cause of the enmity between them must be taken away. No war, even in human affairs, is really settled until the cause has been dealt with and corrected. A peace that leaves the old cause of friction the same as it was before is not a peace but only an armistice.

In the case between God and ourselves, the cause of the enmity was sin. It was sin that separated God from the human race. That sin has been taken care of by the atonement of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The cause of the enmity has been taken away. So the justified person has, first of all, PEACE WITH GOD.

Peace with God is the necessary preparation for all the later steps of the Christian life. Nothing can be right with us or our life as long as we are at war with God, our Maker. So the apostle mentions peace with God first of all as the result of Justification.

### Joy in Anticipation of Future Glory. 5:2

We "rejoice in hope of the glory of God". This word "rejoice" means, literally, "triumph". It is the joy that accompanies a great victory. We triumph in HOPE of the glory of God. Glory is what is reserved for the life of eternity. We get it in heaven, and especially after the resurrection of the body at the end of the world. When we shall rise with changed and immortal bodies to live for ever, we shall receive the highest glory and blessedness. Since glory is something reserved for the future, and we cannot have it right away, we look forward to it with hope; that is, with anticipation of enjoying it.

We are looking forward to a day when the present conflict in Korea will come to an end, and the men in the armed forces can come home to their families again and enjoy life in their own country. That is hope concerning matters of this present earthly life. But as Christians we look forward to the time when we shall inherit the glory of God, the fulness of eternal life that is reserved for us in heaven.

### Triumph Even in Present Troubles. 5:3-5

We are not in the state of glory now; on the contrary, we are in a life which is replete with trouble, suffering and woe. Yet these verses state that we can triumph even in our present troubles — our "tribulations". This triumph comes by reason of the progress of our Christian growth. Look at the ascending ladder of Christian growth which is here placed before us.

(A) Tribulation. This is unavoidable for a Christian in this present world, as our Saviour said: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

(B) Patience, or endurance, by tribulation successfully endured, by going through it and learning that we can maintain our Christian faith and testimony in spite of tribulation.

(C) Experience, or more accurately approval; that is, God's approval of us, and our own consciousness of His approval of us.

(D) New and reliable hope, which will not disappoint us as a fading mirage — a hope that maketh not ashamed.

(E) God's love shed abroad in our hearts. This does not mean our love for God; it means God's love for us. The Bible tells us, "He careth for you." The consciousness of God's love is made to fill our hearts by the operation of the Holy Spirit within us. The present consciousness of God's favor is a proof that our Christian hope will not disappoint us, will not make us ashamed.

### Parenthesis. 5:6-8

Here the apostle pauses in his argument to speak of the wonder of God's love for us. It is a love for helpless enemies (compare 5:10), which is unparalleled in human relationships. Men might perhaps be willing to die for a really GOOD man, but certainly not for a merely righteous man. Note that Paul does not speak of merely risking life, but of actually dying for another. But God's love is bestowed on the sinful and rebellious. God's grace does not find men fit to be loved; it makes them fit to be loved.

### Salvation from the Wrath of God. 5:9

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (1:18). But so far as the Christian is con-

cerned, God's wrath is a fire that has already burnt itself out. It cannot touch him.

Christ in His sufferings and death in Gethsemane and on Calvary absorbed it all, every bit of the wrath of God. None was left to fall upon us. He drank the bitter cup to the last drop. There may be sufferings, tribulations, afflictions, appointed for us, but they will not be bitter by reason of the wrath of God mixed with them. The Christian must pass through death and must also stand before the judgment seat of Christ, but neither death nor the judgment is a messenger of divine wrath to the Christian. That wrath has already been exhausted on Calvary; that wrath has been completely extracted from God's dealings with the Christian.

The one place that is really safe in a raging prairie fire is a large patch that has already been thoroughly burned over. The flames cannot come there to destroy. The Christian is "in Christ", in whom the flames of God's wrath against sin have already consumed to the limit. It is a safe refuge from the wrath of God.

#### Salvation with Life. 5:10

Since Christ suffered and died to cancel our debt to God's righteous law, it is certain that He will not forsake us, but that the power of His risen life will be exerted to save us to the very end. "I am come that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Christ is a living Saviour, not only from the awful guilt of sin, but also from its enslaving power. Jesus died for us, rose again for us, and now He lives to help us.

#### Salvation Super-Abundant. 5:11

Through Christ we have received the "atone-ment" — the "at-one-ment" or reconciliation. Having named the different results of being justified, Paul says over again, "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ". We are saved "in a triumphant manner and frame of mind". Think of Paul and Silas singing praises to God at

midnight in the jail at Philippi. God has provided enough and to spare for our salvation. God never does anything by halves, in a partial or incomplete way. So our salvation is full and free, suited to the depth and breadth of our need. We are great sinners, it is true; but let us never forget Christ is a great Saviour. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (5:20).

#### Questions:

1. What new subject is taken up in chapter 5?
2. Of what two kinds of peace does the Bible speak?
3. Which must come first, the peace of God, or peace with God?
4. Why is it necessary for us to obtain peace with God?
5. What was the cause of the enmity between God and ourselves?
6. What is the place of peace with God in the Christian life?
7. When shall Christians receive the highest glory and blessedness?
8. Why is glory a matter of hope?
9. What steps of Christian growth are mentioned in 5:3-5?
10. What is the love that is shed abroad in our hearts?
11. What is the special wonder of God's love for us?
12. Why can the wrath of God not touch the Christian?
13. What is the meaning of "we shall be saved by his life", 5:10?
14. What is the meaning of "the atonement", 5:11?

## LESSON 17

### GOD'S WAY OF JUSTIFYING SINNERS. 3:21 to 5:21, Continued

#### D. In Bringing Men Eternal Life, Christ Succeeds where Adam Failed. 5:12-21

We might call this section, 5:12-21, "The Covenant of Works Fulfilled in the Covenant of Grace". It is the great New Testament interpretation of the Covenant of Works and its relation to the saving work of Christ.

The historical character of Adam and Eve, and their fall into sin, is assumed in these verses. The apostle's argument depends on it. Any view of the Book of Genesis that interprets the story of Adam and Eve, and their fall into sin, other-

wise than literally, makes utter nonsense of Paul's argument in the verses that are before us. If the story of Adam and Eve is a mere myth or allegory, as many claim today, then what the apostle says in Romans 5:12-21 is just foolishness. It depends on the fact there was a real Adam and a real Eve, who lived at a particular time and place, and on a particular day fell into sin.

A popular news magazine made the following statement:

"Anthropologists no longer look for a defi-

nite single place where the human race first appeared on earth. They know that man's ancestors were numerous, varied and widely distributed before they were fully human." (TIME, Nov. 12, 1945, p. 50).

But in spite of this unbelief of the scientists, it is perfectly clear that both Paul and Jesus Christ taught that Adam was the first man and that he was a single, definite, historical person who lived at a particular time and place — an individual person, the first ancestor and head of the human race.

#### **Summary of the Covenant of Works in the Garden of Eden**

In order to understand Romans 5:12-21, we must have in mind the Covenant of Works, the first covenant God made with the human race. The Covenant of Works was an arrangement made by God and imposed on the human race, to bridge the infinite distance between the Creator and His creatures. God took the initiative and approached mankind, so that men could enjoy religious communion with God — could worship, glorify and enjoy God. The creature himself could never have bridged that gap. If God had not taken the initiative and approached mankind, we would have been forever separated by an infinite distance from God.

The Covenant of Works was a temporary probation or test, appointed by God, by which, if successfully withstood, Adam and all his posterity would have been confirmed in their original condition of righteousness, so that it would have become forever impossible for mankind to fall into sin.

The particular test involved in the probation was a command not to eat the fruit of a particular tree, called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This command was intentionally arbitrary, to make it a sheer test of obedience to the revealed will of God, apart from all reasons of suitability or considerations of human prudence.

The reward for obedience to the will of God was to be LIFE; that is, of course, eternal life, which was symbolized in the Garden of Eden by the Tree of Life which grew in the midst of the garden. If Adam and Eve had gone through the period of probation without disobeying God, the time would have come, sooner or later (we do not know when) — the time would have come when they would have been given the right to eat the fruit of the Tree of Life. That would have meant that the possibility of sin and death was forever abolished, not only for Adam and Eve personally, but for the entire human race through all the centuries and millenniums of human history. There would never have been any such thing as sin or death in the human race.

Thus Adam and Eve had something which we do not have today, namely, an opportunity to earn eternal life by DOING something, that is, by their works.

The penalty for disobedience was death, and this meant, of course, not merely physical death, the death of the body, but TOTAL DEATH, that is, eternal death, which the Bible calls "the second death".

In this Covenant of Works Adam acted not merely as an individual man, but as a head or representative of the human race. We might express the matter by saying that Adam acted not merely in a private capacity but also in an official capacity. He acted not merely for himself, but for other people also; in fact, for the whole human race.

The covenant was made with Adam as representing all future generations of men, from the Garden of Eden to the end of the world. If Adam had remained faithful and obedient to God, all future generations would have been born sinless and would automatically have received eternal life.

On the other hand, when Adam fell into sin, as we know he did, the result was that all human generations to the end of time would be born into this world with a sinful nature and guilty before God BECAUSE OF ADAM'S FIRST SIN.

Although some people object violently to this doctrine, there is no denying that the Word of God teaches it, especially the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. It is our purpose to expound the Word of God, not to tone it down or apologize for its statements.

#### **The Results of Adam's Breaking the Covenant of Works.**

In 5:12 we are informed that "sin entered into the world". This is not only a truth of the Bible, but also something that can be observed around us on every hand, and also within our own hearts and lives. The fact and the universality of sin are obvious everywhere.

The origin of sin in the universe is a mystery. The Bible does not try to explain it to us. What made Satan, a holy angel, change his character and begin to sin against God, we simply do not know. We do know that sin originated outside the human race; it began, not with men, but with the devil; from the devil, it was imported into the human race, and entered into the world through one individual human being, namely, Adam.

Sin having entered the world, death also entered the world as the necessary consequence of sin (verse 12). Both sin and death became universal, co-extensive with the human race:

“and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (12).

The universality of sin is sometimes questioned or denied, but no one can deny the universality of death. Wherever there are human beings, there you find death. Mankind hungers and thirsts for life. The thirst for life is the strongest of all human impulses. Men will cling to life when all else is gone. They will struggle and strive to live just a few more days or a few more minutes. Yet in spite of this insatiable thirst for life, death overtakes every human being. How can this strange fact be explained?

The evolutionist who regards the present average condition of men as normal cannot explain the fact of death in the face of the hunger for life. But the Bible explains it: “And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (12). And the explanation of the thirst for life lies in the nature of mankind, created by God not to die but to eat the fruit of the Tree of Life and live forever. That deep longing, that powerful impulse toward life, comes down to us today from Adam and Eve who were created to eat the fruit of the Tree of Life and never die, but live forever.

**Questions:**

1. What is the subject of 5:12-21?
2. What difference does it make whether we believe that Adam and Eve were historical characters and the Fall a historical event?
3. If the story of Adam and Eve is a myth or allegory, what is the effect of this on the apostle Paul's argument in Romans 5:12-21?

4. What is the prevalent theory of scientists concerning the first man?

5. What was the purpose of the Covenant of Works?

6. Why was it necessary that the initiative in bridging the gap be taken by God?

7. What probation or test was involved in the Covenant of Works?

8. What would have been the outcome if Adam had not disobeyed God?

9. What was the reward for obedience in the Covenant of Works?

10. What was the penalty for disobedience in the Covenant of Works?

11. What is the meaning of death as the penalty of sin?

12. What can be said about the origin of sin in the universe?

13. What is the strongest of all human impulses? How is it contradicted by universal human experience?

14. Why can evolutionists not explain the universality of death in the face of the universal hunger for life?

15. How does the Bible explain this mysterious contradiction?

16. What is the source of our powerful hunger for life?

**LESSON 18**

**GOD'S WAY OF JUSTIFYING SINNERS, 3:21 to 5:21, Continued**

**D. In Bringing Men Eternal Life, Christ Succeeds where Adam Failed. 5:12-21, Continued**

**Death Reigns over Men from Adam to Moses. 5:13,14**

The fact that Adam's transgression affected all his posterity, the apostle Paul proves by a reference to the period between Adam and Moses, a period of at least 3,000 years time. We should realize that the period from Adam to Moses was at least as long as the period from Moses to the present day.

Sin by definition is “the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). The law was formally given in the days of Moses. Adam died because he disobeyed a specific command of God — the command not to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Clearly Adam was a lawbreaker, a transgressor. But what about

the people during the long period from Adam to Moses, three thousand years or more?

Of course during that long period people had the law of God written on their heart and conscience. But the apostle in these verses is not speaking of the law of nature written on all men's hearts. He is speaking about the Ten Commandments, the specially revealed moral law of God. Between Adam and Moses, men did not have that specially revealed moral law of God. Thus they could not be TRANSGRESSORS in the full, exact sense of the word. They could not be transgressors as the Jews were after the Ten Commandments were given. They were not exactly transgressors. But were they sinners?

Yes, they must have been sinners, because, Paul tells us, **DEATH REIGNED OVER THEM**. He says that death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the

similitude of Adam's transgression; that is to say, even those who had not sinned in the same way as Adam sinned, even those who had not transgressed a positive, specific, specially revealed command of God, as Adam had. Even they were sinners, as is evident from the fact that they all died. Death reigned over them. If they had not been sinners they would not and could not have died, for death is the wages of sin. Thus Adam's transgression resulted in the total wreck and ruin of the human race.

Note Paul's clear statements. By Adam's fall, many were made sinners (verse 19). By Adam's fall, sin and death reigned over the human race (verses 17 and 21). By Adam's fall, the whole human race was brought under divine judgment unto condemnation (verse 16).

#### Adam and Christ Compared

Adam was, first of all, our natural head and ancestor. Secondly, he was our federal head or representative in the Covenant of Works. Thirdly, Adam was a "figure" or type of Christ (verse 14).

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (verse 19). Note the exact parallel between Adam and Christ. This is why Christ is sometimes called "the second Adam". Just as Adam's fall made us sinners, so Christ's obedience makes us righteous.

Adam brought us into condemnation; that is, he brought us under the condemning judgment of God (verse 18). But Christ brings us just the opposite, namely, "justification of life"; that is, justification which results in eternal life.

God never abandoned or abrogated the Covenant of Works. When Adam broke it, it became impossible for sinful human beings to attain eternal life by the Covenant of Works. But God did not discard the Covenant of Works. He simply held it in suspense until the proper time, called in the Bible "the fulness of time", when the second Adam, that is, Jesus Christ, should appear to accomplish what the first Adam had failed to accomplish, namely, to win eternal life for men by perfect obedience to God.

Jesus Christ, the second Adam, by fulfilling the Covenant of Works, made it possible for God to save sinners by a different covenant — the Covenant of Grace. In other words, the Covenant of Works was fulfilled in Christ and thus made a part of a new covenant, the Covenant of Grace, by which sinners are saved.

We should always remember that we are saved, not merely by the sufferings and death of Jesus for us, but also that His perfect life of obedience to God is reckoned to our account. Both in His life and in His death Jesus rendered a perfect obedience to God as our representative.

#### Adam and Christ Contrasted

Note verse 18, where the phrase "came upon all men" occurs twice. Adam's Fall made all men sinners, with only one exception (Jesus Christ, who was born with a sinless human nature). Verse 18 seems to tell us that Christ's obedience makes ALL MEN righteous just as Adam's fall made all men sinners. Yet we know from the Bible as well as from experience that not all, but only some, are saved by Christ and receive eternal life. What can be the explanation of the apostle's statement?

It is evident that the "all men" in the first part of verse 18 does not cover exactly the same ground as the "all men" in the second part of the verse. For the bond of connection is different in the two cases. We are connected with Adam by the bond of nature, whereas we are connected with Christ by the bond of faith. Everybody in the world is descended from Adam. In the Covenant of Works he represented all humanity. So judgment and condemnation come upon all men because all men are connected with Adam by the bond of nature. (Of course the fact that Adam was the ancestor or natural head of the human race was the basis for God constituting him the federal head or representative of all mankind in the Covenant of Works. It was Adam, not Seth or Noah, that was made the representative of all mankind, precisely because it was Adam that was the natural head or ancestor of all mankind).

But we are not connected to Christ that way. Even though Christ is called "the second Adam", we are not literally His posterity; we are not physically descended from Him. Christ is not the ancestor of the human race as Adam was. The bond of connection between us and Christ is not nature, but a spiritual bond of faith. Not everybody, but only those who believe, receive justification and eternal life from Christ.

All who are connected with Adam receive condemnation and death from Adam; and since all people are connected with him, this includes everyone. And all who are connected with Christ receive justification and eternal life from Him. But since not all, but only some, are connected with Christ by faith, this includes only a part of the human race, namely, those who believe on Christ as their Saviour.

There is also another contrast between Adam and Christ. It is the contrast between a debt and a gift. God owes us judgment and condemnation, but He does not owe us salvation and eternal life. We deserve what we receive from Adam; God would not be just if He did not lay it on us. But we do not deserve what we receive from Christ; God gives salvation to us, not as a matter of debt, but as a free gift.

Note verse 15, where Paul contrasts the of-

fence of Adam with the free gift of Christ. And again in verses 16, 17 and 18 we find this same contrast repeated, with great emphasis laid on the fact that we receive salvation from Christ not as something we are entitled to, but as a GIFT OF GRACE, that is, an undeserved gift. God owes us judgment, but He gives us salvation.

There is still another contrast between Adam and Christ. That concerns the abundance of sin compared with the super-abundance of God's grace, as we see in verse 20, "Moreover. . . where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." God's grace is wider and fuller than man's sin; God's provision is richer than our greatest need.

This may help us to find a partial answer to the question, Why did God permit sin to enter the world? At least we can say that God permitted sin to enter the world because He planned to provide grace and salvation far more rich and abundant than the sin that was allowed to enter. "Grace did much more abound". This does not mean, of course, that everybody is going to be saved; but it does mean that God's salvation is more than enough to meet our every need.

#### **Are You Still under Condemnation?**

Adam failed; Christ succeeded. There has thus been provided a perfect, completed plan of salvation. "Whosoever will, let him come". May we accept and receive Christ as our Saviour and so make sure that this abounding grace shall be ours.

If we have not received Christ, the second Adam, we are still under the curse and condemnation of the covenant broken by the first Adam.

A woman in a local business establishment said to the writer of these notes: "God is kind and loving, and no one should be afraid of God". The writer replied to her: "You should get your ideas of God from the Bible, not from your own mind. The Bible teaches that God is just and holy and will by no means clear the guilty. If any person is not a Christian he certainly ought to be afraid of God."

If anyone is under the broken Covenant of Works, he ought to be afraid of God. Only when we are sure we are under the Covenant of Grace can we really feel safe and secure.

#### **Questions:**

1. Why does Paul speak of the period from Adam to Moses?
2. How long was the period of time between Adam and Moses?
3. Why were the people between Adam and Moses not transgressors in the full sense of the term?
4. How do we know that the people from Adam to Moses were sinners?
5. What two relationships exist between Adam and ourselves?
6. What is the relation of the Covenant of Works to the Covenant of Grace? Was the Covenant of Works abolished when Adam sinned?
7. Does 5:18, "the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" mean that everybody will be saved?
8. What is the difference between "all men" in the first part of verse 18 and "all men" in the second part of the verse?
9. Wherein does our bond of connection with Adam differ from our bond of connection with Christ?
10. How does our relation to Adam and Christ involve the contrast between a debt and a gift?
11. Which abounds more, human sin or divine grace?
12. Does 5:20 mean that everyone will be saved? If not, what is the meaning of the second part of this verse?
13. Of what great mystery can 5:20 help us to find a partial solution?
14. Who is still under the condemnation of the broken Covenant of Works?
15. Who should be afraid of God, and why?
16. When are we warranted in feeling safe and secure?

### **LESSON 19**

#### **THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39**

##### **A. Objections to the Doctrine of Justification Answered. 6:1-23**

At this point in the Epistle, the apostle passes from the subject of Justification by Faith to the consideration of the theme of Sanctification, or

the moral and spiritual consequences of a legal standing with God. What difference will the fact that a person is justified by faith make in that person's character and daily life?

Paul introduces this new subject by stating

and answering two objections to the doctrine of Justification by faith as a free gift of God. The first objection is referred to in verse 1 and the second in verse 15.

#### First Objection Stated and Answered. 6:1-13

An objection to the truth of Justification by faith is suggested in verse 1, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" The objection suggested is, that the doctrine of free justification implies that a person may continue living in sin, in order that grace may abound.

No doubt Paul's opponents were actually making this slanderous charge against the apostle's teaching. And indeed there has been no time from the apostles to the present day when the same objection has not been raised by opponents of the doctrine of free justification.

Paul has shown that we are justified simply as a free gift of God, just by receiving righteousness imputed to us as a free gift, by an act of faith, that is, of PURE RECEPTIVITY, entirely apart from our own character, merits, conduct, good deeds, and so forth. As stated in 3:28, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law".

Now the opponents of free justification object to this idea. They say, "Well, if a man is justified as a free gift, if he doesn't have to do anything whatever toward earning or deserving his own salvation, then why can a person not accept Justification as a free gift, and then go right ahead and live a sinful life?"

"If God is glorified in forgiving my sins and saving me just as a free gift, then the more sins I commit, the more sins God can forgive, and the more sins God forgives, the more He will be glorified!"

"Then Justification is just like a blanket permission to go ahead and commit sins, for no matter how many or how wicked sins we commit, we can always get them forgiven by God as a free gift, to His name's honor and glory. If we are justified just as a free gift of God, then what incentive is there to live a good life? If I am saved anyway, why should I make any effort to live a good life? Why not just continue in sin, that grace may abound?"

So ran the objection. Since opponents were making this slanderous charge, the apostle at this point undertakes to answer it. First of all he denies the charge flatly: "God forbid!", or, as we might say today, "Certainly not! Far from it!" Then he goes into details and explains the reasons why we may not continue in sin that grace may abound. We shall consider these point by point.

#### The Implications of our Baptism. 6:2-10

As represented by his baptism, the Christian is dead to sin, but alive to God. The Christian has, of course, been baptized, in obedience to Christ's command. Well, was this baptism a mere empty formality, or did it mean something? Doubtless, it meant something very important. What did our baptism mean?

Primarily, of course, baptism means the washing away of our sins by the precious blood of Christ and the cleansing of our hearts by the Holy Spirit. But baptism means more than that. It also means UNION WITH CHRIST: we are baptized "in", or more correctly "into" the name of Christ. But union with Christ in what respect? In what particular way are we united with Him?

*To walk in newness of life*  
Certainly baptism means union with Christ in respect to His death and His resurrection, for it is especially by those two historical facts that our redemption was accomplished. But Christ's death was connected with sin; not His own sin, of course, for He had none; but the sins of His people, which were laid on Him by the Father. Verse 10 informs us that "in that he died, he died unto sin once". Death is the wages of sin. Death is always connected with sin. If there had been no sin, there would not have been any death either. Christ "died unto sin"; that is, by His death He finished off His connection with the matter of sin. Verse 10 adds: "but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God". Christ finished His connection with sin, once for all, when He died on the cross; now He lives a new life, a life not connected with sin, but devoted to God.

If the Christian is really united with Christ, as represented by his baptism, and if that really means anything, then it must involve the parallel facts in our own experience, namely, DEATH UNTO SIN and LIFE UNTO GOD. We have been baptized into the name of Christ; that sacrament is full of meaning, and it certainly means union with Christ in the matter of death unto sin, and life unto God.

So Paul, answering the objectors, exclaims: "God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (6:2). As represented or implied by baptism, the Christian is united with Christ in the matter of His death, and shall be in the matter of His resurrection (6:5). This will take place fully, of course, at the Last Day, the resurrection day, when Christ shall come again in glory. But in a spiritual way it also takes place here and now, by a day to day life of holiness.

#### Questions:

1. What is the subject of chapters 6 to 8 of the Epistle?

2. What new doctrine is introduced at the beginning of chapter 6?

3. What was the first objection urged against the doctrine of Justification by Faith?

4. According to the objectors, what must be the effect of the doctrine of free justification?

5. How does Paul start to answer this first objection?

6. What is the primary meaning of the sacrament of baptism?

7. In addition to this primary meaning, what truth is implied by baptism?

8. What kind of union with Christ is implied by baptism?

9. What is the meaning of the statement: "In that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (2:10)?

10. What does this truth about Christ imply concerning the life of the Christian?

## LESSON 20

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued

#### A. Objections to the Doctrine of Justification Answered. 6:1-23, Continued

##### First Objection Stated and Answered. 6:1-13, Continued

##### Justification is not an Isolated Fact

The objection that was urged against Paul's doctrine of Justification by faith assumes that Justification takes place alone, as an isolated fact, in a vacuum, as if Justification, just that alone and nothing more, constituted the sum-total of the Christian life.

The objectors really saw only one part of the picture. They reasoned as if God would take a sinner, justify that sinner as a free gift, forgiving his sins and pronouncing him righteous in God's sight — and then would just leave off and never do anything more for the person — as if God would simply justify a person, stop there, and let it go at that. This was the partial, incomplete view of the matter that was at the bottom of the objection. If the objectors had seen the rest of the picture, they could never have raised such an objection against the apostle's doctrine.

Of course God does not act in any such way as that. There is no such thing as a Christian who is MERELY JUSTIFIED and nothing more. Justification does not take place alone, all by itself, as an isolated fact. It is A LINK IN THE CHAIN OF SALVATION. It is always accompanied by the other links in the chain of salvation, including adoption, sanctification, and so forth.

In particular, Justification is always accompanied by Regeneration or the New Birth, by which a person "dead in trespasses and sins" is given "a new heart" or A NEW NATURE, so that that person becomes "a new creature" in Christ Jesus (John 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17). Justification is always accompanied by the new birth, to which Paul alludes here by mentioning "newness of life" (6:4), and saying that we should "walk in newness of life". Of course, we have to receive

"newness of life" before we can "walk" in it; and receiving newness of life is simply the new birth, or regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

God does not merely justify people and then drop the matter. God goes on and completes His work. What God begins, He carries on to completion. When God justifies a person, He also regenerates that person, gives that person "newness of life", a new nature, a new heart.

How then can any real Christian talk about continuing in sin that grace may abound? It was the objectors to Paul's doctrine that talked that way. But they did not speak the language of Zion. They spoke rather like the inhabitants of Sodom and Egypt. If they were really Christians they would have spoken in a very different way. No real Christian will ever talk about continuing in sin that grace may abound.

The Christian is indeed dead to sin but alive to God, by virtue of his union with Christ, which union was effected by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and was implied by his baptism.

That the Christian is dead to sin, but alive to God, is not an exhortation, or a pious wish, but a statement of fact. It is true of every real Christian, everyone who sincerely believes on Jesus Christ as his Saviour. He may be an inconsistent Christian; he may be a weak and faltering Christian; but if he truly believes on Christ as his Saviour, then it is true of him that he is dead to sin, but alive to God. Such is the fact of the matter.

##### What Difference will it Make in our Daily Life? 6:11-13

What are we going to do about it? We are dead to sin and alive to God. What difference is that going to make in our daily manner of living?

Since we are united to Christ in His death and resurrection, it follows that we must live accordingly, of our own voluntary decision and purpose. How are we going to regard our life

in this mortal body, here and now, in this present world in which we are living? Well, as Paul has already shown, first of all, we may not continue in sin that grace may abound. On the contrary, we are to "reckon" or regard ourselves as dead to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord (6:11). Therefore we are not to let sin reign over us while we are still in this mortal body (6:12). This does not mean that we can live a perfect or sinless life here below, for we cannot. But we are not to submit to THE DICTATORSHIP OF SIN. We are not to let sin "reign" over us as a tyrannical dictator or oppressor.

Remember God's warning to Cain, in Genesis 4:7 (ARV): "If thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door; and unto thee shall be its desire; but do thou rule over it".

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (6:12). Sin will remain in us as a principle as long as we continue in this mortal body, here in this life on earth. But we are not to let it work itself out to the full in our conduct by obeying its impulses. On the contrary, as those that are alive from the dead — we who once were "dead in trespasses and sins" — we are to place ourselves and all our faculties, not at the disposal of sin, but at the disposal of God, as "instruments of righteousness unto God".

#### Summary of Answer to the First Objection

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (6:14). While people are still under the law as a condemning power, sin has dominion over them. Wicked, worldly people are not free men; they are slaves to sin. Sin is their cruel, harsh master, and they obey that master day by day. What sin demands, they do all the time.

But if the Son of God shall make us free, then we shall be free indeed. We are free, first of all, from the condemning power of the law of God. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus (8:1). But that is not all. We are freed also from the bondage, the salvery, of sin. Remember the introduction to the Ten Commandments: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20:2). Sin is an enslaving power. We need not merely to be forgiven, because of our guilt, but to be emancipated, because of the enslaving power of sin. Christ brings us not only forgiveness, but also freedom, emancipation.

True, we still fall into sin. Our lives are still marked by sins and transgressions, omissions and shortcomings, failures and offences against God.

We still have to repent and seek forgiveness and cleansing day by day. But one thing we are NOT, if we are Christians — we are not slaves, not in bondage to sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (6:14). Paul does not say, "Don't let sin have dominion over you". He says, "Sin SHALL NOT have dominion over you". It is not an exhortation, but a statement of fact, a promise of God. If anyone is really a slave to sin, with sin reigning over him as a harsh, cruel dictator, then that person still needs to be set free by the Son of God.

So we see that the truth of Justification by Faith not only does not lead to a careless, sinful life, but actually it has just the opposite result: it leads to a holy life, devoted to God's service.

#### Questions:

1. What mistaken idea did the objectors have of Justification?
2. Besides Justification, what are some of the links in the chain of salvation?
3. What great spiritual change always accompanied Justification?
4. What is meant by "newness of life" (6:4)?
5. In speaking as they did, what did the objectors to Paul's doctrine show about their own Christian experience or lack of Christian experience?
6. What does our union with Christ in His death and resurrection imply concerning our own daily life?
7. Does Paul's statement in 6:12 imply that we can live a sinless life here and now?
8. If we cannot live a sinless life here and now, then what is the meaning of Paul's statement in 6:12?
9. What is the differing between committing sin, and letting sin reign in our mortal body that we should obey it in the lusts thereof?
10. Why do we need emancipation?
11. Who can emancipate us from the enslaving power of sin?
12. Is the statement of 6:14 an exhortation or a statement of fact?
13. Instead of leading to a sinful life, what is really the result of the doctrine of Justification by Faith?

## LESSON 21

## THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued

**A. Objections to the Doctrine of Justification Answered. 6:1-23, Continued****Second Objection Stated and Answered. 6:14-23**

In this sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans Paul is taking up sanctification, or the moral and spiritual results of a legal standing with God. He does this by stating and answering two objections to the doctrine of Justification by Faith as a free gift of God.

The first objection is referred to in 6:1: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Having disposed of this objection, the apostle takes up the second objection in verse 15: "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?"

Think just what this question means. The Christian is no longer under the law of God as a condemning power. The power of the law to condemn him to eternal death has been taken away. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The Christian has been forever delivered from liability to God's wrath and the curse of the law. He is not under the law, but under grace. The Christian seeks to do what is right, and to avoid what is wrong, not because of a motive of fear — fear of hell — but because of love and thankfulness to God. He has a desire to please God. The Christian is no longer an enemy, no longer an alien; he has become a citizen of God's Kingdom, and a member of God's household and family. The privileges of the household are his. He is not under the condemnation of the law; he is under grace. He has been received into God's loving favor.

Now, does this mean that since the Christian need no longer fear the eternal punishment of hell, it will be all right for him to go ahead and live a wicked life? He is no longer on the road to hell; he is not afraid of that any more; so he might just as well enjoy himself by committing sins if he feels like it. He might just as well go ahead and sin, since he is no longer under the law, but under grace.

So ran the second objection. In essence, it was a claim that Paul's doctrine of Justification would lead to a wicked life. It was a claim that people would impose on God, that they would take advantage of God's mercy and make it an excuse for living a life of wicked immorality.

Suppose a child is caught in some city crowd trying to steal a purse with money in it from a strange man. Since he was caught in the act, he can be dealt with by the authorities. Perhaps his case will come up in court and he will

be sent to a reform school or some other kind of institution.

But the gentleman whose pocket was picked is a kind-hearted, generous man, and is sorry for the poor boy who tried to steal his wallet. So he goes to see the judge and arranged to have the lad paroled in his custody. Later he discovers that the boy has no parents and no home. He is filled with compassion for the unfortunate child and takes him into his own home. He even goes to court and arranges to adopt the lad as his own son.

This child is not afraid of the law now. He is under grace. He knows that the man who has been so kind to him and has done so much for him will not turn him over to the police to be sent to a reformatory. Now, what will be the effect on the boy? Will he say, "I am through with stealing. From now on I will try to go straight and lead an honest life?" Or will he say, "Now is my chance. This man has been so kind to me, he will never treat me badly or unkindly. I will just take advantage of him. Since I need not fear any punishment, I will just see how much of his money and property I can steal!"

The objection urged against Paul's doctrine of Justification as a free gift of God was like that. It was based on the assumption that the Christian will be only too ready to take advantage of God's kindness, to live a life of sin and "get away with it", because the fear of punishment has been removed once and for all.

Let us see how Paul answers this objection. First of all, he flatly denies the charge: "God forbid!" "Certainly not; for from it" Then he gives reasons to prove his point. Let us examine them.

**We Serve Either Sin or Righteousness. 6:16**

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (6:16).

Nobody can be neutral in the great conflict between right and wrong, righteousness and sin. During the first and second World Wars, some nations succeeded, though with great difficulty, in remaining neutral. But no person can remain neutral in the battle between sin and righteousness. Everyone is on one side or the other. If he obeys the dictates and impulses of sin, he is on the side of sin; if he obeys the commands and principles of righteousness, he is on the side of righteousness.

There is no real middle ground between the

two. Every one of us, every day of our lives, is either serving sin or serving righteousness. There is no other alternative.

**Our Allegiance has Already been Decided. 6:17, 18**

Once we did not know God. We were not Christians. At that time we were in bondage to sin. We were servants — slaves — of sin. Sin had dominion over us, in those days. Sin had a total dominion over us; we were not just slightly under its influence; we were totally enslaved to it, under its power. At that time, before we received salvation, our allegiance was to sin — a total allegiance to sin.

But a change came. God's special grace came into our lives. We were saved. It came, not by our own efforts or goodness, but as a free gift of God's love. Just by receiving it, we were justified and declared to be eternally righteous in God's sight. We became heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

By receiving Christ and His salvation, we proclaimed our allegiance and loyalty to Him. We "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered" to us (6:18). We received Christ to be our Saviour, and we promised to serve and obey Him — we promised it, and we meant it from the bottom of our hearts. That is, if we were really converted to Christ we meant it from the bottom of our hearts. Our profession, our covenant vows to God, were sincere. Therefore our allegiance is now to the total service of righteousness, just as formerly it was to the total service of sin.

In other words, this great gift of Justification does not stand all alone by itself. It is always accompanied by regeneration, by which God gives us a new heart, making us new creatures in Christ Jesus, so that we have new motives, new desires, and live in a new way, which Paul calls "newness of life". And Justification is also always accompanied by a change of allegiance of the person who is justified. It is accompanied or followed by CONSECRATION, a pledging of our loyalty and allegiance to God, to seek His Kingdom and His righteousness in all our life.

**This Change of Allegiance is a Reality. 6:19**

"I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (6:19). This change of allegiance is not a mere formality or empty promise, not just a matter of words, but a reality. It involves a sincere, honest purpose to carry out its implications in our lives day by day — to yield our members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

You see, the objection we have been considering — that people will commit sin because they are not under the law but under grace — is, like the first objection, purely theoretical. No real Christian ever talked that way. No person with a bit of love of God in his heart would say such a thing. No person with an atom of real Christian experience would tolerate any such proposal. What! Practice sin, commit sin, just because I am no longer afraid of going to hell? Far from it! I pledged my whole allegiance to Jesus Christ when I received Him as my Saviour. I meant what I said. I may fall into some sin through weakness or temptation; in fact I do constantly; but I do not propose to take advantage of God's mercy by deliberately sinning just because I am not under law but under grace. My very soul rebels against such a thought!

**Non-Christian Experience Contrasted with Christian Experience. 6:20-22**

"Those things whereof ye are now ashamed" (6:21). Here is a contrast between THEN and NOW. Then, our whole inclination and desire was to practice what we now know to be sin, violation of the moral law of God. We were not ashamed of it then, not at all. It came naturally to us. But now, as we think back on the way we once lived, and remember how we dishonored God's name, and resisted His grace, we are filled with self-reproach for our wickedness.

A person's life always bears fruit, which may be either good or bad. What fruit did we have from our former life of sin and iniquity, before we knew Christ as our Saviour? Did we get any real, abiding satisfaction out of those things that we are now ashamed of? Did they give us any real contentment or peace of heart and mind?

No; we know very well, now that we are Christians, what kind of fruit those things produce. Just death. That is, in the end. "The END of those things is death" (6:21). No doubt they seemed pleasant enough to us for a time, but it could not last. In the end they bring bitterness and death. And if it had not been for the special grace and salvation of God overtaking us, they would have produced the fruit of death to the limit — eternal death, the second death.

Such was non-Christian experience, the experience of a sinner in his sin, without Christ. What a contrast is the experience of a Christian, which we find stated in verse 22! Set free from the bondage and slavery of sin, and transferred to the service of God, a person's life moves in a different direction. The tendency is different and the fruit is different. The fruit is holiness, and the end is everlasting life.

What did we get out of a life of sin? What is the outcome of a Christian life? That is the contrast of these verses.

**Summary: Wages of Sin or Gift of God — Which? 6:23**

Here is the Gospel of Christ set forth in 20 words in 6:23. All will be paid the wages of sin except those who accept and receive the free gift of God in Christ. If we are still under our old employer, the slave-driver, SIN, he will pay us our wages in the coin of his realm in the end. The final payment will be ETERNAL DEATH. But if our relationship and allegiance has changed from sin to God — really and truly changed — then our destiny is eternal life. And the very thought of sinning because we are not under law but under grace will be repulsive to us.

**Questions:**

1. What is the second objection to Justification by faith which Paul undertakes to answer?
2. What is meant by saying that the Christian is not under the law but under grace?
3. Why does the Christian seek to do what is right and avoid what is wrong?

4. What wrong idea of the Christian life is taken for granted by the second objection?

5. Why is it not possible to remain neutral in the conflict between sin and righteousness?

6. What was our allegiance before we became Christians?

7. What change of allegiance is involved in becoming a Christian?

8. What is the reaction of a real Christian to the idea of committing sin because he is not under the law but under grace?

9. What is the moral and religious experience of a non-Christian?

10. How is the moral and religious experience of a Christian different from that of a non-Christian?

11. Why is "death" spoken of as "wages", whereas "eternal life" is spoken of as a "gift"?

12. What is the full meaning of the word "death" in 6:23?

**LESSON 22**

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued**

**B. The Continual Conflict of the Christian Life. 7:1-25**

This portion of the Epistle, as we have noted, deals with the subject of Sanctification. In chapter 6 the apostle has disposed of two objections to the doctrine of Justification by Faith, by answering the questions: (1) Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? (2) Shall we continue in sin because we are not under the law but under grace. He has answered "No" to both questions, and given his reasons. We now come to the more specific discussion of the subject of Sanctification, or the cultivation of a holy character.

**We are Made Holy, First, by Release from the Curse of the Law. 7:1-6**

Release from the curse of the law is necessary, before we can even begin to be holy, or to live the good life. In human law it is an accepted principle that the law has claims on a person as long as that person lives. But when a person dies, the claims of the law are at an end.

This principle Paul lays down in 7:1, not referring specially to the law of God, but to laws in general. The principle is that DEATH TERMINATES THE CLAIMS OF THE LAW ON A PERSON. A dead man cannot be sued for damages, nor indicted by the grand jury, nor sentenced to suffer any penalty, nor fined any sum of money. The law's claims have been terminated by death.

Next Paul uses an illustration taken from the law of marriage. Death terminates the bond of marriage, so that the woman whose husband is dead is free to marry another man, 7:2,3. This is applied to the Christian by a figure of speech. Before we believed on Christ as our Saviour, we were under the curse and condemnation of God's law. We were "married" to the law; therefore we were not free. But when we believed on Christ as our Saviour, who was crucified, dead and buried for us, it is just as if we, too, had been crucified, dead and buried. Our union with Christ means that we are reckoned as "dead" to our old life, and dead to the curse and condemnation of God's law. So in verse 4 Paul tells us "Ye also are become dead to sin by the body of Christ" — that is, by the CRUCIFIED body of Christ, by Christ's death on the cross — that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God". According to this figure of speech, before we accepted Christ as our Saviour, we were "married" or united to the law; but since we have received Christ we are "married" or joined to Christ.

Back in those days when we were "married" to the law, what was our life like? We read it in verse 5: "For when we were in the flesh" — that is, before we were Christians — "the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death". "To bring forth fruit unto death" means a sinful life,

resulting finally in death, the death of the body and also that more awful death called "the second death", the eternal death of the lost in hell.

The person who is under the condemnation of the law of God is walking the down-grade of that highway: sin, death, hell. No one who is walking on that highway can live a holy life. No one on that highway can ever live a truly good life in God's sight. No one on that highway can even do one single deed that is truly good in God's sight. It is all only sin and evil.

What is the first thing necessary if we are to live a good life, to be holy, to be sanctified and made like Christ in our heart and life? The first thing necessary is to get into a right relation to God, to get free from the condemnation and curse of God's law, to get past being a slave in bondage and to become a free man in Christ.

Now look at verse 6: "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter". "Newness of spirit" — that means a new life, a life under the control and influence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. That is what is before us as Christians. That is what will mean a REAL life of holiness and goodness.

"Not in the oldness of the letter". Paul here contrasts "the spirit" with "the letter". Now "the letter" means precisely the law which was written in letters on two tablets of stone; in other words, the Ten Commandments. "Newness of spirit", on the other hand, means the new life which we receive from the Holy Spirit through regeneration or the new birth. Release from "the oldness of the letter" is needed before we can even begin to make any progress in a life of holiness. That law of God, those Ten Commandments, pronounce an awful doom: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). From that curse we must be released, before we can really begin to live a good life.

We may recall the incident in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress", where Christian is trying to get rid of the heavy burden on his back that is weighing him down so cruelly. He is on the right track, but he has not yet been released from the burden. He becomes discouraged. Then someone meets him who tells him that there is a better way, a real shortcut, to get rid of the burden. There is a man called Mr. Legality who is said to be an expert on burdens and how to deal with them. He lives at the foot of a mountain called Mount Sinai. If Christian will only turn aside and find Mr. Legality he will show him how to get rid of his burden, for, it is said, he has already helped many with the same problem.

Christian proves rather gullible, and starts out to follow this bad advice. But before he gets to Mr. Legality's house he is nearly frightened to death, because the whole mountain trembles, quakes and rumbles, and there are flashes of lightning and roars of thunder coming out of it, and great bursts of smoke rising up as from an active volcano. The appearance is so terrifying that Christian is nearly petrified with fear. He never does get all the way to Mr. Legality's house, because a better guide named Evangelist meets him and directs him in a better way, toward the cross of Christ, where he is really released from his intolerable burden of sin.

Mount Sinai, of course, stands for the law of God. Mr. Legality stands for the person who advocates seeking salvation by a strict, careful observance of the moral law, the Ten Commandments. Mr. Legality is spiritually a blind man, so he doesn't know any better. But Christian, whose conscience has been awakened, cannot endure such a thing. The more he thinks of the law of God, the more terrible it seems. The more he ponders it, the more he realizes that he can never, never save himself that way. That law cannot save him; it can only condemn him to everlasting doom. He is terrified. And only when he gets to the cross of Calvary and believes on Christ as his Saviour is he really set free from that doom of the law, so that he can really begin to live a good life.

#### Questions:

1. What is the first thing necessary for a person to live a holy life?
2. What principle concerning the claims of law on a person is set forth in 7:1?
3. By what event is the bond of marriage terminated?
4. To what is a person "married" before he believes on Christ?
5. How does it come about that this "marriage" is terminated?
6. To whom is the true Christian "married"?
7. What is the inevitable result of being "married" to God's law?
8. What does Paul mean by the expression "the oldness of the letter"?
9. What is meant by "newness of spirit" and how do we get it?
10. In Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress", what is meant by the heavy burden on Christian's back?
11. How would Mr. Legality deal with that burden?
12. Why did Christian, in the end, not adopt Mr. Legality's method?
13. How did Christian really get rid of the burden?
14. Why is release from the condemnation of God's law necessary before we can really live a good life?

## LESSON 23

## THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued

## B. The Continual Conflict of the Christian Life. 7:1-25, Continued

## The Law of God Shows us we Cannot Make ourselves Holy. 7:7-14

Here Paul gives us a bit of his own personal experience. The law of God, he tells us, finally convinced him that he was a sinner. "I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known list, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (7:7). Think of Saul the Pharisee, the strict, conscientious, scrupulous observer of all the details of the law of God, both the moral law and the ceremonial law: If we had asked Saul the Pharisee, "Are you a poor, lost, guilty sinner?", what would he have replied? Beyond question, he would have said, "No; I am a righteous Pharisee, for I have observed the law blamelessly". Yes, he thought he had. He tells us, "I was alive without the law once" (7:9). That represents Paul's former opinion of himself. We might paraphrase it this way: "There was a time when I thought I was all right; there was a time when I thought I had lived a perfect life in my own strength."

But something happened. "But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (7:9b). There came a time when light, spiritual light from God, dawned in his soul. He came to understand the TRUE MEANING of God's law, the Ten Commandments. And when he came to understand the true meaning of God's law, then he came to see himself as he really was. His bubble burst; his illusions about himself faded out. "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died". That is to say: "When I came to a real understanding of God's law, I realized myself a hopeless victim and slave of sin — guilty before God and spiritually helpless".

The result was that Saul the Pharisee became Paul the Christian. It was the tenth and last commandment — "Thou shalt not covet", that brought him to conviction of sin, to the end of his own resources, at last. Paul tells us that this commandment "slew" him, or rather that "sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me".

The law, he tell us, is holy, just and good (7:12), but it cannot make a sinful human being holy, just and good. Far from it. It works on that sinful human being and shows his sin in its true colors, "that sin . . . might become exceeding sinful" (7:13). The law cannot make us holy; on the contrary, it makes us realize that we are exceedingly sinful. For the law of God is spiritual (7:14), but we sinners are not spiritual; we are just the opposite of spiritual; we are carnal, "sold under sin".

## Every Christian Faces a Battle in his own Life. 7:15-25

This section is one of the classic passages of Scripture on the experience of a Christian. If we really know Christ and His salvation, we will find our own portrait and history in verses 15-25. We will see our own souls here as in a mirror.

Sin means war, conflict, battles, enmity, division. Sin means separation. It separated Adam and Eve from God; then it separated Abel from Cain. God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (Gen. 3:15). That is the age-long warfare between Christ and Satan, the Church and the world.

The world is a place of warfare and battles today because of sin. If there had been no sin, there would have been no war and no suffering. When sin entered the human race it came as a DIVISIVE element, an element of extreme anarchy and disorder. The result is never-ceasing conflicts, kingdom against kingdom, race against race, class against class.

But there is another kind of conflict which has come because sin entered the world. That is the internal conflict, the conflict in the Christian's soul. The person who is not a Christian has never experienced this battle in his soul. He enjoys peace because his conscience is asleep and does not bother him. He just placidly drifts downstream, doing whatever is popular and customary, and he seems to get along very well. He has no battles being fought in his soul. He drifts peacefully along and finally he goes to hell.

But with the Christian it is very different. His soul is a battlefield day by day. Two forces are contending in his soul, back and forth. It is a fight to the death, a desperate struggle, from the day a person believes on Christ to the very end of his life here on earth. This desperate battle is described in the verses we are considering. Let us see what they tell us about it.

There are two forces which are enemies of each other. One of them Paul calls "the inward man" (7:22). He says, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man". "The inward man" — we might say, "my inmost self". My inmost self (if I am a Christian) really delights in Gods law and wants to follow the way of holiness. This "inward man" is called in the next verse (23) "the law of my mind". Over against the "inward man" or the "law of the mind", there is a contrary power, called in verse 20 "sin that dwelleth in me", and in verse 23, "the law of sin which is in my members".

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In the Epistle to the Galatians Paul spoke of this same conflict and called it a battle between "the flesh" and "the Spirit": "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17). Our old sinful nature that we received from Adam, Paul calls "the flesh" or "the law of sin in our members". The new, holy nature that we receive from the Holy Spirit by being born again, Paul calls "the inward man" or "the law of the mind".

We have a sinful nature, but when we are born again we receive also a new nature. But the old nature is not entirely removed. It remains in our personality. So a conflict is inevitable, a life-long battle between the new nature and the old. They cannot mix, they cannot tolerate one another, any more than oil and water can be mixed. As long as these two natures are at war in our personality, there will be no real peace but continual conflict.

Someone may say, But did not Christ promise us peace, does not God's Word speak of peace that passeth all understanding? Yes, peace with God, but not peace with evil, not peace with sin, not peace with our old sinful nature. So Paul describes the battle. The new nature, "the inward man", he identifies with his real personality; the other nature, the old sinful nature, is an alien force in his life.

Because of this battle in his soul, the Christian frequently does things which, in his deepest soul, he really hates. He hates them and he knows he hates them, and yet he does them, "For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I" (7:15); "For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (7:19,20). My inmost self, my new nature received from regeneration by the Holy Spirit, seeks holiness and strives for holiness in my life and conduct. But there is the old nature pulling and tugging the other way all the time. The result is inevitable, continual warfare, "the law of sin in my members" carrying on warfare against the law of the mind, the new nature. This conflict is so real and so desperate a struggle that Paul cries out: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (7:24). Who shall deliver me from this embattled state of affairs that continues while I live in the body in this present life?

If anyone thinks that verse 24 is foreign to Christian experience, he has not yet really come to grips with the evil in his own soul. He has not yet really made contact with the enemy. "O wretched man that I am!" Conflict always means suffering, discomfort, misery. Because the Christian must always go through this never-ceasing battle with sin, he can never enjoy perfect peace, perfect rest, perfect happiness during this present life. There are some light-hearted people who

claim that they have perfect peace and perfect happiness here and now. Their experience is much shallower than Paul's. They have not really faced the full power of the enemy.

But the cry of verse 24 is not a cry of despair. It is not even a cry of discouragement. For it is followed immediately afterwards (verse 25) by a note of thanksgiving and praise; "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the One that will give deliverance from this conflict in His own appointed time.

So Paul sums it up: "So then with the mind" — the new nature, the real personality of a Christian — "I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh" — the old nature — "I serve the law of sin" (7:25b).

#### **The Battle, by the Holy Spirit's Power, Ends in Victory**

There is one practical application which we should certainly consider in this connection. The conflict in our souls is nothing to be discouraged about. Some people have a wrong idea of the Christian life. They expect everything to be peace and joy — "a bed of roses". And when they find a battle going on day after day in their soul, they think that maybe they are not really saved after all. They become terribly discouraged.

But we should not be discouraged. The battle in our souls is a good sign. It is a sign of life. If we were not saved Christians there would be no battle. If we did not have a new nature from God there would be no battle. Because we are spiritually alive, there is a continual battle in our souls. God has put ENMITY there between the old nature and the new nature. This conflict is the experience of all God's true children. It is not something exceptional that you and I have to face alone. All of us have this same ordeal to pass through.

And it is a battle that is sure to end in victory. Our Lord Jesus Christ is going to give us the victory in the end. All armies expect to lose some battles at times, but what counts is to win the war. So if we lose out sometimes in the battle with sin, we must not let the devil throw us into a fit of discouragement and despair. He will if he can. But we must not let him do it. Remember, victory is sure.

#### **Questions:**

1. What does Paul mean by saying "I was alive without the law once"?
2. What does he mean by saying, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died"?
3. What particular commandment brought Paul to conviction of sin?
4. What does the apostle mean by saying:

"Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me"?

5. What is the real cause of conflict in the world?

6. Who put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent?

7. What divisions have been caused by sin?

8. Why does the person who is not a Christian enjoy internal peace?

9. What terms does Paul use to designate the Christian's new nature?

10. What terms does he use to designate the sinful nature?

11. What kind of peace did Christ promise His disciples?

12. Why does the Christian often do what he really hates?

13. Is 7:24 foreign to Christian experience? What can be said of the experience of those who claim that it is?

14. How does Paul sum up the Christian's internal conflict (7:25)?

15. Why is the battle in our souls a good sign?

16. Why should we not become discouraged because of our spiritual conflict?

17. Why is final victory in the battle against sin a certainty?

## LESSON 24

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued

#### C. The Outcome of the Conflict, Here and Hereafter. 8:1-25

##### The Outcome of the Conflict in the Present Life. 8:1-17

Even during this present life on earth, the new nature or "law of the mind" in the Christian, by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, gains control over the old nature or "the flesh". This control is not absolute nor complete, but it is real and considerable. Let us note what the apostle tells us about it.

##### The Christian is Freed from the Dominating Power of Sin. 8:1-4

By believing on Jesus Christ as his Saviour, the Christian has, of course, been freed from the condemnation of sin, as we are told in 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. . .". Sin can no longer condemn the Christian and doom him to eternal punishment in hell. That power of sin to condemn has been canceled by the atonement of Christ. The Christian is freed from the condemnation of sin, but that is not all he is freed from. He is also delivered from the dominating power of sin, by the even mightier power of the Holy Spirit, as we read in 8:2-4.

The Holy Spirit of God lives in the heart of every Christian. The Holy Spirit is divine, He is God, He is one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Being divine, the Holy Spirit is ALMIGHTY. Sin is a tremendous power, we know; but the Holy Spirit can cope with it, for He is almighty, His power is infinite.

The law could never save us, either from the condemnation of sin or from the power of sin. But God sent His own Son, to become a human being (that is, "in the likeness of sinful flesh",

8:3), to accomplish our redemption from both the condemnation and the power of sin. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (8:4). The law could not save us, because we cannot really keep its precepts. We break God's commandments daily in thought, word and deed. So God sent His Son. And when our Saviour was here on earth, He promised to send the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the divine Trinity, to carry on His work in the hearts of His people.

The Holy Spirit gives us the power to live a good life. The good that the law demands, we could never attain of ourselves. We could never live that kind of a good life except by believing on Christ and receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. This is what is meant by the expression, "Who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (8:4). Note, please that, the word "Spirit" is printed in the Bible in this verse with a capital "S". It means THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD. Those who "walk after the flesh" — ordinary human beings with only their original sinful nature — can never really live a good life. But Christian people can, for they have a new power that ordinary people do not have. They do not walk after the flesh, according to their old sinful nature; they "walk after the Spirit", that is, they walk as influenced and led by the Spirit of God.

##### The Wicked Person Cannot Please God, for he is Radically Different from the Christian, being a Stranger to the Holy Spirit. 8:5-8

There are two radically different kinds of people in this world, namely Christians and non-Christians. Different names are used in the Bible to describe these two kinds of people, such as "the righteous" and "the wicked"; those born again and those not born again; "the people of God" and "the world"; and as we read here in

Romans 8, "they that are after the flesh" and "they that are after the Spirit" (8:5).

"They that are after the flesh" — this is a description of the class of people whom we call non-Christians. In another epistle Paul calls them "the natural man" (1 Cor. 2:14). These people who "are after the flesh" are dominated by their sinful nature, which they received from Adam. That sinful nature is all they have; consequently they are controlled by it and act according to its impulses. As Paul tells us, they "mind the things of the flesh".

The apostle gives us a contrast between these two classes of people. The non-Christian minds "the things of the flesh"; his thoughts and actions are the working out of his sinful nature. But the Christian is not like that; on the contrary, he "minds the things of the Spirit"; his thoughts and actions, to a greater or less extent, are the working out of the Holy Spirit in his heart and life.

"For to be carnally minded is death". To follow the thoughts and impulses of the original sinful nature, as the non-Christian continually does, ends in death. Remember that this means not merely physical death but eternal death, the second death, eternal separation from God and from all that is good and pure and holy, in hell. That is the final outcome of the sinful nature, "the mind of the flesh".

The carnal or fleshly mind, the sinful nature, is at enmity against God. It is at war with God. It "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (8:7). That is why we must be born again — because our old sinful nature is so wicked and corrupt that it cannot be repaired or reformed; it must be supplanted by a new, holy nature in which the Spirit of God can dwell and work.

The non-Christian's whole nature being at war with God, it is obvious that such a person cannot please God. No matter what he does or tries to do, he can never do anything that is really pleasing to God. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (8:8).

It is necessary at this point to guard against an extremely common error in interpretation of Paul's Epistles, the error which holds that "the flesh" means the human body and that "they that are in the flesh" means people who habitually commit certain sins in which the body is prominently involved. It is really very clear that in Paul's Epistles "the flesh" cannot be identical with "the body". "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (8:8). If "the flesh" and "the body" are identical, then this text means "They that are in the body cannot please God". But Christians, during this present life, are in the body just as truly as non-Christians are. There-

fore "the flesh" cannot mean simply "the body". If we will turn to Galatians 5:19-21 we will find a list of "the works of the flesh". In this list there are seventeen different sins. Of this list of seventeen sins, eleven are either exclusively or predominantly SINS OF THE MIND (idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders), whereas only six are sins in which the body plays a prominent part (adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, drunkenness, revellings). Thus almost two-thirds of Paul's list of "the works of the flesh" are predominantly sins of the mind. This proves conclusively that "the flesh" is not identical with "the body", and moreover that in the expression "the flesh" the emphasis is not on what are sometimes called "gross" or "fleshly" sins. The careless and non-Biblical use of "the flesh" as if it meant simply "the body" on the part of many Bible teachers who ought to know better is misleading and deplorable. We should realize that while it is true that sin has affected all parts of the human personality, nevertheless the seat of sin, according to the Bible, is not in THE BODY but in what the Bible calls THE HEART, that is, the inmost personality whence are the issues of life. See Matthew 12:34,35; Mark 7:14-23 and note the teaching of Jesus on this subject. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: ALL THESE EVIL THINGS COME FROM WITHIN, AND DEFILE THE MAN" (Mark 7:21-23). The notion that the human body with its blood and bones, nerves, glands and organs, is the seat and source of sin seems to be rather common, but it is definitely not Biblical. Sin is a spiritual evil and its seat and source cannot be in material objects or organisms; it resides in man's "heart" or deepest personality, which of course is spiritual, not material. From that "heart" it radiates outward and affects all elements of the personality and all the person's life and conduct.

The non-Christian can never do anything really pleasing to God. For one thing, the non-Christian never does anything with the right motive, namely, to glorify God. His motives may be selfish, or they may be altruistic; he may live for self, or he may live for others (for society), but he NEVER LIVES FOR GOD. So he cannot please God.

So much for the dark, gloomy picture of the life of the non-Christian. It is dark, but not too dark. It is not any darker than the facts warrant making it.

Very different is the Christian, the person who believes on Christ as his Saviour. He is "after the Spirit"; that is, in addition to his old sinful nature, he has received a new, holy nature,

in which the Holy Spirit of God dwells. Being "after the Spirit", the Christian "minds the things of the Spirit". His thoughts, words and actions are more and more the product of the working of the Holy Spirit in his life. The result of this kind of life is not "death", but just the opposite, namely, life and peace (8:6b). And "life", of course, does not mean merely the life of the body, here and now; it means eternal life, life more abundant.

**Questions:**

1. Why did God send His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh?
2. What is meant by the expression "in the likeness of sinful flesh"?
3. Why is the word "Spirit" capitalized in Romans 8:1-4?
4. What is meant by "they that are after the flesh"?

5. What is meant by "they that are after the Spirit"?

6. What is the final outcome of "the mind of the flesh"?

7. Why must we be born again?

8. How can it be proved that in Paul's Epistles "the flesh" does not mean "the body"?

9. Where is the real seat of sin in the human personality?

10. Why can the non-Christian never really please God?

11. Why does the Christian "mind the things of the Spirit"?

12. What is the outcome of being "after the Spirit"?

**LESSON 25**

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued**

**C. The Outcome of the Conflict, Here and Hereafter. 8:1-25, Continued**

**The Outcome of the Conflict in the Present Life. 8:1-17, Continued**

**Every Christian Possesses the Holy Spirit. 8:9**

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (8:9). We might paraphrase this verse thus: "Now if the Spirit of God is living in your heart, then you are born again and have a new nature, and are a different kind of person from the non-Christian who has only his old sinful nature. And if anyone does NOT have the Holy Spirit, which Christ promised to send, living in his heart, then that person is not a Christian at all, and does not really belong to Christ".

If anyone does not have the Holy Spirit in him, he is none of Christ's; he is not a Christian at all.

There are some sects which teach that we must first believe on Christ for salvation, and then at some later time by a second act of faith, we must accept and receive the Holy Spirit. They teach that there are two classes of Christians: (1) those that are only justified, but do not have the Holy Spirit, or "the second blessing"; (2) those that, in addition to being justified, have also received the Holy Spirit, or "the second blessing". But Paul did not teach any such doctrine. He did not recognize two classes of Christians, those with the Holy Spirit and those without the Holy Spirit. According to Paul there is no such thing as a Christian without the Holy Spirit. Every

Christian receives the Holy Spirit when he is regenerated or born again and becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. The idea that there are some Christians, who truly believe on Christ as their Saviour from sin, who yet have not received the Holy Spirit, is contrary to the Bible.

**The Holy Spirit will Complete His Work in Every Christian. 8:10-13**

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (8:10). If a person is a Christian his old nature is no longer supreme in his life; it is kept under control by the Spirit of God. But the new nature is very much alive; it is the real life of the person.

Someday the Holy Spirit, who now dwells in us, will "quicken" our mortal bodies. This word, "quicken", means GIVE LIFE TO. The Holy Spirit, who raised Christ from the dead, will also give life to our mortal bodies. At the last day, when Christ comes again to the world, we shall rise from the dead with new life, immortality. The resurrection of the body will be the completion of the Holy Spirit's work in us. He has come to live in our hearts, to keep our old nature under control and to give power to our new nature. This work of the Holy Spirit in us never stops, though of course it may suffer some setbacks from time to time. It never stops; it continues until our death, when we enter the state of glory, and shall be instantly made perfect in holiness.

But that is not the end of the Holy Spirit's work

in the Christian. He still has one great work to do, the raising of our human, mortal bodies at the resurrection. That mighty work of supernatural power will be the climax, the completion of the Holy Spirit's work in us. Such is our destiny and our hope. Since such wonderful things are in store for us, what kind of life ought we to live here and now?

Well, Paul tells us, in verses 12 and 13. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live". We are debtors. We owe a debt. But we don't owe any debts to our old sinful nature. Some people make some payments in that direction, sometimes, but really the Christian owes no debts to his old nature. He is not a debtor to the flesh, to live after the flesh. Rather, the Christian's obligation is just the opposite: through Holy Spirit to mortify or deaden the deeds of the old sinful nature.

(Note: In 8:10, 13 Paul uses the term "the body" not at all implying that the human body itself is the seat or source of sin (which we have already shown to be an unbiblical error), but as a figurative designation for the sinful nature which remains in the Christian).

**Justification is also Followed by Adoption. 8:14-17**

Verses 14 and 15 tell of the grace of Adoption, which accompanies Justification and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Those who have the Spirit of God in their hearts, are also the SONS or CHILDREN of God. Once we were not the children of God, because we were alienated from Him, far away from Him, in our sin. But we have been adopted into the family of God, and have re-

ceived the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry "Abba, Father", that is, to experience the fact that God is our Father and we are His children. This is a personal experience in the Christian's life: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God" (8:16). This position of sonship carries with it a joint-heirship with Christ, suffering with Him now, and to be glorified with Him later (8:17).

**Questions:**

1. If anyone does not have the Holy Spirit living in him, what does that prove concerning that person?
2. What does Rom. 8:9 show concerning the doctrine that there are two classes of Christians, those with and those without the Holy Spirit?
3. What is the meaning of the statement: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin but the Spirit is life because of righteousness"?
4. What is the meaning of the word "quicken"?
5. What act of the Holy Spirit will constitute the completion of the work of redemption in the Christian?
6. What effect should the thought of his future destiny have on the Christian's daily life here and now?
7. To what is the Christian a debtor, and to what is he not a debtor?
8. What is the significance of the term "the body" in 8:10, 13?
9. What is meant by Adoption?
10. What is the result of the Spirit of adoption living in a Christian?

**LESSON 26**

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued**

**C. The Outcome of the Conflict, Here and Hereafter. 8:1-25, Continued**

**The Outcome of the Conflict in the Future Life. 8:18-25**

**The Crown Contrasted with the Cross. 8:18**

Present sufferings are real, certainly, but they are insignificant in comparison with the future glory that awaits us. The word "glory" is often used in a careless and trivial sense at the present day. We say we enjoyed a glorious picnic, or that a chocolate cake was simply glorious, and so forth. This is part of the inflated condition of our speech, by which it has deviated far from the gold standard of meaning. In the Bible the word "glory" usually has a specific meaning and in many of its occurrences it refers

to the future destiny of the Christian at and after the resurrection day. Psalm 84 tells us "The Lord will give grace and glory". We receive grace now, but glory chiefly in the life to come. One of the old Covenanters of Scotland said, "Grace is young glory", a very true statement. If we are included in God's saving grace today, the day will come when we shall participate in glory. Christ's kingdom now is a kingdom of grace; in eternity it will be a kingdom of glory.

**All Nature Yearns for the Dawn of Glory. 8:19-23**

The non-human creation awaits the dawn of glory, 8:19. Here the word "creature" should really be translated "creation": "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the mani-

festation of the sons of God" (8:19). The world of nature is to be released from "vanity", 8:20,21. The word here translated "vanity" means FUTILITY or FRUSTRATION. The world of nature, in bondage to destructive forces because of human sin, is to be restored to its normal and rightful condition, and nature itself longs and yearns for this release. "For the creation was made subject to vanity (futility, frustration), not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope" (8:20). "Vanity" or futility, frustration, is the present condition of the world of nature because of subjection to the law of decay, the destructive forces which resulted from man's sin. We look out upon the world of nature and everywhere we see the forces of destruction, dissolution and death. The giant redwood or Sequoia trees of California sometimes reach an age of two thousand years, or even more, but even these great trees, the oldest living organisms on earth today, finally die and decay.

Geologists have discovered that in the arctic regions where today it is so cold that hardly anything will grow, buried in the ground are the fossil remains of tropical plants and trees such as palms. The inference is plain — that frigid region once had a mild and balmy climate. Something has happened to the world of nature. Paul tells us what it is. The creation has been subjected to futility, it has been enslaved to the law of death and decay, it has been placed in bondage to destructive forces.

God saw everything that He had created, and it was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). It was not of its own impulses or desires that the world of nature became enslaved to evil and sinister forces. If left to its original tendencies and impulses, nature would have gone on in a beautiful, lovely harmony. But something happened. Mankind, the human race, for whom the natural world was created as an environment to develop his personality in, fell away from God into sin and apostasy. Man, the king and crown of creation, debased himself by sinning against God. He alienated himself from God and became an enemy of the living, holy God.

What was the result? We know that the result for the human race was that both sin and death became universal (Rom. 5:12). But what about the world of nature below man? Nature was placed under a CURSE (Gen. 3:17-19), not for its own sake, but on account of man's sin. "Cursed is the ground FOR THY SAKE". It was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of God's will and purpose. "By reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope". That is, it was God's will to place the natural world in bondage to destructive forces, because of man's sin, for a certain period of time. The natural world was not merely subjected to futility, but SUBJECTED IN HOPE; that is, sub-

jected for a definite duration of time with the hope or prospect of deliverance from that state of affairs when that period of time should have passed.

Man's sin has subjected nature to futility, and man's redemption will lift nature out of futility again. Over and over again the Bible teaches this same lesson. It speaks of a new heaven and a new earth, with no more sea, the first heaven and the first earth having passed away. Peter speaks of the "times of the restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). "Restitution" means restoration to original, normal condition again. Note also the statements of Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25.

The present sin-cursed world is in a state of groaning and travailing in pain (8:22). This is true both of the realm of nature and of the human race. In the Christian, the longing for release from this law of decay is intensified and assumes a conscious, definite form, that is, longing for and expectation of THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY, 8:23. What the Christian longs for is not merely immortality, or a life after death, but specifically the resurrection of the body, here called "the redemption of our body". All lesser hopes must fail fully to satisfy our hearts; the resurrection at Christ's second coming is our real hope. It will really satisfy.

Ourselves, as Christians, though we already possess the first-bestowed portion of the Holy Spirit, still long for something better and more complete: our total redemption, when even our human body shall be delivered from corruption and death and endowed with fulness of life and immortality.

"Waiting for the adoption". We have already, as Christians, received the grace of adoption, being received into the family of God. But there is one element still reserved for the future, the final element of our adoption and redemption, and that is "the redemption of our body", the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said of those who shall rise in glory, that they "are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36). This verse shows that there is a sense in which the resurrection of the body is the completion of God's act of Adoption, and that we shall be "the children of God" in the life of the resurrection in an even fuller and more wonderful sense than we are His children today.

On this we should set our hope, and refuse to be dazzled by any of the illusory false hopes cherished by worldly and unenlightened people today. Nothing short of the resurrection of the body is going to make this world anything else than a state of groaning and travailing in pain (8:22,23). The Bible warrants no hope of a state of perfect bliss and peace and joy and happiness

before the resurrection. Paul — rather, the Holy Spirit speaking through Paul — does not say “waiting for the building of the kingdom throughout the world”; he says, “waiting for the adoption, to wit, THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY” (8:23).

#### Questions:

1. How are the words “glory” and “glorious” often misused today?
2. What is a common meaning of “glory” in the Bible?
3. What is meant by saying “Grace is young glory”?
4. What is the meaning of “vanity” in Rom. 8:20?
5. How does the present condition of the world of nature compare with its original condition as created by God?

6. Why was the world of nature subjected to “vanity”?

7. What truth is implied by the words “in hope” in the phrase “subjected. . . in hope” in 8:20?

8. When will the realm of nature be restored to its normal condition?

9. In what specific way does the Christian long for release from the law of corruption and decay?

10. What is the connection between Adoption and the Resurrection?

11. What is the real object of the Christian’s highest hope?

12. What will be the condition of the realm of nature prior to the resurrection?

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

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## *Reviews of Religious Books*

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

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY? AND OTHER ADDRESSES, by J. Gresham Machen. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 317. \$3.00.

This volume contains a selection of the most notable lectures, addresses and articles by the late J. Gresham Machen, Professor of New Testament in Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. These addresses supplement the rich literary legacy constituted by the books which were published on Dr. Machen’s own initiative, of which the best known probably is CHRISTIANITY AND LIBERALISM. The addresses bear the author’s personal style and are flavored by his character and personality. There is a nearness of author to reader which is unusual. The reader feels as though he were sitting in the very audience of the lecturer.

In the Introduction by Dr. Ned Bernard Stonehouse, who also edited the book, it is stated that the purpose of the volume is “to stimulate men to be concerned with the greatest of questions, to mark the line where the truth lies, and to kindle love to the truth that they may be saved.” The book accomplishes its purpose.

This reviewer has been stimulated more to an appreciation of his Christian heritage and to a concern for its defense through the study of this volume than by any other single exercise.

The volume is not, however, a pump injecting “pep” and enthusiasm into its readers without the necessary concomitant and foundation of instruction. The lectures are superbly didactic without being highly technical and erudite. While the book bears the marks of precise, accurate scholarship, it is written in the language of the common dialect. It is a popular defense of the Reformed Faith, dealing with doctrinal issues and Reformed theology as it applies to practical issues, e.g., human relationships, the Church and war, social progress, liberty and culture.

The subject of the first lecture, “What is Christianity?”, serves appropriately as a title for the entire collection, describing the boundaries of what can be called truly Christianity, and excluding everything else. Since Christianity is “an historical phenomenon”, and must be investigated by historical means, the author insists that if we are going to determine what Christianity is we must turn to the beginnings of the move-

ment. With his usual insight Dr. Machen points out that while the founders of the Christian movement had no right to legislate for all subsequent generations, they did have the inalienable right to legislate for all those subsequent generations that should choose to bear the name "Christian". He raps Liberalism as dishonest: "Conceivably we may change their program (the apostles' program); but if we change their program, let us use a new name. It is misleading to use the old name to designate a new thing. . . . If, therefore, we are going to tell what Christianity at bottom is, we must take a look at the beginnings of Christianity." Further, Christianity at first was not "a life as distinguished from a doctrine", but a life founded upon a doctrine. The teaching of the earliest missionaries was a doctrine, not an attestation to a religious experience. They were witnesses to the FACTS of the case, viz., that Jesus Christ was the Son of God; that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures"; and that He rose again for our justification. Christianity, then, is based on facts — not bare facts, but facts with the meaning of facts — and facts with meanings are doctrines.

The question then is settled conclusively whether the Bible is right about Jesus. This is the burden of Chapters 2 through 6, in which the author discusses the trustworthiness of the Gospels and of the Pauline Epistles, the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. He justly criticizes E. Stanley Jones' book, "The Christ of the Indian Road", when he says that truth and error are mixed in this book in a pernicious way. It is a "beautiful but harmful little book" which seems to convey the notion that every race may interpret Christ for itself. The whole point of controversy with respect to the person of Christ, is that between those who would see Jesus as the "fairest of the children of men", and those who believe in Him as the divine Son of God and the only Redeemer of God's elect. If this issue is settled, the whole controversy between nature and the supernatural in Christianity is settled. Was Jesus really the person whom the Gospels and the Epistles declare Him to be? If the Gospels and the Epistles are trustworthy historical documents, then Jesus is the supernatural Person whose death atoned for the sins of the elect. That is what the New Testament teaches. If it can be shown that the New Testament is trustworthy, the question whether Jesus be divine is settled. The author deals with the charges that early Christianity was the result of the syncretism of pagan religions, the hallucination theories of the Resurrection, and Interpolation hypothesis of Higher Criticism (the theory that such supernatural elements in the Gospels as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection were added to the Bible long after it was written).

Chapters 13 and 14, dealing with "History and Faith" and "The Modern Use of the Bible",

and possibly chapter 22, a discussion of "Fundamentalism", might more naturally and logically, it seems to this reviewer, follow chapters 1-6. Being more strictly apologetic than the sections of the book with which they stand, these three chapters are out of place. The chapter on "History and Faith" re-instates the Bible as an authority claiming divinity for Christ. The Liberal reconstruction of Jesus is examined and is found to break down in three places, viz., 1. It fails to separate adequately divine and human in the gospel records. To reject the divine is to reject the human also, since they are so closely interwoven; 2. The liberal Jesus, after He has been reconstructed, is a monstrosity. The Messianic consciousness introduces a contradiction at the very center of His being — "a humble teacher who thought that He was the Judge of all the earth!"; 3. The liberal Jesus is insufficient to account for the origin of the Christian Church.

Chapter 14, on "The Modern Use of the Bible", is an intensive criticism of a volume bearing that title by Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, and a defense of the historical supernatural Jesus of the New Testament.

The remainder of the book, or sixteen lectures (exclusive of the final two chapters) is taken up with the relationship of historical Christianity to the practical issues of our day. In the chapter on the "Relations Between Jews and Christians" the question of intolerance and its relation to freedom is brought to bear on the right of institutions to exist within a free democracy. Dr. Machen demonstrates that when men give assent to the creed of a church or the program of any voluntary institution when, as a matter of fact, they do not believe what they pledge themselves to, in becoming members of that institution they change the character of that institution, and thus implicitly they deny the right of that institution to exist in a free democracy. Church members and ministers who do not agree with the creed of their Church falsely represent their Church, and deny their Church its right to exist as the institution which its constitution declares it to be.

There are three lectures on **Christian Scholarship**, dealing with its relation to **Evangelism**, the **Defense of the Faith**, and the **Building up of the Church**. A sentence or two will present the point of view from which the author starts:

"At this point, indeed, an objection (to scholarship) may arise. Is not the gospel a very simple thing, it may be asked; and will not its simplicity be obscured by too much research? This objection springs from a false view of what scholarship is; it springs from the notion that scholarship leads a man to be obscure. Exactly the reverse is the case. Ignorance is obscure; but scholarship brings order out of confusion, places

things in their logical relations, and makes the message shine forth clearly."

The author attacks the common view — common even among preachers — that scholarship and "spirituality" are mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the former may easily be the strength of the latter.

The finest chapter in the book, to the reviewer's mind, is the one entitled "Christianity and Culture", in which the author obliterates the traditional distinction between "sacred" and "secular". This distinction has been expressed by the Church in various ways, e.g., in the parallel tendencies toward a scientific or academic approach toward theology and a practical approach; or in the problem of the relation between knowledge and piety, between culture and Christianity. The author suggests three proposed solutions of the problem: 1. Christianity may be subordinated to culture; 2. Christianity may seek to destroy culture; 3. The solution of consecration, i.e., instead of destroying the arts and sciences, or being indifferent to them, Christians ought to cultivate them and consecrate them to the service of the Kingdom of God. This same thesis-antithesis-synthesis approach is used by the author in discussing the problem of human relationships in the Christian life. According to Scripture, (1) the natural affections are not to be allowed to choke our affection for Christ; (2) neither are they to be rooted out nor broken off; but (3) they are to be consecrated and are "to be regarded as one means which God has given us for serving Him."

In the address on "The Church and the War" (delivered in 1919 but not ungermane to present world conditions) the author attacks one of the leading characteristics of the present age, viz., the "profound satisfaction with human goodness". He shows that in time of war, in attending to the sins of others, men have sometimes lost sight of their own sins; and further, that the sense of sin has been blunted in war by the consciousness of great achievement.

Chapter 21 answers four objections to "Fundamentalism" as it is said to obstruct social progress, and demonstrates that far from being inimical to social progress, "Fundamentalism" is a handmaid to progress in the social sphere.

Throughout the book Dr. Machen evinces his insight into the problems of freedom and responsibility, his firm grasp on the doctrine of the Church and its nature. The lecture entitled "The Responsibility of the Church in Our New Age" is especially representative of his ability to get to the bottom of things. He was confronted in his day with the "Ecumenical Movement" toward Church union, and he faced it with the charge that it is an interference with liberty and has in it the seeds of a tyrannical machine. "To that

kind of intolerance", he says, "I am opposed with all my might and main. I am also opposed to church union for somewhat similar reasons. . . I am opposed to the depressing dream of one monopolistic church organization, placing the whole Protestant world under one set of committees and boards. If that dream were ever realized, it would be an intolerable tyranny. Certainly it would mean the death of any true Christian liberty."

In outlining the principles of the program of the true Christian Church, Dr. Machen is opposed to "any official pronouncements upon the political or social questions of the day". Individual members may and ought to engage in such special associations as they may choose to form with the state. "But the function of the Church in its corporate capacity", says the author, "is of an entirely different kind. Its weapons against evil are spiritual, not carnal; and by becoming a political lobby, through the advocacy of political measures, whether good or bad, the Church is turning aside from its proper mission, which is to bring to bear upon human hearts the solemn and imperious, yet also sweet and gracious, appeal of the gospel of Christ". This obviously rules out the attempt on the part of the Church to seek the acknowledgment of the Kingship of Jesus Christ in the national life and Constitution by any means which partakes of the nature of a political lobby. On the basis of this one would be obliged to question whether Isaiah had any business counselling Hezekiah, or whether Micaiah stepped beyond his calling to warn Ahab and Jehoshaphat against warring with the Syrians at Ramoth-Gilead. The prophets, speaking in the name of the Lord, had a responsibility toward their nation, a responsibility which could be realized only by a readiness to "speak of thy testimonies also before kings" (Psalm 119:46). Micah, Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, were spokesmen for God and represented the nation as a covenant people before its king. Ministers of the Word, being prophets of the Most High God, have a similar duty and may legitimately labor to rectify the defections of the political and social spheres, acting in the capacity of ministers who represent their people corporately.

The author's strong opposition to the reading of the Bible in the public schools, because of the danger of misuse of the Bible, is, to this reviewer, quite unfounded. "For my part", he says, I have no hesitation in saying that I am strongly opposed to it. I think I am just about as strongly opposed to the reading of the Bible in state-controlled schools as any atheist could be". Granted that the choice of Scriptures may constitute a narrow misuse of them, Dr. Machen seems to limit the Holy Spirit in applying even the most "garbled" and "falsified Bible" to the human heart. Dr. Machen's proposed remedy is the Christian School, without which, in the meanwhile, he would be

content to have no Bible reading in the public school.

The whole volume is a clear statement of naturalistic, humanistic religion, together with an appraisal of it and a defense of historic Christianity. It is a closely woven fabric of apologetic material in which there is some overlapping and repetition, though not offensive. We are today picking the fruits of the humanism which was growing in Machen's day. The harvest has come to a head. The Church has gone to seed. But the new Renaissance for which Machen longed is at hand. We may be in a new period of the revival of learning and be unaware of it.

— Joseph A. Hill

A FOURFOLD SALVATION, by Arthur W. Pink. Bible Truth Depot, I. C. Herendeen, Swengel, Union Co., Pa. 1951, pp. 31, paper cover. 30 cents.

This little booklet is a brief exposition of the topic "So Great Salvation" of Hebrews 2:3. As the author plainly states, it is not intended to be an exhaustive study of the Way of Salvation. It does set forth the completeness of our salvation from its conception in the Counsel of Peace to its final culmination in eternity to come. This booklet warms one's heart as it sets forth our great salvation, and is a bold contrast to the insipid so-called "evangelistic preaching" of our day. It is a very good antidote to the anti-intellectualism so prevalent in our time. It should be widely distributed among young and old alike. Those who enjoy handing out Christian literature will do well to buy these in quantity and give them to Church members and to those who are seeking salvation. There are four topics treated in general: Salvation from the Pleasure of Sin; Salvation from the Penalty of Sin; Salvation from the Power of Sin; Salvation from the Presence of Sin. One quotation will give you a taste of the strength and beauty of the booklet: "Our salvation originates, of course, in the eternal purpose of God, in His predestinating us to everlasting glory. 'Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began' (2 Tim. 1:9). That has reference to God's DECREE of election: His chosen people were then saved completely, in the Divine purpose, and all that we shall now say has to do with the performing of that purpose, the accomplishing of that decree, the actualization of that salvation." The author's statements are not based on rationalizing, but are always proved from Scripture. The booklet is well suited for use in a study group.

— Philip W. Martin

AN EXPOSITION OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, by Arthur W. Pink. Bible Truth Depot, I. C. Herendeen, Swengel, Union Co., Pa. 1950, pp. 442. \$3.75.

The author of this book has written several interesting and informing books, among which are an "Exposition of the Gospel of John", "The Seven Sayings of the Saviour on the Cross", "The Sovereignty of God". To the present reviewer, this book on the Sermon on the Mount is the finest of them all.

It is, indeed, refreshing to read a book whose writer has such high regard for Scripture and its Divine Author. The volume can be safely recommended to people of all walks of life. Mr. Pink's scholarship and depth of thought have been expressed in the clearest language. There is no place in the book where his thoughts are muddled. The minister will enjoy this as well as the elder, the Sabbath School teacher, and the layman.

Of course, we cannot endorse every sentence in the book, but the author has made an honest effort to set forth the true meaning of the Sermon on the Mount in the light of all Scripture. One place in particular in which this reviewer is inclined to disagree with the author is in his identification of the "salt" of Matt. 5:13. He is right in applying these verses peculiarly to God's servants, those in the ministerial office. He spends a good deal of time showing that mirth and levity connected with the proclamation of the Gospel cause the salt to lose its savor. This is, indeed, one of the things which destroy the effectiveness of the Gospel witness, but it is not exclusive. There are many other ways in which a minister of the Gospel may destroy his witness to his Saviour, such a perversion of the Gospel, an ungodly life, failure to separate from the world, etc.

The book shows that the author has truly entered into the labors of other men, for he quotes often, both favorably and critically. He also shows his wide knowledge of Scripture and constantly strives to take the straight and narrow path which is dictated by comparing Scripture with Scripture. May God raise up more men who will strive to proclaim the whole counsel of God by comparing Scripture with Scripture, without fear or favor of man. Mr. Pink is not afraid to point out the errors, even of those who claim to be orthodox teachers of the Word of God, and to show where they have deviated from the truth.

Mr. Pink has a keen insight into the problems of our day. The way in which he treats those problems will make this book of lasting value.

The following quotations will recommend the book better than anything I can say. "If ever there was a time when these words 'dugged deep' needed to be pressed upon the notice of professing Christians it is today. We are living in an age characterized by superficiality and shallowness, when religion itself has degenerated into a mere

surface things. There is no deep ploughing, no spade work, no foundation exercises, no brokenness of heart. If I have never mourned over my waywardness, I have no solid ground for rejoicing. 'Want of depth, want of sincerity, want of zeal in religion — this is the want of our times. Want of an eye to God in religion, lack of sincere dealing with one's soul, neglect of using the lancet with our hearts, neglect of the search-warrant which God gives out against sin, carelessness concerning living upon Christ; much reading about Him, much talking about Him, but too little feeding upon His flesh and drinking of His blood — these are the causes of tottering professions and baseless hopes.' If Spurgeon found occasion for making such complaint as far back as 1870, how sadly conditions have worsened since then!"

"Matthew v-vii . . . Those three chapters record what is commonly designated our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. Really, it is far more than a sermon, being what might be termed the Messiah's manifesto, the magna charta (or 'constitution') of His kingdom, for therein he unfolded the laws and conditions under which alone we can enter His kingdom."

I would close with the final sentence of the book: "Then let us earnestly seek grace to be something more than 'astonished' with this Sermon, namely receive it into our hearts and minds and incorporate it into our daily walk."

— Philip W. Martin

**THE TEACHING OF JESUS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH**, by Geerhardus Vos. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1951, pp. 103. \$1.50.

This volume is a reprint of a work originally published in 1903 by the American Tract Society under the title "The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church". It is a helpful, well-written study of the kingdom of God, based on the teaching of our Lord as recorded in the Gospels. Dr. Vos not only makes plain what the kingdom is, as Jesus revealed it, but he also deals ably with most of the prevalent misconceptions concerning the kingdom. In one of the early chapters there is an interesting discussion of the "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven", which reveals the author's belief that these two terms refer to identically the same kingdom. He suggests that the latter term was probably the one which Jesus most frequently used, and that Mark and Luke, writing for Gentile readers, would substitute "the kingdom of God" as being more intelligible to them than the typically Jewish phrase, "kingdom of heaven".

Dr. Vos presents a great deal of evidence from the Gospels to show that Christ had a definite conception of the kingdom in its internal and spiritual aspect. He points out that the

kingdom is present as well as future; that it comes in the hearts of men, and then afterward in the external world. Yet he is careful to state that, notwithstanding its internal character, the kingdom remains to all intents a supernatural kingdom. "The doctrine of the kingdom stands for the principle that the Christian religion is not a mere matter of subjective ideas or experiences, but is related to a great system of objective, supernatural facts and transactions. The kingdom means the renewal of the world through the introduction of supernatural forces."

The author does not deal at length with the eschatological aspect of the kingdom. However, he does say that it would not be in harmony with Jesus' view of the kingdom to believe that by the gradual extension of the divine power operating internally the kingdom which now is will become all comprehensive and universal and so of itself pass over into the final kingdom. He holds that the final state of the kingdom will only come by the direct intervention of God, "in the miracle of all miracles."

Dr. Vos discusses the essence of the kingdom under three headings: first, the kingdom as the supremacy of God in the sphere of saving power; second, the kingdom in the sphere of righteousness; and third, the kingdom as a state of blessedness. One chapter of the book deals specifically with the relationship of the kingdom to the church, and contains a rather full exposition of Matthew 16:18,09 (" . . . upon this rock I will build my church. . . And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom. . . "). In this chapter the author emphasizes that the kingdom of God is intended to pervade and control the whole of human life in all its forms of existence. However, it was not Christ's intention that this result should be reached by making human life in all its spheres subject to the visible church. Church and state are to be separate, but both must recognize the supremacy of Christ as king. Dr. Vos asserts that the form which the kingdom assumes in the church shows it to be inseparably associated with the person and work of Jesus himself. "The religion of the kingdom is a religion, in which there is not only a place but in which the central place is for the Saviour."

This book, with its strong emphasis on the supremacy of God over the entire range of human life, is a refreshing contrast to much of the present-day teaching and preaching concerning the kingdom. I recommend it to all who desire to understand what Jesus taught about the kingdom of God.

— John McMillan

**TRIED BY FIRE: EXPOSITIONS OF I PETER**, by F. B. Meyer. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1950, pp. 218. \$2.50.

This little volume is the first of the Biblical

expositions to be issued in the Meyer Reprint Series. The expositions were delivered first during Dr. Meyer's ministry. This is more than a devotional commentary: it is a straightforward exposition of Biblical truth, embodying the fruits of exegesis and presented within the framework of a homiletical structure. It is not a critical commentary, but rather, sermonic in form, predominantly instructive as against exhortative, so as to be enjoyable and profitable to laymen as well as ministers. On the dust jacket there is this evaluation of Meyer's writings: "The writings of F. B. Meyer are widely appreciated and admired. They uniformly breathe a deep devotional spirit. They are artistic without being superficial, evangelical without being sensational, and instructive without being obscure."

The volume consists of thirty-one expositions carrying the reader through 1 Peter step by step. Dr. Meyer chose to divide the text of 1 Peter into short passages (as few as one verse and as many as eight in a unit). The theme of the book of 1 Peter, as Meyer has it, "Tried By Fire", might have been carried out more directly and uniformly if the author had dealt with longer passages, but much of the detail, and much of the real flavor of the epistle would be missing.

The theme "Tried By Fire" relates to the sufferings and persecution of God's people in the early days when the Church was a scattered flock. The theme is nicely carried out by the use of titles which are consistent with it. Each chapter is an exposition having a very sententious title, clear, suggestive, meaningful. For example, 1 Peter 1:8,9 — "Christ Unseen, But Loved"; 2:21-25 — "The Footprints of the Flock"; 5:5,6 — "The Garb of the Holy Soul"; 4:3-7 — "The Breath of Eternity".

One passage commands special attention as being of questionable exegesis, viz., 1 Peter 2:18-22, dealing with the preaching of Christ "unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah", etc. Meyer interprets this to mean that when Christ died on the cross He "descended into hell" (Hades) where He was a herald of a message addressed to such men as had been unbelievers at the time of the deluge. Without attempting to be exhaustive, it may not be out of place here briefly to set forth a more tenable exegesis. Christ did enter into Hades at His death. Hades is simply "the state of the dead", that intermediate state between death and resurrection. His soul had departed from the body and had gone into the presence of the Father (Luke 23:46), not into the place of eternal torment. But, even so, the passage does not refer to Christ's entering into Hades. In the immediate context Peter had been writing concerning patient waiting under trial — longsuffering. God is the foremost example of patience and longsuffering. He had been patient with His people, e.g., in the wilder-

ness of Sinai and in the days of Noah when there was nothing but iniquity in all the earth. And Christ's death was also an example of the long-suffering waiting of God, after which men were brought to God. After that death, what became of Christ's spirit? Peter says that when Christ was "put to death as far as the flesh is concerned", He was quickened as to the spirit, that is to say, His divine nature was separated from the flesh by death; death released Him from all bodily limitations, setting Him free from the confinements of His estate of humiliation. It was in this divine nature that Christ had preached before His incarnation to such souls as were imprisoned in the stronghold of sin and evil. Before His incarnation Christ had been in the world, in His spirit or divine nature, and had pleaded with men to turn from their sin. With this activity of the eternal Christ in mind Peter chose a single event, for the sake of illustration, to indicate how Christ had always been in the world revealing His will to men, how in His spirit He was always pleading with them, and how the longsuffering of God was always patiently enduring, bearing with men, overlooking their sins, e.g., during the period in which Noah was building the ark.

— Joseph A. Hill

THE CASE AGAINST MODERNISM IN FOREIGN MISSIONS, by Chester E. Tulga. Conservative Baptist Fellowship, 2561 N. Clark St., Chicago 14, Ill. 1950, pp. 64, paper cover. 25 cents.

No better study book for Covenanter missionary societies or young people's societies could be found than Dr. Tulga's small booklet on Modernism in foreign missions. The reviewer has read several of these useful handbooks by Dr. Tulga, but none seemed more valuable than this one, "The Case Against Modernism in Foreign Missions".

The book is valuable for its rapid historical survey of the spread of unbelief to world mission fields. Statements are well documented and show a broad mastery of relevant literature on the subject of missions. The analysis, too, which Dr. Tulga gives of the problem seems to this reviewer a most thorough and satisfying statement. His focus is on the change in the foreign missionary enterprise on account of Modernism. The chapter headings are: "Milestones of Missionary Change", "The Changing Missionary Message", "The Changing Missionary Motives", "Changing Missionary Approach", "Changing Missionary Methods", and "Changing Missionary Objectives". A convenient recapitulation of the material is given in the closing "Summary".

This reviewer is at present making the disagreeable acquaintance with Modernism in the Protestant churches of Japan. The awful degree of compromise with idolatrous customs during the recent war has stamped many Japanese churches as sub-normal, if not apostate, and mis-

sionary leadership seems to have failed miserably in most cases during the State Shinto period of persecution.

It is of interest, then, to find quoted in Dr. Tulga's book two statements by Modernist missionaries in Japan. Dr. Tulga quotes from a published statement of Dr. William Axling, Baptist missionary for many years in Japan:

"Personally, I went to Japan thirty-one years ago with the conception that the ethnic faiths were all false. I had not been on the field long, however, before I came into intimate relationship with some Buddhist priests. They convinced me that they, too, were on the quest for God and reality. Some of them were seeking for an integrated personality. I determined then and there that my task was not to attack Buddhism or Shinto, but a positive proclamation of Christian truth. . . . I hope I will not be misunderstood, but my experience during the last thirty-one years has convinced me that Buddhism and Shinto as well as Confucianism furnish the Japanese people a sort of Old Testament, out of which they can move forward and upward toward Him who came not to destroy but to fulfil" (p. 17).

Still another Japan illustration is given by Dr. Tulga, quoting W. M. Horton ("The Authority of Faith", p. 138):

"I met a Buddhist priest whom to this day I persist in regarding as my brother in Christ. . . . If I belong in any sense to the body of Christ, then he does, too. It would be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the Wind of God that bloweth where it listeth, for me to deny my Buddhist brother this place in that body. When I ventured to say as much to a group of Christians in Kobe the next day, I was sternly reminded that 'there is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved'; but I thought to myself that I would rather have the Spirit without the Name, than the Name without the Spirit" (p. 21).

Modernism is still a deadly enemy in the foreign mission fields. Dr. Tulga gives some space to a discussion of Chinese Modernism and its compromise with Communism. This sad story is replete with warnings to the United States. Make no mistake! The Modernists who preach a milk-toast form of socialism are unconsciously paving the way for Marxist revolution, and if it comes these broad-minded deceivers will become the ready prophets for an atheistic dictatorship.

Dr. Tulga is a Baptist and yet he does not spare the Baptists for their apostasy in the Northern Convention. His view of Christ's return is premillennial, so that he gives little place to Christian social and economic reforms in the present age. One minor point which I feel inclined to criticize is a reference on page 25 to "Roman Catholic missions and Protestant sectarianism", as instances of unworthy motives for missions. "Denominationalism, in its world-wide

activity, is often moved by motives other than those of the New Testament". This is generally true, but Dr. Tulga would no doubt be quick to agree that true denominational convictions — as, for example, his own concerning the mode of baptism or the principle of congregational freedom — are not to be classed with Roman Catholicism's ambition as equally unworthy motives. The essence of Modernism is its tendency to sacrifice creedal truth to mechanical union, so we need ever to safeguard the validity of genuine Biblical loyalty to truth as we see it, even when such loyalty perpetuates isolated denominations.

I consider this book worthy of careful study and believe it will be a useful reference book for deeper research.

— Samuel E. Boyle

THE CASE AGAINST COMMUNISM, by Chester E. Tulga. Conservative Baptist Fellowship, 2561 N. Clark St., Chicago 14, Ill. 1949, pp. 61, paper cover. 25 cents.

This is the fifth of Dr. Tulga's excellent series on current anti-Christian tendencies. Perhaps this should be studied with "The Case Against the Social Gospel" for more adequate understanding of the author's position. The wicked features of materialistic Communism are well summarized. A brief history of Marx, Lenin and Stalin introduces this discussion. Communism is shown to have false doctrines of the universe, history, man, morality, class, revolution and the state. The author then discusses Modernism's effort to meet Communism's challenge, with its subsequent failure to do so. Finally, historic Christianity's Biblical answer to Communism is briefly outlined and defended.

The author's eschatological views serve to postpone until Christ's return any hope of any practical social or economic reforms which, by Bible standards, are ethically necessary now. Only in his presentation of individual regeneration as "the true doctrine of revolution" does the author vaguely answer the moral question which Communists raise for us as Christian citizens. Dr. Tulga says, "Christianity holds that its primary responsibility is to change men and through changed men, instructed by the teachings of the Word of God, to change life" (p. 60). This would be his substitute for the social gospel of Liberals and the materialistic Utopia of Marxism.

After several years of study of the Chinese Communist revolution in relation to Christianity, I have come to doubt whether Western Protestantism as a middle-class phenomenon can expect to retain its status quo in face of the communistic techniques of radical social change. Under present conditions bourgeois church life is pretty rigidly stereotyped. Christian men earn their living by jobs which bring in good incomes, but the average family expends more than it earns on staple necessities and luxury items such as automobiles, refrigeration units, television sets.

The acquisition of such material things seems to fill the thoughts of many Christians. The portion of their income invested in church or mission projects is quite small. Attendance on church services is notoriously irregular. By this "proxy" method of Christian evangelism and Christian service all Protestant organizations try to carry forward. But can this go on? Is this not indicative of our inner decay?

Communism in China has nothing in itself to commend it, for it is basically a deception and a tyranny, yet one undeniable effect of this revolution should warn us. Communism proposed by violent, comprehensive and detailed remodelling to make society completely over — by human wisdom and force, of course. We know that this will produce only chaos and misery. In China under the tremendous social pressure of this regime Christians have been forced to revamp everything and to make new adjustments from the ground up. This, strange to say, seems to have released some creative energy. This sense of "starting over again" is responsible for much of the curious spirit of enthusiasm which we hear coming occasionally from orthodox Chinese Protestant sources as well as from Modernists like T. C. Chao. Ordinary limitations have been thrown off. A totally new beginning is forced upon the Chinese Church.

Can we, therefore, stop with mere academic denunciations of Communism? Can we set the Bible over against the writings of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and satellite bosses like Mao Tse-tung, and then conclude that the issue is settled? I believe not. Our reaction must go much deeper than counter-propaganda. Deeds are also needed.

Our prayer and labor should be quickened by the storm which must assuredly strike our land in time. Church members ought to take preliminary inventory of their Christian life, and see how much of it rests on sand rather than the Rock, Christ Jesus. Suppose the average church member abruptly had his freedom, income, property and his status in society taken from him. What could he do then to serve God? Chinese Christians are facing this issue today. Japanese Christians may face it soon, and it is quite possible that British or American Christians will someday face the same harsh problem.

Have we orthodox Christians the courage, moral earnestness and imagination to put Bible teachings into immediate practice in our own personal and family sphere? Can our income, for example, be changed from 10% investment in Christ's Kingdom to, say, 90%? Can we bring our Christianity from the outer margin of our affection and planning to the center? If so, we shall no doubt see a release of frozen spiritual energy which will undoubtedly have a healthy social result. This to say there must be a fresh Holy Spirit revival to the orthodox Christians,

the faithful ones among us, to meet Communism today.

I hate Communism. I hate Modernism's sick hopes to make terms with Marxism. But as an orthodox Christian I wonder how I can become a real Christian revolutionary for God now! Not when Christ comes — all social ills will then be set right — but now; we need this social and economic type of obedience to the Word of God which will exert a dynamic moral and spiritual influence on this evil world. Even under world apostasy and the rising Antichrist we need such an experience.

Dr. Tulga's book is very useful. It is true to the Bible and carefully prepared. I thought he was a trifle inadequate in his condemnation of "violence" as a "principle". It seems that he fails to take into account the need of "force" to counter-balance "violence". Exodus 20:13, "Thou shalt not kill", puts the stamp of God's disapproval on violent murder, but it does not forbid just and necessary use of lawful force — which may be VIOLENT force — in defence of the weak against tyranny.

In general, this is an excellent discussion of Communism from the viewpoint of sound Christianity. It is only 25 cents a copy, so that groups of young people can use it for study if they so desire.

— Samuel E. Boyle

BODY OF DIVINITY, by John Gill. Baker Book house, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1951, pp. x1, 1026. \$10.00.

John Gill, who lived 1697 to 1771, was an English Nonconformist minister of Baptist persuasion. He was renowned as a great Hebrew scholar, and was the author of a number of extensive works, including an exposition of the Bible in ten volumes. In 1767 he published "A Body of Doctrinal Divinity", followed in 1770 by "A Body of Practical Divinity". In theology, Gill was a staunch Calvinist and his writings reflect this conviction.

The present volume is a reprint, produced by the photographic process, from the London edition of 1839, of Gill's "A Body of Doctrinal Divinity" (pages 1-696) and "A Body of Practical Divinity" (pages 697-1023). A memoir of the author and an Introduction occupy some forty pages at the beginning of the book.

Unlike many writers of his period, Gill had an attractive, concise and readable style. On first taking up this book, the reviewer was afraid it would prove to be long-winded and verbose, but was pleasantly surprised to find it readable, interesting and easy to follow. It is evident that Gill intended plain Christians to understand what he wrote.

For the most part, this work presents standard orthodox Calvinism in quite an effective manner. As the author was of the Baptist per-

suation, it is natural that his treatment of certain particular subjects, such as the sacrament of Baptism and the government or polity of the Church, should follow the Baptist position and therefore necessarily be unsatisfactory from the Presbyterian point of view. Thus while the author believes firmly in the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace, he emphatically denies that the children of Christian parents are born with a covenant status (pp. 903 ff.). With respect to church polity he adheres to the regular congregational or independent position, denying that the Bible warrants any authoritative church government having jurisdiction over more than a single congregation.

With reference to the Last Things, the author holds that following the second coming of Christ there will be a conflagration of the universe, followed by the rise of a new world out of the ashes of the old; this again will be followed by "the millennium, or personal reign of Christ with the saints on the new earth a thousand years" (pp. 643 ff.); after this will come "the last and general judgment", followed by the final state of the saints in heaven and of the wicked in hell. "The millennium-reign will not be till after the first resurrection; and the first resurrection will not be till the second coming of Christ, when the dead in him shall rise first. The personal reign of Christ will not be till the new heavens and the new earth are made, which will be the seat of it; and these will not be till the present heavens and earth are dissolved and burnt up; and this conflagration will not be till Christ comes a second time. The reign of Christ with his saints, will not be till Satan is bound, as well as anti-christ destroyed; and Satan will not be bound, till Christ, the mighty angel, descends from heaven to earth, which will not be till the end of the world" (p. 664). In the judgment of this reviewer, Gill's doctrine of the millennium is erroneous and is based upon an unwarranted literalism in interpreting the first resurrection of Revelation 20, and other prophetic Scriptures.

In the part of the volume entitled "A Body of Practical Divinity", the reviewer found some excellent things. There is, for example, a discussion "Of the Office of Deacons" (pp. 881-886) which is really remarkable. This reviewer has never seen any treatment of the office and duties of deacons which compares with Gill's. In a day when too many deacons perform almost no functions beyond passing the collection plate in church services, something like this is urgently needed. This particular section could very well be published separately as a booklet, and would have a very good effect.

Another excellent discussion is entitled "Of Singing Psalms, as a Part of Public Worship" (pp. 957-964). Gill presents a remarkably persuasive and cogent argument for singing the Psalms of the Bible in the public worship of God.

Just about all the objections to singing the Psalms that are brought up at the present day are stated and ably answered by Gill in this book written nearly 200 years ago! The argument that "hymns and spiritual songs" in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 means ordinary human compositions of uninspired writers, the author rejects with some indignation: "By 'hymns' are intended, not any mere human compositions; since I can hardly think the apostle would place such between psalms and spiritual songs, made by men inspired by the Holy Ghost, and put them upon a level with them, to be sung; but rather this is only another name for the Book of Psalms. . . . By 'spiritual songs' may also be meant the same psalms of David, Asaph, &c. the titles of some of which are songs; as sometimes 'a psalm and song', 'a song and psalm', 'a song of degrees', and the like; together with all other spiritual songs written by men inspired of God; called 'spiritual', because of the author of them, the Spirit of God; the penmen of them, such as were moved by the same Spirit; and the matter of them, spiritual, useful for spiritual edification; and are opposed to all loose, profane, and wanton songs" (pp. 960, 961). Gill goes on to argue that the Greek words for "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" are taken from the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) and correspond to the Hebrew titles found in the Book of Psalms.

Again, Gill takes up the objection that the Psalms are not suited to the Christian Church: "It is doubted whether the Book of Psalms is suited to the gospel-dispensation, and proper to be sung in gospel-churches. Nothing (is) more suitable to it, nor more proper to be sung in it; since it abounds with prophecies concerning the person and offices of the Messiah, his suffering and death, resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God, now more clearly understood, and more capable of being sung in an evangelic manner; and also is full of precious promises; is a large fund of experience, a rich mine of gospel-grace and truth, and so is greatly suited to every case and condition the church of Christ, or a particular believer may be in at any time; a little care and prudence in the choice of proper psalms on particular occasions, would fully discover the truth of this" (p. 962). From this point Gill goes on to answer objections urged against the singing of the so-called "Imprecatory Psalms".

In view of Gill's masterful argument in favor of singing the Psalms, it is a pity that at one point he concedes that "hymns and spiritual songs, composed by good men, uninspired, may be made use of; provided care is taken that they be agreeable to the sacred writings, and to the analogy of faith, and are expressed as much as may be in scripture language. . . ." (p. 961, column 1). Time has amply proved that the admission of "a few good hymns" in addition to the inspired Psalms of the Bible into the public wor-

ship of the Church inevitably turns out to be the entrance of the camel's nose into the Arab's tent; in the course of time the whole camel gets in and the Arab has to move out; so the admission of some hymns eventually forces the entire Psalter out, the hymns supplanting it completely; We see the end product of this today in some denominations which once sang only the Psalms; then the Psalms and a few hymns; then many hymns and a few Psalms; and now hymns only and no Psalms. There are members of such churches today that have never even heard of singing the Psalms and do not realize that the hymns which they take for granted are really an innovation.

There are many good and helpful things in this large volume, in both the doctrinal and the practical part. With the reservations noted above concerning baptism, church polity, the millennium, etc., this book can be heartily recommended. The author had a deep insight into the truth of the Scriptures, and his work will bring help and blessing to many.

— J. G. Vos

**THE SEED OF ABRAHAM**, by Albertus Pieters. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Avenue, S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 161. \$2.50.

It is high time something like this be published. It is a kindly and winsome, but truly devastating, exposure of current popular errors and fallacies concerning "Israel, the Church, and the Jew" (sub-title of the book). The author was for many years a missionary in Japan. On returning to the United States, he became Professor of Bible and Missions in the Western Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America (Holland, Michigan). He is well known as the author of a number of books, including "The Lamb, the Woman and the Dragon" (an exposition of the Book of Revelation). A small booklet from his pen, entitled "A Candid Examination of the Scofield Bible", is noteworthy.

The present volume undertakes to show that the Visible Christian Church is the true "Seed of Abraham" today. In this reviewer's judgment, the author is remarkably convincing in his argument. Starting with the patriarchal period, the author show that "the Seed of Abraham" is not a racial concept at all, but a covenantal concept. "Whenever we meet with the argument that God made certain promises to the Jewish race, the above facts are pertinent. God never made any promises to any race at all, as a race. His promises were to the continuing covenanted community, without regard to its racial constituents or to the personal ancestry of the individuals in it. Hence no proof that those whom the world now calls 'the Jews' are descended from Abraham, if it could be supplied (which it can not) would be of any avail to prove that they

are entitled to the fulfilment of any divine promise whatsoever. Those promises were made to the covenanted group called 'The Seed of Abraham', and to that community they must be fulfilled. What is needed is that one shall bring forward proof of his membership in that group. If the promise had been on a racial basis, it must have been fulfilled to many besides the children of Israel. By far the majority of Abraham's descendants were not Israelites" (pp. 19,20).

Continuing down through Old Testament history, the author traces the continuity of "the Seed of Abraham" as a group in covenant with God. Then taking up the New Testament, he adduces strong arguments to prove that "the Seed of Abraham" in New Testament times is none other than the Visible Christian Church. He states three questions, namely: "(1) Do the New Testament writers recognize the Visible Church to be the New Covenant Israel? (2) Does the church bear the marks and exhibit the characteristics of the Seed of Abraham? (3) Does the Visible Church as historically known really do the work that the Seed of Abraham was intended to do — in other words, are all nations truly blessed in the Visible Church and its operations" (p. 86). All of these questions the author answers in the affirmative, with arguments from Scripture. This reviewer considers the author's argument unanswerable.

Taking up the question, What of the Jews, the author makes it clear that the Jews of today are not really the Seed of Abraham; they have no covenant connection with God, for the Old Covenant passed away when Christ was crucified, and they refuse to accept the New Covenant. They have an essentially different religion from that of the Old Testament, for they have no priesthood descended from Aaron, and no sacrifices. The Judaism of today is based on the Talmud primarily, rather than on the Old Testament Scriptures.

The author shows that the Jews of today have maintained their identity as a group by continued rejection of Christ: "In saying that God 'is through with the Jews', we mean, of course, that this group, maintained in existence as a separate community by the rejection of Christ and by insisting upon the ordinances that He has abolished, has no part, and can have no part in the great redemptive enterprise which God began in the call of Abraham, made known by the prophets, and is now carrying out through the New Covenant Israel. Individuals are always welcome to take refuge in Christ by faith, and for every soul that does it there will not only be joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God, but also in every Christian heart on earth. For such conversions we should zealously and lovingly labor; but for the group as such there is no place in the kingdom of God, nor can there be any unfulfilled prophecy of divine blessing which they may in-

herit. God is through with the Jews. A Jew must first cease to be a Jew and become a Christian before God can use him" (pp. 124-5). Down through the ages Jews have been converted to Christianity, thereby being lost to Judaism. The Jews of today thus represent the residue of those who generation after generation, have refused to believe on Christ.

The closing chapter of the book is entitled "The Problem of the Ten Tribes". In it the author ably points out the absurdities of the British-Israel theory.

It is a pity that some criticisms must be registered concerning this book, which in its main positions is certainly sound and very much needed today. (1) At several points in the book the author manifests an attitude toward the moral laws revealed in the Old Testament which is contrary to the accepted theology of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. This is briefly enunciated on page 115: "Because of the abrogation of the Old Covenant, nothing in the Old Testament Scriptures has any legal authority in the Christian life" (see also pages 31-35, 116-121). The author specifically mentions "the observance of the Sabbath" as having "nothing to do with morality as such" and as having been abolished. The reviewer must dissent, believing that the traditional Reformed doctrine of the Sabbath, and the Ten Commandments as the summary of the moral law, is Biblically sound (see the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. XIX; Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly, Q. 91-148; Shorter Catechism, Q. 41-81).

(2) The author states categorically that there are no unconditional promises in the Bible (p. 142). But there certainly are; for example, Gen. 3:15 and Psalm 89:33-37. These may be called predictions, but they amount to unconditional divine promises.

(3) The author holds that denominational church government is a mere human contrivance for reasons of expediency and that Scripture does require any structure of church government beyond the limits of the local congregation (pp. 101-2). This seems to the reviewer a rather superficial inference from the Biblical data. I believe that a more penetrating analysis of the data will show the essential features of the Presbyterian form of church government as of divine authority. See, for example, the "Form of Presbyterian Church Government" adopted by the Westminster Assembly of Divines, where the argument from Scripture for the "divine right of presbytery" is very acutely presented.

— J. G. Vos

THE CASE AGAINST NEO-ORTHODOXY, by Chester E. Tulga. Conservative Baptist Fellowship, 2561 N. Clark St., Chicago 14, Ill. 1951, pp. 64, paper cover. 25 cents.

Perhaps the most conspicuous theological tendency of our day is the general shift from Liberalism to Neo-Orthodoxy, otherwise known as the Theology of Crisis, the Dialectical Theology, or (less accurately) "Barthianism". Neo-Orthodoxy is the brand of theology sponsored by Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Reinhold Niebuhr, Edwin Lewis and others less renowned. Since it is not really a return to orthodoxy, it should be called "Neo-Modernism" rather than "Neo-Orthodoxy". For while Neo-Orthodoxy involves a strong reaction against some characteristic ideas of Liberalism, it certainly does not involve a return to the historic Christianity of the Scriptures.

Those who wish to read an exhaustive analysis and critique of Neo-Orthodoxy should by all means avail themselves of "The New Modernism" by Cornelius Van Til (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 525 Locust St., Philadelphia 6, Pa. Pp. xx, 392. \$3.75). For those who wish a brief and simple evaluation of Neo-Orthodoxy, Dr. Tulga's booklet, "The Case Against Neo-Orthodoxy" is heartily recommended. This booklet does not go into the difficult subjects of Kantian and Existentialist philosophy which are the real background and source of Neo-Orthodoxy, but it presents a clear account of how Neo-Orthodoxy contradicts the Christianity of the Bible and of the historic Church.

In his Forward, Dr. Tulga says: "It may be pointed out that many quotations can be cited from Barth and Brunner that apparently refute the charges made in these pages. We acknowledge this to be so, for we have read such quotations. Barth and Brunner believe that a horse can be ridden in opposite directions at the same time, and they insist that this is the only way to ride a horse. Because Neo-Orthodox thinkers feel no responsibility for consistency, they should not be surprised if they are misinterpreted. It will be charged that we have misunderstood and misinterpreted Barth and Brunner. Since every other critic has been similarly charged, we shall not be surprised. Men who feel no obligation to use reason, who reject logic, who consider historical facts incidental, who use paradoxical language difficult to understand, may be misunderstood and misinterpreted. We have endeavored to avoid misinterpretation, but any school of thought which denies any relationship between the faith and logical categories, immediately falls into confusion and continually tries to say something which it cannot say. Others will insist that we do not distinguish between the "earlier" Barth and the "later" Barth, but we have found them both equally unscriptural" (pp. 5,6).

Dr. Tulga makes out his "Case Against Neo-Orthodoxy" under the following headings: 1. What is Neo-Orthodoxy? 2. Neo-Orthodoxy is not Intelligible because it is Irrational. 3. Neo-Orthodoxy is Deceptively "Orthodox" but it is not Christian. 4. Neo-Orthodoxy Rejects the

Biblical Truths Basic to the Plan of Salvation.  
5. Neo-Orthodoxy and its Attitude Toward the Bible.

This booklet should be widely circulated and read. It should serve to show the foolishness of holding that there is much good in Neo-Orthodoxy in spite of its errors. As this booklet plainly proves, Neo-Orthodoxy is just a fancy house built on sand, just another clever counterfeit of the real thing.

— J. G. Vos

NOTES ON THE OLD TESTAMENT, EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL: PSALMS, by Albert Barnes. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1950, 3 volumes, pp. 432, 448, 408. Per volume, \$3.00.

These three volumes constitute a beautifully photo-lithographed reproduction of Albert Barnes' Notes on the Psalms. This work is full of valuable exegetical and practical material on the Psalms. Each page is divided, with a brief portion of the Scripture text at the top — sometimes only a phrase or two, sometimes three or four verses — and the rest of the page devoted to explanatory and practical comments.

The Notes are written from the standpoint of the divine inspiration and authority of the Psalter. In examining any commentary on the Psalms we want to know the author's attitude toward the so-called "Imprecatory Psalms", as this is sure to be revelatory of his real convictions concerning the inspiration and authority of the book as a whole. In his Introduction Barnes discusses "The Imprecations in the Psalms" (Vol. I, pp. xxv-x1). Stating frankly that a real difficulty is involved, he opines that "Perhaps it is not possible for us to remove all such difficulty. . .", but he proceeds to suggest a number of possible solutions: (1) "Whatever difficulty there exists, is created by the Bible itself. . . It cannot be pretended that the writers indulged in feelings which they were unwilling to record; which they were ashamed to make known. . . Moreover, if there is any condemnation of this spirit in the Bible — if there was anything wrong in this spirit — we are to remember that the condemnation is found in that very book where these expressions occur — for it is to be assumed here that, so far as the objection lies against these expressions as a part of the Bible — as a part of a pretended revelation — **the Bible is one book**; the Old Testament and the New are parts of the same revelation from God." Thus Barnes, unlike many more recent writers, holds that the Bible is one harmonious whole, without internal contradictions. This is good. (2) "It may be a fair subject of inquiry how much of what is charged as wrong, harsh, and vindictive, may be referred to the spirit of the age in which the Bible was composed, and in which these men lived. . . Truth and holiness, right and wrong, do not change, nor are they dependent on the caprices or the customs

of mankind. . . It may be possible that those who lived in the earlier ages of the world really **meant** no more by the language which they often used, and which seems to us to be so harsh, so revengeful, and so savage, than we do in the milder tones which we employ, and which we now suppose to be demanded by civilization and Christianity." (3) "Part of these passages **MAY** undoubtedly be prophetic; expressing what **WOULD BE**, rather than indicating any **WISH** on the part of the author of the Psalms that such things **SHOULD** be." (4) "**SOME** of the expressions referred to are a mere record of the feelings of others; of the gratification which **THEY** would feel in seeing vengeance inflicted on the guilty. . . In such a case all that the inspired writer, or the Spirit of inspiration, is responsible for, is **the fairness of the record**; or that he has given an exact statement of the feelings which would be cherished and expressed by those who should inflict the vengeance, or who should experience gratification in seeing it." Barnes cites Psalm 137:8,9 as an instance of this last kind ("O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou has served us. **Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones**"). We must remember that it was the Medes, not the Jews, that were God's instrument in executing judgment on Babylon. The reviewer recalls hearing a young woman of a Psalm-singing church say concerning Psalm 137, "I just **HATE** that Psalm!" Such a sentiment is blasphemous, albeit unintentionally so; it arises from a misconception of the real issue involved in the "Imprecatory" Psalms. (5) "The real question is, whether under any circumstances such prayers — such imprecations — can be right; and whether, if ever right, the circumstances in the Psalms were such as to make them proper." Under this heading Barnes points out that David was a magistrate; that punishment of wrongdoing is right; and since punishment is right, it must also be right to pray that it will be executed upon the guilty. Here, as Barnes says, we have "the real question". Whatever light may be thrown upon the problem from other angles, the real issue concerns **JUSTICE**, the rightfulness of the execution of divine judgment upon sinners, and, by implication, the rightfulness of wishing and praying for such execution of judgment. When this is conceded, the ground is cut away from under the ordinary objections to the "Imprecatory" Psalms. (6) "There is still another solution of the difficulty which has been suggested. It is, substantially, that these expressions **are a mere record of what actually occurred in the mind of the psalmist**, and are preserved to us as an illustration of human nature when partially sanctified." While Barnes argues that this is a possible partial explanation of the "Imprecatory" Psalms, this reviewer maintains that it fails to reckon fully with the divine character of the Psalter.

For the Bible itself represents the Psalter as possessing not merely historical, but also **NORMATIVE** authority (Col. 3:16). It should however be observed that Barnes endeavors earnestly to solve the problem of the "Imprecatory" Psalms in a manner consistent with the inspiration and authority of the Psalter. Nowhere does he suggest any view of the Psalms which would regard them as mere human compositions, or put them on a par with other religious poetry.

In arguing that the Psalms are suited to the worship of God, Barnes gives his opinion of much of the contents of popular hymn books: "There is none (of the inspired poetry of the Hebrews) that can be placed on the same low level with much that is found in the hymn books of most denominations of Christians — very good; very pious; very sentimental; very much adapted, it is supposed, to excite the feelings of devotion — but withal so flat, so weak, so unpoetic, that it would not, in a volume of mere poetry, be admitted to a third or fourth rank, if, indeed, it would find a place at all" (Vol. I, p. xlii). This is very well said.

Barnes' Notes on the Psalms are truly illuminating. There is here a wealth of material shedding light on the meaning of the Psalms. Much is adduced from the daily life and customs of the people of Israel, from the geography of Palestine, and from study of the Hebrew words, which helps to understand obscure or difficult passages. There are also in the volumes a number of pictures illustrative of the Holy Land and its life. To each volume there has been attached an appendix, giving pertinent comments of various other commentators on the Psalms.

Barnes fully accepts the Messianic character of the Psalms usually classed as "Messianic" by conservative scholars. In the judgment of this reviewer, there is much more in the Psalter that is fully true of Christ alone. But it is good to note the sound treatment of the Messianic Psalms in these Notes. For example, in his conclusion to his comments on Psalm 22, the author says: "The **SCENE** in the Psalm is the **CROSS**, the Redeemer suffering for the sins of man. The main

features of the psalm relate to the course of thoughts which then passed through the mind of the Redeemer; his sorrow at the idea of being abandoned by God; his confidence in God; the remembrance of his early hopes; his emotions at the taunts and revilings of his enemies; his consciousness of prostrated strength; his feelings as the soldiers pierced his hands and his feet, and as they proceeded to divide his raiment; his prayer that his enemies might not be suffered to accomplish their design, or to defeat the work of redemption; his purpose to make God known to men; his assurance that the effect of his sufferings would be to bring the dwellers on the earth to serve God, and to make his name and his righteousness known to far distant times. I regard the whole psalm, therefore, as applicable to the Messiah alone; and believing it to be inspired, I cannot but feel that we have here a most interesting and affecting account, given long before it occurred, of what actually passed through the mind of the Redeemer when on the cross, an account more full than we have anywhere else in the Bible. Other statements pertain more particularly to the external events of the crucifixion; here we have a record in anticipation of what actually passed through his own mind in those hours of unspeakable anguish when he made an atonement for the sins of the world" (Vol. I, p. 208).

When a Psalm-singing Church stops explaining the Psalms and studying the Psalms, it will be only a matter of time until that Church will stop singing the Psalms. Barnes' Notes on the Psalms will provide great help in the effort to study and explain the Psalms. Every minister of a Psalm-singing Church should possess a set of these Notes. They would be helpful, too, to any church member of ordinary intelligence and fair education.

It has already been remarked that these books are beautifully printed. They are also beautifully bound, uniformly with the other volumes of the series of Barnes' Notes on the Old and New Testaments.

— J. G. Vos

## Books Received

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

**THE MINOR PROPHETS: A COMMENTARY, EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL**, by E. B. Pusey. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. Two volumes, pp. 427 and 504. Per volume, \$3.50.

**THE THEOLOGY OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR**, by Edward J. Carnell. Wm. B. Eerdmans

Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1951, pp. 250. \$3.50.

**OUR HOPE OF SURVIVAL**, by George L. Murray. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich., pp. 133. \$1.50.

**THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES**, by Oswald

T. Allis. *The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 525 Locust St., Philadelphia 6, Pa. Pp. x, 355. \$3.75.*

**THE GOSPEL: THE UNIFICATION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS**, by Thomas G. Dietz. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1951, pp. 186. \$3.00.

**A HARMONY AND COMMENTARY ON THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL**, by Frank J. Goodwin. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1951, pp. 240. \$2.50.

**THE WAY INTO THE HOLIEST: EXPOSITIONS OF HEBREWS**, by F. B. Meyer. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E. Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1951, pp. 277. \$2.50.

**LECTURES ON THE LAST THINGS**, by William Hendriksen. Baker Book House, 1019

Wealthy St., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1951, pp. 65. \$1.50.

**THE MAIN TRAITS OF CALVIN'S THEOLOGY**, by Bela Vasady. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E. Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1951, pp. 43. \$1.00.

**THE DRIFT OF WESTERN THOUGHT**, by Carl F. H. Henry. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1951, pp. 164. \$2.50.

**10,000 BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATIONS**, by Charles E. Little. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E. Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1951, pp. 636. \$4.95.

**WHAT IS BOUND TO HAPPEN**, by William J. McKnight. Meador Publishing Co., Boston, Mass. 1951, pp. 317. \$3.00.

## *Blue Banner Question Box*

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

### Question:

Does 2 Cor. 5:10 ("For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad") mean that the whole earthly life of a Christian is to pass in review at the Judgment? Or if sins have been repented of, are they exempt from review at the judgment seat of Christ?

### Answer:

The following is quoted from A. A. Hodge, "Outlines of Theology", 1949 edition, page 575:

"Whether the sins of the saints will be brought forward at the judgment is a question not settled by the Scriptures, though debated by theologians. If they should be, we are sure it will be done only with the design and effect of enhancing the glory of the Saviour and the comfort of the saved."

It is clear from the Bible that the believer cannot come into any CONDEMNATORY judgment (Rom. 8:1). But it is certainly possible that the sins of Christian believers will "pass in review" with reference to the believers' REWARD — not with reference to salvation, or eternal life, but with reference to their reward. It is also clear from the Bible (Matt. 13:30, 40-43, 49; 25:14-23, 34-40, 46) that Christians must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, as 2 Cor. 5:10 also certainly teaches. But with regard to the specific question raised concerning the sins of justified persons in relation to the Judgment, since the Scriptures do not reveal clearly the answer to

this question, we are not warranted in speaking dogmatically upon it. — J. G. Vos

### Question:

What is the position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church with regard to serving on juries?

### Answer:

At one time the Reformed Presbyterian or Covenanter Church prohibited this absolutely. However there has been a modification of this position as it has become clear that jury service, in some cases at least, does not involve an oath to the U. S. Constitution, or incorporation with the political body. It is a civil function, similar to paying taxes, serving in the armed forces, etc.

The Minutes of Synod, 1949, page 95, state as follows (Report of Committee on Discipline, adopted by the Synod):

"Paper Number Nine from Kansas Presbytery pertains to jury duty. It asks Synod to approve jury service where no oath is involved and where God's law is not contravened.

"It is the opinion of your committee that the action of Kansas Presbytery should be approved. It seems to us that jury duty is not a political office but a civil service in the interests of 'public order and justice'. Synod has approved the use of the 'explanatory declaration' in situations that are civil and military rather than political in their nature. The oaths required of jurymen in the State of Kansas require simply that a true verdict be rendered in that particular case at issue according to the 'law and the evidence'. In any case in which the juror is required to render a decision that would contravene the law of God a Covenanter must refuse to serve."

The above decision of the Synod obviously sets a precedent concerning jury service, approving of such service in cases where the conditions are the same as in Kansas, that is, where no oath to a Christless constitution is required.

— J. G. Vos

**Question:**

In "Blue Banner Faith and Life", Oct.-Dec. 1949, page 187, you explain "free agency" to mean that man can act freely "according to his own nature". I assume that he cannot act **out of accord** with his own nature. On the same page you say that before the Fall "man's nature was good and he was free to do good" in accordance with his nature. But you go on to say that man sinned. Was he not acting out of accord with his good nature?

**Answer:**

The statement concerning free agency to which this query refers was intended to guard against the popular Arminian notion of "free will" which regards THE WILL as unconditioned by the person's character; that is, as absolutely free and unmotivated. Many people speak of "free will" as if the sinner, in his spiritually dead condition, could make up his mind to love God and righteousness — as if a totally depraved individual could, by a "decision" or act of the will, originate a love for God in himself. This, of course, not only is psychologically unrealistic, but theologically unsound.

As for the origin of sin in Adam and Eve, it remains a mystery no matter what view of free will or free agency may be held. As the Shorter Catechism rightly affirms, man was created "in knowledge, righteousness and holiness" — there was no evil in his nature. Yet we know that, as a matter of fact, man fell into sin. To state that this fall was in consequence of Satan's temptation does not explain it psychologically; the mystery remains. What was there in Adam and Eve, who were created good and holy, to which Satan could successfully appeal?

This problem is discussed in A. A. Hodge, "Outlines of Theology", Chapter XVIII, Section 16, (Eerdmans 1949 Edition, pp. 321-2), "How could sin originate in the will of a creature created with a positively holy disposition?" See also Louis Berkhof, "Systematic Theology", Eerdmans one-volume edition, 1949, page 224, Section 3; A. H. Strong, "Systematic Theology", one-volume edition, 1912, pp. 585-8; Charles Hodge, "Systematic Theology", Vol. II, pp. 99-102.

Certainly orthodox Reformed theology teaches that Adam had a morally good nature when created (Westminster Confession of Faith, IV.2), and also that Adam fell from this original righteousness (same, VI.2). Clearly, then, Adam's first sin was an act out of accord with his good

nature. Precisely, it was that act by which his originally good nature became bad. How this could take place involves, of course, a theological problem ("How could a good God permit evil to originate?") and also a psychological problem ("How could evil originate in a being created positively good?").

Both of these problems remain profound mysteries. Any attempt to remove them by rationalization will only land us in far worse difficulties. We know the facts, namely: 1. God is good and cannot be the author of sin. 2. Nothing can happen except by God's providence. 3. Man was created with a nature morally good. 4. Man fell into sin by disobeying a command of God, his nature thereafter being morally bad.

How these four Scriptural truths can be harmonized, must certainly remain mysterious and beyond the capacity of human reason. This mysterious or paradoxical character of the matter is generally recognized by orthodox Calvinistic theologians.

Of course the origin of sin IN THE UNIVERSE is an even greater mystery. In Adam's case, we can at least say that there was an occasion in that Satan tempted Eve and Eve tempted Adam. But when we ask, What ever induced Satan, a holy angel, to sin in the first place? we find no answer. To say that Satan sinned by becoming proud, or envious of God, does not solve the problem; that only tells what kind of sin Satan committed, not how he, while holy, came to commit it. What could cause sin to originate in a being created holy, when there was no external source of temptation or contagion? We do not know.

A similar problem arises in connection with the temptation of Jesus. As we know, our Lord was sinless. Yet He was truly tempted. How could the temptation be real, when there was no sin in His nature to which the tempter could appeal? The present writer knows of no really satisfying answer to this problem. We can only take what the Scripture tells us in simple, child-like faith, and leave the insoluble problems and mysteries to the Lord our God, to whom the secret things belong.

— J. G. Vos

**Question:**

Is it right to pray that all heathen will be saved?

**Answer:**

First, we have no right to pray that ANY heathen will be saved unless we are doing all in our power to bring to them the means of salvation. We should both pray and labor for the salvation of the heathen, including the millions of heathen living in so-called Christian lands.

But when the question is raised, whether it

is right to pray that every individual heathen will be saved, it must be replied that there is no text promise in the Bible that warrants this. In prayer we are to be guided by the will of God, as revealed in the Bible, and to pray for things that are according to His will.

The Bible certainly does not teach that every individual is to be saved. That is the doctrine of Universalism, but it is not Biblical. God has from all eternity elected SOME to everlasting life and has passed by others, who are thus doomed, on account of their sins, to everlasting death. We have no right to pray for those whom God has not elected to save, as is shown by 1 John 5:16.

If we knew who the elect are and who the non-elect are, it would of course be a very simple matter for us to pray for the elect and to pass by the non-elect, as God has done. But inasmuch as we do not know who the elect and the non-elect are, we should pray for all in general, but not for all individually.

Of course we know of real believers that they are elect; and it may be possible to know of certain persons, who have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, that they are non-elect persons; but of the great mass of sinners in this world, only God knows which ones are elected to eternal life and which are not. And God has not revealed this information to man. We can

each of us make our calling and election sure, that is, make ourselves sure of our calling and election. But we cannot be sure about others until they are actually saved.

Therefore we should pray for the unsaved in general, but we have no warrant in God's Word to pray for any and every individual sinner and expect that by our much praying each and every one will surely be saved. Even Christ, our great Example in prayer, did not pray for all. He made a distinction between "the world" and "those chosen out of the world", as shown in His great mediatorial prayer in John chapter 17. He prayed not for the world, but for those chosen out of the world by the Father and given to Him (the Son) that they might have eternal life. The world is in sin; the elect become the children of God. God, for His own reasons, has not ordained that all shall be saved. Should we be more righteous than God, and say, "God wills that certain individuals shall be saved, but His decree is too narrow; our desire is that every individual human being shall be saved" —? The history of Judas brings out clearly the doctrine of preterition (that is, passing by, or non-election). Judas died and went "to his own place" (hell). Christ said it would have been better for him if he had never been born. And yet there can be no doubt that God, who is Almighty, could have saved Judas, if He had chosen to do so. His judgments are a great deep.

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**“Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and to Him alone; not to angels, saints, or any other creature: and since the fall, not without a Mediator; nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone.”**

**The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXI.2**

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## *From the Introduction to "Lays of the Kirk and Covenant"*

By Harriet Stuart Menteth

"Till doomsday shall come, they shall never see the Kirk of Scotland and our Covenant burnt to ashes; or, if it should be thrown in the fire, yet it cannot be so burnt or buried as not to have a resurrection". — Samuel Rutherford.

Scotland! hallowed in thy story,  
 Who would trace thine annals right,  
 One peculiar page of glory,  
 Ever brightens on his sight!  
 Not the honors, far descended,  
 Of thine ancient hero kings;  
 Not thy bulwarks, blood defended —  
 These are but thy meaner things!  
 True, the pulse exulting flutters;  
 True, our souls within us burn,  
 Trumpet names as Freedom utters,  
 Wallace, Bruce, and Bannockburn!  
 But a holier joy subdues us,  
 Tracing, while our heartstrings thrill,  
 How the Saviour deigned to choose us,  
 In His cause to suffer still!  
 Honored be the patriot story!  
 Well may Scottish hearts beat high!  
 Yet a far-excelling glory  
 Glads the heaven-anointed eye —  
 Heritage unbought, unpriced,  
 Rich in the reproach of Christ!

Ah! the eye is sick with seeing;  
 Ah! the heart is faint with fear.  
 Clouds athwart the horizon fleeing,  
 Harbingers of tempest near!  
 God hath laid to sleep His chosen;  
 Who the mighty shall withstand?  
 And the tide of faith seems frozen  
 In the winter of the land!  
 For a space it darkens, darkens,  
 Hope and promise in the tomb!  
 But the Lord looks down, and hearkens:  
 Sobs of prayer amid the gloom!  
 "Nay, my people — not forsaken,  
 Though afflicted sore thou art.  
 Of my strength thy hold is taken;  
 Thy fresh springs are in my heart!  
 From the deep vault of the prison;  
 From the lone isle of the sea;  
 From thy banished ones hath risen  
 An accepted voice to me!  
 Chosen in affliction's waters,  
 Chosen 'neath the oppressor's rod,  
 I have sealed thy sons and daughters  
 In a covenant with God!

Pass thou on, a sign and wonder,  
 As my nation was of yore;  
 In the secret place of thunder  
 I have laid thy help in store!  
 Quit thy hold of earthly favor;  
 Touch not the accursed thing!  
 Monarchs must abhor thy savor  
 While they set at naught thy King!  
 Part not — halve not thine allegiance,  
 Till I come to claim mine own;  
 In the woe of thine obedience  
 Bear my Cross and guard my Crown,  
 All its thorns in thy true sight,  
 Transfigured into beams of light!"

Thus, a witness to the Churches  
 Scotland's Church hath ever been—  
 Carnal men, with vain researches,  
 Musing what the sign may mean!  
 Like her Master, poor and lowly,  
 Seeking naught of price below,  
 All she claims, with freedom holy,  
 Still about His work to go;  
 Coveting nor wealth nor station;  
 Terrible to naught but sin;  
 Mean in outward estimation,  
 She is glorious within!  
 Trace her unmolested going;  
 Caesar finds observance meet;  
 Living waters round her flowing,  
 Oh, how beautiful her feet!  
 Hope, o'er those broad waters gliding,  
 Fast pursues the waning night,  
 And the home of her abiding  
 Gathers still and radiates light!  
 Strange! that in her pathway ever  
 Strifes and oppositions spring;  
 Nay! she sows beside the river,  
 And her shout is of a King!  
 Since from Herod's couch the slumber  
 Parted at the wise men's word,  
 Kings and rulers without number  
 Band themselves against the Lord!  
 Tolls a death-knell through their riot;  
 Shakes a terror 'neath their scorn;  
 And they seek, in vain disquiet,  
 For the Babe in Bethlehem born!

(Continued on back cover)

# *The Visible Church*

## *Its Nature, Unity and Witness*

By J. G. Vos

(Continued from last issue)

**Note:** This article is reprinted by permission from *The Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. IX, No. 2 (May, 1947).

### II. THE UNITY OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH

The visible Church being a divine institution, the question of its unity cannot be an unimportant one. Nor is it an easy problem to solve, for besides the distinction between the invisible and the visible Church, that between the visible Church as an organism and the visible Church as an institution must be kept in mind. Obviously the modern "church union" movement greatly over-simplifies the problem. An instance of the superficiality with which it is often faced is the frequent quotation of I Corinthians 1:10 ff. as if this passage were a direct condemnation of denominationalism. Now it is perfectly clear that the four parties mentioned by Paul in verse 12 were not competing denominations, but rival factions within one and the same congregation, "the church of God which is at Corinth" (verse 2). Factions such as the apostle condemns may occur in any Church, and have occurred even within the supposed uniformity of the Church of Rome. This passage has no doubt an indirect bearing on the question of denominationalism, especially by reason of its insistence upon the Christian duty of cultivating unanimity (verse 10), but it does not prove that for which it is often cited, namely, that denominational divisions can never be legitimate.

It is very common to cite such Scriptures as our Lord's petition in John 17:21 ("That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.") and assume without proof that such texts are directly applicable to the visible Church as an institution, and that every separate denominational organization must therefore be inherently wrong, and ought to be abandoned as soon as possible in the interest of obedience to the requirement of unity involved in such texts of Scripture.

What John 17:21 and similar Scriptures really require is not necessarily **organic union** of the visible Church as an institution, but rather **unity** of the visible Church as an organism in this world. The rhetorical question of Amos, (Amos 3:3.) "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" implies a negative answer, and certainly any form of Church union which is not found

ed on true unity is without value and moreover is no real fulfilment of the ideal set forth in our Lord's petition. He prayed that his people might all be one with a mutual unity similar in some way to his own reciprocal unity with the Father. He prayed also that his people might be one in himself and the Father. While the ontological unity of the Son with the Father is of course unique and cannot be fully paralleled by any unity among Christians, still it is clear that our Lord's prayer requires something quite different from, and much more than, a mere indiscriminate union of professing Christians, of various divergent shades of belief, in one organization. Certainly what is required first of all is a true unity of doctrinal conviction; not a mere walking together, but a real state of being agreed; and in the second place this condition of unity must have its root and strength in the relationship of Christian people to God the Father and God the Son. There can be no real and worthy horizontal unity which is not itself the product and expression of a real vertical unity — a unity with the Triune God on the basis of the self-revelation of God given in the Scriptures.

It is clear that the current church union movement, despite its many pious phrases and its apparent moral indignation against the alleged evils of denominational divisions, falls far short of embodying the Scriptural ideal of Christian unity. The modern church movement must be adjudged to be far less holy than it seems and claims to be. In reality it is not the product of an ardent desire for obedience to Christ and conformity to his revealed will. On the contrary, it is the offspring of widespread religious skepticism and general depreciation of the importance of doctrinal truth. A well-educated layman recently told the writer that he had been successively a Presbyterian and a Methodist, each for a period of years, yet he did not know the doctrinal difference between the two. This may illustrate the state of affairs which seems to be prevalent in contemporary American Protestantism. It is from such soil that the current urgent demand for organic union has sprung. If people who have been members of a denomination for years do not know wherein it differs from other denominations, of course they will see no reason why immediate union should not take place. We face today a situation in which the ordinary denominational labels have largely become meaningless, because of the general abandonment of doc-

trine: not merely this doctrine or that doctrine, but the abandonment of doctrine as such. This is extremely serious, for it means that the product of the current church union movement, in so far as it attains its objective, will not be a compromise between the distinctive tenets of various denominations, nor even a setting-forth of a minimal substratum of evangelical Christianity which may be supposed to be common to them all, but rather the ecclesiastical expression of a spineless non-doctrinal religion which will be called, but will not really be, Christianity. The real issue is not Presbyterianism *versus* Episcopalianism, nor Lutheranism *versus* Methodism; it is historic Christianity *versus* a vague, non-doctrinal religion which can only be labelled pseudo-Christianity, a religion which at bottom can only be pure humanism. The non-doctrinal and even anti-doctrinal tendency of the modern church union movement was clearly seen by Dr. B. B. Warfield more than half a century ago when he wrote:

“What is ominous in the present-day drift of religious thought is the sustained effort that is being made to break down just these two principles: the principle of a systematized body of doctrines as the matter to be believed, and the principle of an external authority as the basis of belief. What arrogates to itself the title of ‘the newer religious thinking’ sets itself, before everything else, in violent opposition to what it calls ‘dogma’ and ‘external authority.’ The end may be very readily foreseen. Indefinite subjectivism or subjective indifference has no future. It is not only in its very nature a disintegrating, but also a destructive, force. It can throw up no barrier against unbelief. Its very business is to break down barriers. And when that work is accomplished the floods come in.

“The assault on positive doctrinal teaching is presented today chiefly under the flag of ‘comprehension.’ Men bewail the divisions of the Church of Christ, and propose that we shall stop thinking, so that we may no longer think differently. This is the true account to give of many of the phases of the modern movement for ‘church union.’ Men are tired of thinking. They are tired of defending the truth. Let us all stop thinking, stop believing, they cry, and what a happy family we shall be! (B. B. Warfield: *Studies in Theology*, pp. 587 f.)

Having decided that the modern church union movement is in essence really anti-Christian because it is anti-doctrinal, shall we also affirm that union of the visible Church as an institution is not a valid ideal, and need not be sought even as an ultimate objective? By no means. That the current church union agitation is subversive of real Christianity does not imply that there cannot be a legitimate and worthy church union movement. Certainly the Scriptural emphasis on un-

ity of the visible Church as an organism implies the validity, as an ultimate objective, of the ideal of union of the visible Church as an institution. Certainly very few Christians would venture to defend denominationalism as good in itself. It may be inevitable; it may be a necessary evil under existing conditions; it is certainly far less of an evil than would be an indiscriminate organic union of denominations on a vague, non-doctrinal basis; but after all, it is an evil; it is not inherently good.

By denominationalism is not meant all co-existence in the world of distinct ecclesiastical bodies each possessing autonomy subject only to God and his Word. Two communions may be organically separate because of geographical, linguistic or other reasons, and yet be of identical faith. Such are not really different denominations. They are in no sense rivals the one of the other. Rather they are one in all respects except their actual external organization. Real denominationalism, on the other hand, exists where of two or more bodies occupying, in whole or in part, the same territory and seeking to present their message to the same public, each claims to be more faithful to the Scriptural pattern than the others, and therefore competes, more or less, against the others. On the other hand, various examples could be cited of true “sister Churches”, of identical or virtually identical faith, each of which is nevertheless ecclesiastically fully autonomous. Such co-existence of separate communions is not to be regarded as something evil; rather it is in itself morally indifferent, and in view of actual conditions in the world, may be quite proper and necessary for adequately carrying out the functions of the Church.

Denominationalism properly so-called, however, must always be regarded as an evil. It is only because of the fact of sin that error exists, and it is only because of the fact of error that real denominationalism exists. Where two denominations hold mutually contradictory doctrines, clearly at least one of them — perhaps both of them — must have deviated from the path of truth. Because error is *sinful in itself*, we must hold that the denominationalism which results from error is something evil. The modern church union movement sheds many tears over the “shameful divisions” which exist among Christians, but it never sheds any tears over the sinful error which must lie at the basis of these divisions. It is perhaps characteristic of Liberalism to be more concerned about the consequences of sin than about the sin itself. But as Christians we should be much more concerned about the sin itself than about the consequences of the sin. The really deplorable thing in denominationalism is not so much the external divisions as the sinful, even though sincere, adherence to error which has produced and perpetuated the di-

visions. This is what most needs to be repented of.

It follows that there can be no real remedy for denominationalism without facing the fact of error and dealing with it. Any program of Church union which starts out by assuming that opposing views are inherently equally valid and equally true is doomed to failure so far as really remedying the trouble is concerned. The prevalent skepticism concerning the existence of absolute truth tends to result in regarding the creed of a denomination as possessing only a relative value as the tradition or preference of that denomination, instead of its being regarded as that denomination's understanding of the absolute truth given in the divine special revelation. It is quite true of course that absolute and final authority may not be claimed for any creed or confession; only the Scriptures constitute the absolute and final authority for faith and life, and the creed of a denomination has at best the value of a limiting concept or landmark of progress already made in understanding the Scriptures. Thus no creed may ever be regarded as complete and final, that is, not subject to future revision or additions as more light is gained from the Scriptures. But thus to recognize that no creed can be absolute, complete and final, is something quite different from the attitude toward creeds which modern skepticism has produced. That attitude is begotten of the notion that truth itself cannot be absolute and permanent, but changes with the times. Thus there are those who say that the Westminster Confession was an excellent expression of Christianity for the seventeenth century, but is not suitable for the twentieth century, because today men think in other categories than those of the seventeenth century. For our own day, it is said, there must be a new construction of Christianity in terms of modern thinking. Now those who think thus of the creeds which form their denominational heritage will of course not venture far in defending those creeds, nor will they be inclined to insist upon the doctrines formulated in them. Rather the tendency will be to regard the creeds as pieces of antique furniture, not indeed without interest and importance, but hardly relevant to the issues of the present day. If two denominations are negotiating a merger, where this attitude toward creeds prevails, even flatly contradictory propositions in their respective creeds will not prove a real barrier to union. Creeds which are not held to be landmarks of attainment in the grasp of absolute, unchanging truth, can easily be treated as material for bargaining and compromise, or even be relegated to the museum of curious antiques as possessing a historical interest only.

Wherever this perverse skeptical attitude toward creeds prevails there can only be failure to provide any real remedy for the evil of denom-

inationalism. For this attitude of indifferentism fails to face the fact of error and take it seriously. Any real remedy must start out with the recognition of the supreme, absolute and permanent authority of the Scriptures, and with the assumption that the creed of one's own denomination, as far as it goes, is a faithful formulation of the teaching of the Scriptures. It must then be recognized that various denominations have creeds which, in some points at least, are mutually contradictory. The fact must then be faced that where two creeds are contradictory, at least one of them must be in error. Although every denomination must necessarily start by assuming that its own creed is true, and must therefore also necessarily start by assuming that the other denomination's creed, in the contradictory points, is false, still these assumptions must be regarded as provisional only. That is to say, if there is to be any real progress in providing a remedy for denominationalism, all parties must recognize that, after all, only Scripture is the absolute and final authority; no party may claim infallibility over against other parties; no party can absolutely rule out the possibility that it is in error and the opposing party is holding the truth on a particular matter. Otherwise even discussion of contradictory points would be impossible; there can be no real discussion where each party insists that its own rightness, and the other party's wrongness, are matters beyond dispute. To take such an attitude would be to assume that which, for a real remedy of denominationalism, requires proof, namely the actual Scriptural character of doctrines which one or another party alleges to be Scriptural.

Even where the above-mentioned presuppositions of a remedy for denominationalism exist, it is obvious that any real progress in this matter will require a great deal of effort, much patience and a high degree of Christian humility on the part of the denominations concerned. The temper of our times is against it. The Westminster Assembly of Divines, representing all parties of English Protestantism except the high episcopacy of Archbishop Laud, sat for about seven years, during which time 1163 sessions were held. Ample time was taken for the unhurried and thorough investigation and discussion of the matters under consideration. There was a patient and painstaking effort to ascertain the real sense of the Scriptures on these matters. No doubt the Assembly's work, for industry, patience, thoroughness and whole-hearted devotion to the Word of God, has never since been paralleled. There seems little reason to suppose that any present-day assembly called to attempt to resolve denominational divisions would equal or even approach it. The hurried sessions of synods and assemblies of the present day, with their ready-made dockets and pressure of business and inevitable struggle to finish their work by a fixed closing date, afford but an unfavorable climate

for the calm, deliberate investigation and discussion of doctrinal matters which is so urgently needed today. Mutual agreement among the people of God in their confession of the truths of his Word is a plant that cannot be forced; it must grow slowly, even in the most favorable soil. The impatient, pragmatic temper of the twentieth century is too much in evidence, even in the most orthodox denominations, to permit sanguine expectation of any early or marked progress toward a real elimination of denominational divisions. Not that such an elimination of divisions should be regarded as impossible, in whole or in part; it is only that the Churches do not value truth

highly enough to make the necessary efforts and sacrifices. No doubt most Church members of today would regard a contemporary Westminster Assembly of Divines, called to meet for seven years and hold over a thousand sessions in the pursuit of mutual agreement on doctrinal truth, as a waste of time and money which ought to be devoted to more "practical" ends. But we may rest assured that there is no short-cut to the desirable goal. There can be no real progress toward Church union on a truly Scriptural basis without the payment of a heavy price by the parties involved. Comparatively few would be willing to pay that price.

(To be continued)

## *The Scottish Covenanters*

### THEIR ORIGINS, HISTORY AND DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES

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

#### PART III

#### THE DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES OF THE COVENANTERS

#### CHAPTER I

#### THE CONTINUING OBLIGATION OF THE SCOTTISH COVENANTS

### 3. Do the Covenants Purport to be Perpetually Binding?

The National Covenant as subscribed in 1580 and 1581 technically binds only the actual subscribers: "We all and every one of us under-written, protest . . . that we shall continue in the obedience of the doctrine and discipline of this kirk, and shall defend the same, according to our vocation and power, all the days of our lives. . .". The National Covenant as renewed in 1638 contained the following statement: "And finally, being convinced in our minds, and confessing with our mouths, that the present and succeeding generations in this land are bound to keep the fore-said national oath and subscription inviolable . . . we . . . do hereby profess", etc. This shows that the National Covenant of 1638 purported to be inviolable and perpetually binding on the nation to all generations.

The Solemn League and Covenant purports to bind only the actual subscribers: "We Noblemen, Barons, Knights, Gentlemen, Citizens, Burgesses, Ministers of the Gospel, and Commons of all sorts . . . all subscribe, and each one of us for himself, with our hands lifted up to the most High GOD, do swear", etc. Article I, however, contains a statement which shows that the Solemn League and Covenant was intended to be a permanent and not merely a temporary arrangement: "that we, and our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us". Article V binds the swearers to endeavor that the three

kingdoms "may remain conjoined in a firm peace and union to all posterity" which indicates that the religious oath sworn was intended to be perpetually binding upon the three kingdoms.

### 4. The Perpetual Obligation of the Covenants as held by the Early Covenanters.

Samuel Rutherford held that "to pass in silence over the sworn Covenant" was no less than a denial of Christianity itself. The Marquis of Argyle, in his speech on the scaffold in 1661, spoke thus: "But whatever they (Gallios) think, God hath laid engagements upon Scotland: we are tied by Covenant to religion and Reformation. Those that were then unborn are engaged to it, and in our baptism we are engaged to it, and it passes the power of any under heaven to absolve a man from the oath of God; they deceive themselves, and it may be will deceive others that think otherwise". A few days later James Guthrie was hanged, and in his speech on the scaffold he stated that no person or power on earth could loose or dispense the Covenants, that they were still binding on the three kingdoms, and would be forever hereafter. His last words were: "The Covenants, the Covenants, shall yet be Scotland's reviving".

A sermon preached in 1663 by John Guthrie, minister at Tarbolton, sets forth with great fullness the arguments then in use by the Covenanters to prove the perpetual obligation of the Covenants. His text was Ezekiel 17:19, and his theme was the indissoluble tie of the Covenant: "And lest any of you, who sometimes have heard us

press the oath of the covenant in these lands, should now-a-days think it alterable, and look upon it as a thing to be dispensed with, we are, through God's strength, from Scripture, to make out the indissoluble tie of the Covenant". The text presupposes, but does not explicitly state, says Guthrie, that "every oath and covenant of God, is a thing inviolable, that is, may not and cannot be broken". He continues that he is not speaking of the covenant of works, nor of the covenant of grace, either in its old or new dispensation, because these covenants were devised by God. "But we take the covenants in this place, to be of men's duties in the land; and for keeping them the better, we take an oath upon us in things that are neither morally evil nor good but indifferent. But a man once engaged by oath cannot retract. Though they be not commanded duties, yet once entered into, they must stand, for when we open our mouths to the Lord we cannot go back". He continues, three things are necessary to an oath or covenant of God. 1. It must be a thing in itself lawful. 2. It must be a thing in itself possible, within man's power. 3. It must be taken in the name of the Lord. He next cites Scripture proofs to show that an oath is binding; then, that the inviolableness of an oath is "founded upon the law of nature and nations"; then he cites Scripture to show that God is pleased by the man who swears to his own hurt, and changes not; next, that when people have taken a lawful covenant upon them and broken it, "God will appear eminently in sending plagues upon them". Several Scripture passages are cited to prove this: Joshua 9, 2 Samuel 21, Jeremiah 34, and the text of the sermon. Then he speaks against the idea that a Pope can dissolve the obligation of a covenant, oath or treaty, and then proceeds to "uses", of which he lists three, the sum of which is that covenant breaking is sin and will be punished by God. Finally, he takes up "some things which folk may have for excusing themselves about the Solemn League and Covenant; and for undestanding of them, consider, the Parliament of Scotland, England, and Ireland, entered into a covenant for maintaining the word of God and the purity thereof, and putting away profanity; and engaged themselves against schism, heresy, error, Popery and Prelacy. And there was an oath of God taken for this end upon us, and our King took it at his coronation. This oath again is broken by our King and Parliament, and is depised, for which, according to the word of God, wrath will be upon the heads of those that have broken it, if God do not mercifully prevent it". "Now, there are many that have many excuses and many objections about this Solemn League and Covenant. I shall, therefore, speak to some of them, and I take you to record this day, I pretend not to preach rebellion against King or Parliament, but according to the word of God; and if it be rebellion, we must take our hazard of it". Following

this eleven objections against the Solemn League and Covenant are taken up and answered one by one, as follows:

1. We are not bound by an oath or covenant which is not lawful, but the Solemn League and Covenant was unlawful, because it lacked the consent of the King, i.e., since it was made by the Parliaments; Numbers 30:3-5 proves that the King could disallow the Covenant. Guthrie replies, that the King is a civil parent, not a natural one, and therefore the text is irrelevant; Numbers 30:2 shows that a man's vows or a widow's must stand, being once made; God makes no exception but that of a woman in her father's house or subject to her husband; this is the only exception allowed by Scripture, therefore the Covenant must stand; even if the King did not take the Covenant when it was made, the authority of Parliament was sufficient to make it lawful. The King afterwards subscribed the Covenant, therefore it must stand.

2. The King did take the Covenant, it is admitted, but he may break it, because he took it not freely, but was forced to do so. To this Guthrie replies, that no one would have ventured at the time to say that the King was forced to it. But even if he was forced to take it, it is still binding; even though the act was not spontaneous, it was none the less voluntary. Zedekiah was a captive of the king of Babylon, and so was forced to make a covenant with the king of Babylon; when later he broke the oath, God's vengeance came upon him for it.

3. The Solemn League and Covenant must be broken, because we are not bound to keep with them that broke to us first; but England first broke the Covenant, therefore Scotland is released from the bond. Guthrie replies that those who make this objection must have never read the Covenant itself. It is not a bargain between three parties on earth, the one whereof breaking, the other is free. "But these three lands are one party, and the God of heaven is the other party; therefore, though England should break, should Scotland also break the Covenant? It is not after this tenor:—We will endeavour reformation in these lands, but if you break, we will break also. No; it is each man swearing for himself that he shall, in his place and station, endeavour reformation, so that if it were all left to one man, he must endeavour reformation. For, consider the last words of the article. Each of them for himself did lift up his hands to the Most High; and so these three lands are one party, and the other party is the God of heaven. . . ."

4. "We swear in the League and Covenant to that which is impossible, and therefore it cannot be kept". Guthrie replies that this objection assumes that Scotland is sworn to reform England, or that England is sworn to reform Scotland,

which is impossible, etc. But this is not the obligation of the Covenant. It does not bind the swearers to accomplish the reformation of England, "but that which is sworn is this: they are each to endeavour in their places and callings, the Reformation of religion in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government in these lands, and to reform England, according to the word of God, and the best reformed Churches". This would have been a binding obligation even if no covenant had been sworn; the objection proceeds not from principle but from malice against the word of God. "If the king and parliament were studying to reform, as much as they are studying to deface and deform, there should be no need of this objection".

5. The Covenant was too rashly entered into, and therefore is not binding. To this Guthrie gives three replies. First, it was not indeliberate, but the result of a long development. Second, it was deliberated more than many oaths in Scripture, which are acknowledged by all parties to have been binding. Third, even Joshua's covenant with the Gibeonites was binding and could not be broken, though rashly entered into without taking counsel with the Lord; the Solemn League and Covenant was entered into after much seeking of the Lord's mind, therefore is still more binding.

6. "The Covenant cannot be binding, because the parties dealt craftily with us". Guthrie replies: first, England is not the party covenanted with; the three lands together are the one party, and God the other party with whom they covenanted; second, Joshua chapter 9 shows this objection to be without weight; the Gibeonites used craft, and seduced Joshua and the princes, yet the covenant was binding.

7. The terms of the Covenant are so general that it cannot be regarded as binding; it is an oath to endeavour the reformation of England according to the best reformed Churches, but these are not specified by name, therefore it cannot stand. Guthrie replies, first, that if any one wants a more particular rule than the word of God for reformation, he must go to another land to seek another Gospel from Jews or Turks; and if so, then Scotland has no standard at all. Second, by comparing one part of the Covenant with another, the matter becomes quite plain. The reformation proposed must not be Popery, nor Prelacy, for these are rejected by it; this leaves only Independency and Presbytery, "and, at that time, Independency was to be brought to Presbytery," therefore it was to be a Presbyterian reformation.

8. "Supposing the Covenant binds the land, yet it binds none but those that took it". To this objection Guthrie replies: "Now I perceive there are many of you young and ranting blades, that

think yourselves happy youths because ye never took the covenant. But I have a word to speak to such from the Scriptures, and therefore take it with you: Wherever a king and the princes of a land take a covenant the rest of the land are bound to it, as you may see in that covenant with the Gibeonites. The people there did not swear, yea, they murmured against the oath; but though the people did not swear, yet the princes say, 'We have sworn unto the Lord, we cannot touch them'. Therefore do not beguile yourselves. Ye stand as surely engaged to it as I or he who did subscribe it with our hands, therefore the breach of it shall be required at your hands, be you young or old, men or women; and remember 'The children of Israel did not smite them, because the princes had sworn the oath'. Might not the people have said, 'Let them keep it, who did swear it'? But it is not so; for they say, 'We have all sworn it, therefore we must not touch them'".

9. "Suppose it binds this generation, yet it cannot bind our posterity". Guthrie answers: "This same generation that did swear it hath broken it, and I fear the same generation shall be punished for it. The covenant did directly bind all generations, — 'that our children after us be found walking in faith and love, that the Lord may dwell among us'. These are the very words of the covenant. For what end were these words put in? Was it not to bind our posterity, and to keep uniformity and unity, and to bind them to the word of God? But you will say, 'There is no mention of the posterity of Israel, when the people of Israel made that covenant with the Gibeonites, neither was there mention made of the Gibeonites' posterity; yet you may see the covenant binding on their posterity (Josh. ix.; 2 Sam. xxi.). So, then, you must understand that the covenant is absolute; therefore I conclude, that as sure as sun and moon endure in the firmament, if there be any generation in these three lands, God will require the breach of His covenant at their hands, and His vengeance shall be upon them, if they repent not".

10. "The King and Estates of the land found hurt in keeping it". Guthrie answers: "Ay, but 'He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not'".

11. "There will be eminent advantages by the breaking of it, ergo". Guthrie replies: there could be no advantage to the three lands comparable to the advantage of the Solemn League. There would have been eminent advantages in breaking the covenant with the Gibeonites, but God did not allow the people to do so. So in the case of Zedekiah's covenant with the king of Babylon; it was all to his advantage to break it, but it was wrong.

(To be continued)

## Calvin's Doctrine of Church and State

By the Rev. J. Ren Patterson

The problem of the relationship between the Church and the State is no new problem. It is as old as the Church itself. In fact, elements of the problem can be traced back as far as human history goes. Jesus was confronted with the problem when men in their craftiness, came unto Him and asked, "Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?" The classic answer given on the occasion was this: "Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it?" And when they answered "Caesar's", He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's."

Now the problem of the relationship between the Church and the State through history has been this. We have over against each other two autonomies neither of which feels that it can exist if there is another autonomy over against it. The State, in order to be strong, must have everything under control. The Church, in order to be true to God, must have everything under control. The problem is how these two autonomies may get along together, each having freedom to operate within its own sphere. The solution, as we shall find from Calvin, is to give them each the true measure of their freedom, and that the State protect the freedom of the Church, and the Church instruct the State, until the problem finally disappears because the kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Calvin discusses the nature and function of civil government and the relation between civil government and the Church at considerable length in the last chapter of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Here he expresses himself with the ability and wisdom of a true statesman, and with conviction and understanding of a true churchman and student of the Word.

Dr. Loraine Boettner says that "Calvin was the first of the Reformers to demand complete separation of Church and State, and thus he advanced another principle which has been of inestimable value. The German Reformation was decided by the will of princes; the Swiss Reformation by the will of the people; although in each case there was a sympathy between the rulers and the majority of the population. The Swiss Reformers, however, living in the republic at Geneva, developed a free Church in a free State, while Luther and Melancthon with their native reverence for monarchical institutions and the German Empire, taught obedience in politics and brought the Church under bondage to civil authority" (*The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*).

It must not be assumed that Calvin in any way opposed the operation of civil authority. He

emphasized the fact that the liberty of Christ does not remove the necessity for civil government, and made clear his position that the spiritual kingdom of Christ and civil government are things very different and remote from each other.

He holds that the Church is consistent with all forms of government and social conditions, even with civil servitude. "It is of no importance, what is our condition among men, or under the laws of what nation we live, as the kingdom of Christ consists not in these things."

There never comes to be such perfection in the Church as to do away with the necessity for civil government. Some kind of government is always necessary. It is far more excellent, since it protects life and property, maintains law and order and enables men to live together peaceably, and to pursue their several avocations.

The function of civil government is not only to secure the accommodations arising from the things mentioned above, that men may breathe, eat, drink, and be sustained in life; its objects also are, that idolatry, sacrileges against the name of God, blasphemies against the truth, and other offences against religion may not openly appear and be disseminated among the people; that every person may enjoy his property without molestation; that men may transact their business together without fraud or injustice; that integrity and modesty may be a public form of religion among Christians, and that humanity may be maintained among men. By this Calvin does not mean that civil government is to make laws respecting religion and the worship of God, but that it is the duty of civil government to protect the Church, and to see to it that the true religion, which is contained in the law of God, be not violated nor polluted by public blasphemies.

Civil government is of divine origin. "There is no power but of God" (Rom. 13:1). "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice" (Prov. 8:15). The magistrates are called "gods" (Psalm 82:1,6) in a passage referred to by Christ (John 10:35) because they are invested with God's authority and act as His vicegerents. The magistrate receives his commission from God, and is called to judge, "not for man, but for God. The authority possessed by kings and other governors over all things upon earth is not a consequence of the perverseness of men, but of the providence and holy ordinance of God, who has been pleased to regulate the human affairs in that manner, for as much as He is present, and also presides among them, in making laws and in executing equitable judgments."

"There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1b). "For . . . he (the ruler) is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. 13:4). "Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same" (Rom. 13:3b). From this and many other passages quoted by Calvin he deduces that civil magistracy is a calling not only holy and legitimate, but far the most sacred and honorable in human life. Furthermore Calvin intimates that since the authority of civil government is derived from God, this same source of authority ought to be recognized and acknowledged by the State. "For when David exhorts kings and judges to kiss the Son of God (Psalm 2: 10-12) he does not command them to abdicate their authority and retire to private life, but to submit to Christ the power with which they are invested, that He alone may have the preeminence over all."

Moreover, the Church is to pray for governors and kings, Paul admonishing Timothy that in the public congregation, "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made . . . for kings, and for all that are in authority" (1 Tim. 2:1,2). The reason that is appended to this injunction is "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:2b).

This consideration, he says, ought to be continually in the mind of the magistrates themselves, for if "they remember that they are the vicegerents of God, it behoves them to watch with all care, earnestness, and diligence, that in their administration they may exhibit to men, an image, as it were of the providence, care, goodness, benevolence, and justice of God." Those who fail in this duty not only injure men, but they offend God by polluting His sacred judgments.

Regarding the various forms of government, Calvin discusses the merits and demerits of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. I had the feeling in reading this section that there was something here akin to Plato's evaluating of various forms in his *Republic*. Calvin, as has been said earlier in this article, held that all forms of government may be consistent with the Church — that all forms are compatible with Christianity and command our obedience. He regarded all forms of government as having advantages as well as disadvantages and dangers. Monarchy may easily degenerate into despotism, aristocracy into oligarchy or the faction of a few, and democracy may fall into "mobocracy" and sedition. Of the various forms of government, Calvin stated his preference for a mixture of aristocracy and democracy. Into the democratic republic of Geneva Calvin's influence infused a more aristocratic spirit. He saw a precedent for this in the government of Moses where the seventy elders were elected from among the wisest and best of the

people. Calvin felt that it is far safer to have the government in the hands of the many rather than in the hands of one or in the hands of a few. In the hands of the many they would afford each other assistance, and would restrain arrogance and ambition.

Since civil government is of divine origin, submission to it is the duty of every citizen. To resist it is to set at naught the ordinance of God. The government may be bad, but even then, we as individuals must obey and pray for it rather than rebel against it. Only in one case are we required to disobey, and that is when the civil ruler commands us to do something that is contrary to the revealed will of God, or that violates the dictates of a pure conscience. Then, "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

From this we see that Calvin was not an instigator or encourager of rebellion. He was a strong supporter of authority in the State. He neither advised nor encouraged the active resistance of the Huguenots at the beginning of the civil wars in France, although he did give a tacit consent.

The authority and duty of civil government is extended by Calvin to both tables of the Law. In a Christian society, he held that the government is under obligation to "cherish and support the external worship of God, and to preserve the true doctrine of religion, to defend the constitution of the Church, and to regulate our lives in a manner requisite for the social welfare."

This view regarding the duty of the State to undergird the Church is proved from the Old Testament, where he quotes the passage of Isaiah which predicts that kings shall be nursing fathers and queens nursing mothers to the Church (Isaiah 49:23). He refers to the examples of Moses, Joshua and the Judges, David, Josiah and Hezekiah in the part they played in this respect regarding the Old Testament Church.

This principle is always in danger of becoming abortive. Schaff states that just here is found the critical point where religious persecution by the State becomes the inevitable consequence. Offences against the Church become offences against the State, and become punishable by fines, imprisonment, exile, and even death. It was on this ground that the execution of Servetus and other heretics was justified by Calvin and other Reformers of his day. They failed to see that the principle holds only within limits, and that when it is allowed to get out of bounds it runs directly counter to the New Testament and the spirit of the Gospel.

The influence of Calvin, the theologian, was strongly felt in the affairs of state in Geneva. He did not change the fundamental institutions of the Republic, but he infused into them a Christian and disciplinary spirit, and improved the legisla-

tion. He was consulted on all important affairs of the State, and his advice was usually followed. Although he did not become a citizen of Geneva until 1559, and never appeared before the councils except when some ecclesiastical question was debated, or when his advice was asked, yet he was appointed with others in 1541 to draw up a new code of laws, to which assignment he devoted much time, giving careful attention to such matters as the administration of justice, the city police, the military, the firemen, the watchmen on the towers, and such like. However, he never became the head of the Republic except in a purely intellectual and moral sense.

In the organizing of the Reformed Church at Geneva, Calvin's legal training proved of real value to him as the founder of a new system of church polity and discipline. He considered the outward organization a matter of great importance, subordinate only to the doctrine and inner spiritual life. The outward was the body, the inner the soul of the Church.

The first principle set forth in Calvin's system of church polity was the autonomy of the Church, or its right of self-government under the sole headship of Christ. As opposed to the Roman system under the supreme control of the pope, who, as Christ's visible vicar, demands passive obedience from priests and people, Calvin vests the self-government in the Christian congregation, and regards all the ministers of the Gospel, in their official capacity, as ambassadors and representatives of Christ. He declares that "Christ alone ought to rule and reign in the Church, and to have all preeminence in it, and this government ought to be exercised and administered solely by His work; yet as He dwells not among us by a visible presence, so as to make an audible declaration of His will to us, He uses for this purpose the ministry of men whom He employs as His delegates, not to transfer His right by their lips; just as an artificer makes use of an instrument in the performance of his work."

Since self-government requires self-support, it was Calvin's intention to institute synods and make the clergy independent of State patronage. In this, however, he did not succeed. The autonomy of the Church is always curtailed, sometimes more, sometimes less, by civil government whenever the Church is dependent for financial support on the State. The Churches under Calvin's influence always maintained, at least in theory, the independence of the Church in all spiritual affairs, and the right of individual congregations in the election of their own pastors. He derives this right from the Greek verb used in the passage (Acts 14:23) which speaks of Paul and Barnabas ordaining or appointing presbyters (elders) in the churches; this Greek verb (*cheirotoneo*) means "to vote by stretching out the hand" or "to create or appoint by vote" (Thayer's *Lexicon*).

The principle of the sole headship of Christ over the Church was battled on the moors of Scotland. There the fight was first against popery, then against prelacy, and last against patronage. In this land in which we live the principle is almost universally recognized among Protestant Christians.

Calvin believed in the parity of the clergy and was opposed to a papal or prelatical hierarchy. He declared the right of the Christian laity to participate in Church government and discipline. He maintained that strict discipline was to be exercised jointly by ministers and lay-elders, with the consent of the whole congregation.

That Calvin's church polity may be styled a theocracy needs to be qualified. He believed in a principle of union of Church and State on a theocratic basis if possible, or separation if necessary, to secure the purity and self-government of the Church. He aimed at the sole rule of Christ and His work in both Church and State, but without mixture or interference. In Geneva the powers of Church and State were almost equally balanced. His fundamental idea was that God alone is Lord on earth as well as in heaven, and should rule supreme in Church and State. In this sense he was theocratic or christocratic. God uses Church and State as two distinct but co-operative arms for the upholding of Christ's kingdom. The law for both is the revealed will of God as set forth in the Scriptures. The Church gives moral support to the State, while the State gives temporal support to the Church. Calvin lived in advance of his day. He laid down the principles out of which our concept of the separation of Church and State has risen. We have no "established church" in our land. All denominations are on a basis of equality before the law, and enjoy, under the protection of the government, full liberty of self-government with the corresponding duty of self-support. The condition of modern society demands a peaceful separation of Church and State, or a Free Church in a Free State.

This is not to be interpreted as indicating, however, that the State is to be completely devoid of religion, or that the State, as such, has no obligation toward God and His law. The King and Head of the Church is also the King and Head of nations. To Him all authority has been given, both in heaven and on earth. In the words of Emil Brunner, "The state is God's ordinance, therefore its basic law is independent of the will of man. The state is God's ordinance, therefore its limitation is God's will. Where the former is forgotten, the menace of anarchy arises; where the second is forgotten, the menace of the totalitarian state arises. . . There is no limit to the caprice of a people which feels itself sovereign. And if we speak seriously of the sovereignty of the state, as modern legal positivism does, then, as recent times have shown, the totalitarian state already exists. Neither state nor people is sover-

eign. Both stand under a law which is binding upon them, which sets limits to their rights. Sovereignty belongs to God alone. To bear that in mind and never to forget it is the first commandment of truly wise government and political maturity in a nation. It is not mere mediaevalism, nor a relic of past times, if the charter of the Swiss Confederation opens with the words: 'In the name of God Almighty'. For without the limitation in the will of God, a people declines into anarchy and mob rule or the state into totalitarian tyranny" (*Justice and the Social Order*).

**Note:** The quotation from *Justice and the Social Order*, by Emil Brunner, which occurs at the conclusion of the foregoing article, is not to be construed as implying any endorsement, on the part of the author of the article or of the editor of *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, of the theological views of Dr. Brunner as such. The passage quoted is a very just and pertinent criticism of the common secular notion of the absolute sovereignty of the State. The basic unorthodoxy of the "Theology of Crisis" has repeatedly been pointed out in the columns of *Blue Banner Faith and Life*. — Ed.

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## *Psalm Ninety-Two*

### *"A Song for the Day of the Sabbath"*

By the Rev. Frank D. Frazer

A song, that is, for the day which God has set apart that man might never lack opportunity to enjoy his highest privilege of knowing and praising God for His wonderful works. "From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath, and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath." This song, having to do with the spirit and purpose of the Sabbath institution, is adapted for use on the first day Sabbath as well as the seventh.

Significantly, it begins with the word "GOOD". As each principal stage of the work of creation was finished, "God saw that it was good", well-made for the purpose planned in His own mind. And when He looked upon the whole completed work, "God saw that everything he had made was VERY GOOD". There was great joy and satisfaction in such accomplishment. But God is not only the Creator, He is the Disposer of all things. His disposing of things is not fickle nor uncertain, but according to the counsel of His own will revealed in what He calls "MY COVENANT". The work of creation was preparatory. It set the stage for the greater work of redemption. Wisdom and power made a place for lovingkindness and faithfulness to be manifested in due time by God's administration of His covenant, His works in the realm of nature and of grace, with which the whole thought of this Psalm is occupied.

Originally, man himself was good. Made in the image of God, he was capable of understanding and appreciating, to some extent, how exceedingly good is everything God does, and of entering into the joy of it. He was adapted, above all other creatures of earth, to declare the glory of God. He could do so intelligently, of his own

free choice. He was made for that purpose. It would be good for him to know and tell the glory of God; in doing so he would find his greatest joy.

But man miserably failed. He sold his birth-right for something to eat when he already had more than enough. He degraded himself to the level of the beast. He satisfied a selfish, carnal desire as if he knew nothing of God. The result: "All flesh is as grass".

Yet God did not cast him off, but, in covenant mercy and faithfulness, began to lift His fallen creature out of degradation into the blessedness of a new covenant relationship with God, by a Redeemer.

The singer here is one who has received of the abounding grace of that covenant. With joy and thankfulness he keeps Sabbath with Jehovah, the God of the everlasting covenant, the God of nature and of history, and in so doing holds before the world

#### I. The Sign of the Everlasting Covenant (Verses 1-4)

**"Good it is to give thanks to Jehovah, Yea, to sing praises to thy name, O Most High; To make known thy lovingkindness in the morning, And thy faithfulness at night, With an instrument of ten strings, and with the psalter; With soft, sweet music on the harp. For thou hast made me glad, O Jehovah, in what thou hast done: In the works of thy hands I will rejoice."**

Sabbath-keeping is, for all time, the appointed sign of the covenant. (See Ex. 31:12-17; Ezek.

20:12,20). In Sabbath-keeping there is the giving of thanks and the singing of praises to Jehovah; not only in private, but publicly, that all men may know of the great things He has done; there is the proclaiming of His mercies in the morning, when they are always new; and of His faithfulness at night, after another day has been filled with the never-failing proofs of it.

In the days of the one temple at Jerusalem, this was to be done in connection with the morning and evening sacrifice on the altar offered by the priests for all Israel (Ex. 29:39,41), with accompaniment of instrumental music by the Levites (2 Chron. 29:25-28). All Israel, of course, could not be present in person, but, at the appointed times they could all offer their prayers and sing the Psalms in their own homes, or synagogues. There were no altars nor musical instruments in the synagogues, yet each worshipper there could truly say, "I am offering the sacrifice", "I am playing on psaltery and harp", because it was being done, on his behalf, by God's appointed ministers, in God's appointed place, and the joy of it was in his heart.

The stringed instruments here mentioned were symbolic of the vibrant emotions of spirit, heart, mind and will; of "all that is within me"; of joy, gratitude, admiring love, and praise, with understanding.

Then when the "ONE SACRIFICE FOREVER" had been offered and finished and accepted, and the temple destroyed, so that there was not left one stone upon another, there was no place for sacrifices or instrumental music in the worship of God. The hour was come, AND NOW IS, when they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, one of the early Christian scholars, living about 260 to 340 A.D., wrote, among other things, a History of the Church and a Commentary on the Psalms. In his comments on this Ninety-second Psalm, he says: "The Word (i.e., Christ), by the new covenant, translated and transferred the feast of the Sabbath to the morning light, . . . the first day of the light in which the Saviour obtained the victory over death. . . . On this day, which is the first day of the light of the true sun, we assemble after an interval of six days, and celebrate holy and spiritual Sabbath; even all nations assemble redeemed by Him throughout the world, and do those things according to the spiritual law, which were decreed for the priests to do on the Sabbath. . . . **It has been handed down to us that we should meet together on this day; and it is ordered that we should do these things announced in this Psalm.**"

Pliny's letter to the emperor Trajan, about 107 A. D., reports the result of his judicial investigation of the Christians in Bithynia and Pontus. They had been accused of many crimes. He was not favorably disposed toward them. He says, however, that they kept affirming that the whole

sum of their wrongdoing was that they were "accustomed to meet on a stated day, before daylight, to sing together songs to Christ, as to God." "Before daylight", probably to escape interference by the authorities who enforced the observance of pagan rites. But when called to account, they were not ashamed of their Sabbath-keeping as the sign that they were Christians, and many of them were put to death for their fidelity. They were not afraid, but "endured as seeing Him who is invisible".

Faith triumphs in the firm assurance that

## II. God in His Faithfulness Is Administering the Covenant (Verses 5-11)

**"Oh how great are thy works, Jehovah! Thy thoughts are exceeding deep. A brutish man doth not know, Neither doth a fool understand this, When the wicked spring as the grass, And all the workers of iniquity flourish, It is that they may be destroyed forever. But THOU THYSELF art on high forevermore, O Jehovah! For behold thine enemies, Jehovah, For behold thine enemies are perishing; All workers of iniquity are being scattered. But thou hast exalted my horn as the wild ox; I am anointed with fresh oil. Mine eye hath seen those that lie in wait for me; Of those that rise up against me, evil doers, mine ears have heard."**

**"But THOU THYSELF art on high forevermore, O Jehovah!"** This 8th verse is the center of the Psalm's structure and the center of its thought. "How great are thy works! Thy thoughts are exceeding deep." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord?" Certainly, "The brutish man (literally, the "man-brute", the man fallen to the level of the brute) does not know". When a man does not choose to do the will of God, he acts like the brute which God made without knowledge. When he does not like to retain God in his knowledge, God gives him over to do things contrary to his own nature. He sinks to the lowest level of creation, beast, grass, serpent slithering in the grass. God made the grass to grow, partly, to be devoured, trampled down, and consumed. So the wicked may flourish for a season, but it is that they be destroyed forever.

The wicked are the embodiments of that enmity which is part of the covenant order. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed: he shall crush thy head, and thou shalt crush his heel". There shall be conflict, blood and sweat and tears, but the outcome is not uncertain. Jehovah is on high administering His covenant. It shall be done as He said. Not one word shall ever fail. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever". "See, even now, thine

enemies, Jehovah, are perishing. All workers of iniquity are being scattered".

Covenant administration deals with the wicked, but also at the same time with the righteous. The promises of deliverance and life are being made good. The joyous personal testimony of each soul saved is to be heard. "Thou hast exalted my horn as the wild ox: I am anointed with fresh oil". The "horn" is the symbol of defensive strength, of conscious superiority. Being anointed with "oil" is symbolic of consecration to doing the will of God by bestowal of His grace. The singer has been lifted high on the rock cliff. He is safe, and, from his vantage point, can watch those that lie in wait for him, and hear their secret plottings. Forewarned, he is forearmed. Furthermore, he knows their doom, and sees their end. He is not afraid. The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps his heart and thoughts in Christ Jesus.

The Sabbath gives time to think; time to think of what God has done, and is doing; time to realize how perfectly His works answer to His word, and so to understand more fully His gracious purposes, and in confidence to wait.

### III. The Purpose of the Covenant is Being Fulfilled (Verses 12-15)

**"The righteous one shall flourish like the palm tree; Like the cedar on Lebanon shall he grow. They are planted in the house of Jehovah; They shall blossom in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; Flourishing and green shall they be To make known that Jehovah is upright; He is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."**

God made the grass which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, but He also made the trees to grow and bear fruit and continue through the years. The trees are the oldest living things on the earth. There is the palm and the cedar. There is the giant Sequoia of the Sierras, which has lifted its evergreen crown into the sunshine of 4,000 years. It was there long before this Psalm was written; even before God made the covenant with Abraham. "Like the days of a tree shall be the days of my people" (Isa. 65:22).

A tree gathers all its supplies for growth and fruitage from the environment in which it is planted. The people of God flourish only in the House of Jehovah, and blossom only in the courts of their covenant God, where there is the water of life, and "every word that proceedeth from the mouth of Jehovah", without which no man can live, and the perennial sunshine of His gracious presence. There they still bring forth fruit in old age. To what purpose?

The rich and abundant provision of the House of God is to the end that the Christian shall be a true and faithful witness for his God before the

world; to make known, show forth, declare to others that Jehovah is upright, straightforward, absolutely true, invariably faithful, "keeping covenant and mercy to a thousand generations"; to justify the ways of God to men; to give his personal testimony, "He is my Rock, foundation, shelter, fortress, dwellingplace, watch tower; there is no unrighteousness in Him." This is the blossoming of the Christian; then there follows the fruit. But if there be no blossom, there will be no fruit. If there be no fruit, the tree is fit only to be cut down. "Why cumbereth it the ground?"

To know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent is life eternal. To make Him known to others is man's highest duty to God and the greatest service he can render his fellow man. The opportunity for this can never be taken out of a man's calendar, for God put there the Sabbath day. To be sure, it is to be done any and every day, but if it is not done on God's appointed day, in God's appointed way, God is dishonored and the testimony of other days is nullified. One principal cause of the weakness and ineffectiveness of the Church's witness today is the unfaithfulness of Christians in keeping the Sabbath holy. It is an inestimable privilege and honor, as well as duty, for every Christian to hold this sign of the covenant clearly in evidence before the world. To do so brings joy and satisfaction to himself. It offers the same to others, with a warning and an appeal. For God's faithfulness, which never fails, includes judgment as well as mercy. And there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents.

It will be noticed that there is no least trace of doubt, or fear, or anxiety, in this song. No questioning, How long shall the wicked prosper? Why do the righteous suffer? The calm of the Sabbath and the peace of the sanctuary of God is in every verse. It is enough to know that God is on high executing His covenant in faithfulness. Christ Himself sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. Everything He hath done is very good.

**Note:** Mr. Frazer's series of studies in the Psalms will be continued in future issues of "Blue Banner Faith and Life". — Ed.

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"Conversion to God is not so easy and so smooth a thing, as some would have men believe it is. Why is man's heart compared to fallow ground, God's Word to a plow, and His ministers to plowmen, if the heart indeed has no need of breaking in order to the receiving of the seed of God unto eternal life? Why is the conversion of the soul compared to the grafting of a tree, if that be done without cutting?"

John Bunyan

## *Religious Terms Defined*

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

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

**HUSSITES.** A reforming party in the Church in Bohemia (Czecho-Slovakia) in the 15th Century and later. Named after their leader John Huss who was burnt at the stake in 1415 for his faith.

**IDOLATRY.** (1) In the narrower sense, the religious worship of idols, that is, images or pictures. (2) In the wider sense, all religious worship other than that offered to the true God.

**ILLUMINATION.** The progressive work of the Holy Spirit in the mind of a Christian, whereby he is enabled to see and understand the truth revealed in the Scriptures (Eph. 1:18). (Illumination is the intellectual counterpart of sanctification. By sanctification a Christian is made to love and practice holiness; by illumination he is made to know and understand the truth).

**IMPLICIT FAITH.** That faith by which a person accepts on the authority of another some doctrine or system which he has not himself consid-

ered, or of which he is personally ignorant. (Cf. Westminster Confession of Faith, XX.2. When a person says that he accepts the doctrines of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, yet admits that he has never read those documents, he is guilty of the sin of accepting them with an "implicit faith," that is, "sight-unseen", by a blind faith).

**INABILITY.** The condition of the unsaved sinner, by reason of which he is unable, not merely to save himself from sin, but even to desire salvation. (Note: Inability is not inconsistent with free agency. The unsaved sinner is free to turn to God, but not able to turn to God, just as a bird with a broken wing is free to fly, but not able to fly).

**INCARNATION.** The act by which God the Son took to Himself a human nature (body and soul) and thus became man, to accomplish the work of redemption. (John 1:14).

**INDEPENDENCE OF GOD.** The truth that God is in no sense whatever dependent upon, limited by, or in need of anything or anyone in, the created universe, but is absolutely self-sufficient and self-existent. (It is wrong to use the verbs "cannot" and "needs" in connection with God. Mark 10:27; Acts 17:25).

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## *Some Noteworthy Quotations*

"The Church has always believed her Scriptures to be the book of God, of which God was in such sense the author that every one of its affirmations of whatever kind is to be esteemed as the utterance of God, of infallible truth and authority."

B. B. Warfield

"Christian education is the chief business of the hour for every earnest Christian man. Christianity cannot subsist unless men know what Christianity is; and the fair and logical thing is to learn what Christianity is, not from its opponents, but from those who themselves are Christians."

J. Gresham Machen

"Certainly if there be no absolute law of God, there can be no consciousness of sin; and if there

be no consciousness of sin, there can be no faith in the Saviour, Jesus Christ."

J. Gresham Machen

"Redemption was accomplished . . . according to the New Testament, by an event in the external world, at a definite time in the world's history, when the Lord Jesus died upon the cross and rose again."

J. Gresham Machen

"'Take heed how ye hear', said Christ; not only THAT you hear, but HOW you hear. A man must not only make conscience of the very act of worship, but of the manner how he performs it. There are several differences between the children of God and others in the manner of wor-

ship; it must be done humbly, reverently, affectionately."

Thomas Manton

"Faith is dead to doubts,  
Dumb to discouragements,  
Blind to impossibilities;  
Faith makes the Uplook good,  
The Outlook bright,  
The Future glorious.  
He stands best who kneels most."

(Author unknown)

"Rest not in having life, but press after liveliness. A lively frame in our walking is an excellent frame; it expedites work, brings something to pass in religion."

Philip Henry

"Christ is the desire of nations, the joy of angels, the delight of the Father. What solace then must that soul be filled with, that hath the possession of Him to all eternity!"

John Bunyan

"That obstinacy and enmity are common to all men I fully admit, and I also maintain that the heart of no man is softened and made flexible and obedient to the will of God until God gives

him the will and power to do what He commands. For why are we called 'new creatures', but because 'we are His workmanship, created unto good works'? But, I pray you, what kind of a division, and how iniquitous a division, of all praise and glory would it be to make God the Creator of us mortal men, and yet to make each one of us his own creator unto righteousness and eternal life? In this way God would only have for Himself the praise of ineffectual and failing grace. That portion of the glory which is far more excellent would fall to our lot. But the Scripture positively affirms that to circumcise the hearts of men is to work of God alone, nor is regeneration ascribed to any other than God Himself."

John Calvin

"Be not intemperately zealous, hastily rash to speak and to be angered, even in God's behalf: be humble, ready to listen, for your angry zeal, your quick speaking, work not God's righteous purposes. . . How many an endeavor which might have ended in working the righteousness of God, has been diverted and blighted by hasty speaking and anger, and ended only in disgracing ourselves, and Him whom we would have served, before men!"

Henry Alford (on James 1:19,20)

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## *Some Misunderstood Scriptures*

"A little child shall lead them" (Isa. 11:6). This text is often mis-applied to present day situations, as if it were a promise that little children will lead their parents to faith in Christ. This may be a beautiful idea, but it is foreign to the text. The pronoun "them" does not refer to the parents of the little child (who are not so much as mentioned), nor to other persons, but to the various wild and domestic animals mentioned in the first part of the verse: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." It is a prophecy that in the consummated Kingdom of God all the effects of sin, such as the wild and ferocious nature of beasts, will be taken away, and Edenic conditions restored.

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57). This verse is often quoted with the implication that the victory spoken of is victory over the power of sin in the Christian's daily life. Such an interpretation does violence to the context of the verse. The context shows clearly that the victory spoken of is victory over death, which the Christian shall receive at the Resurrection: "So when . . . this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in vic-

tory" (verse 54). It is true that God is able to give His people victory over sin and temptation, but this is not taught in 1 Cor. 15:57.

"Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him" (1 Sam. 9:13). How often these words have been quoted at that solemn moment when the Lord's people are about to take their places at the communion table to partake of the Lord's Supper. This text has been used in this way for so long that it may seem almost sacrilegious to call this a misuse of Scripture. Yet there can be no question but that this is an utterly unwarranted "accommodation" of Scripture by lifting a clause entirely out of its context. A glance at 1 Samuel 9:1-14 will show that the text has no connection whatever with the Lord's Supper. The occasion was Saul seeking his father's asses. The words were spoken by the young maidens who went out of the city to draw water, to Saul and his servant, concerning the prophet Samuel. It would be much better for pastors to invite communicants to the Lord's Table in their own words, rather than to twist a text of Scripture to make it seem to fit the situation. Taking a phrase or clause out of its context is dangerous, for by this method the Bible can be made to prove almost anything. It can even be made to prove atheism, as will be evident by quoting the first sentence of Psalm 53:1 with the first seven words omitted.

## *Studies in the Epistle to the Romans*

### LESSON 27

#### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued

#### C. The Outcome of the Conflict, Here and Hereafter. 8:1-25, Continued

##### The Outcome of the Conflict in the Future Life. 8:18-25

##### The State of Glory is the Substance and Object of our Christian Hope. 8:24,25

The object of our Christian hope is not merely immortality, or personal survival after the death of the body, but specifically the resurrection of the body, which is called "the redemption of our body" in 8:23b.

"For we are saved by hope". If we received all that God has for us here and now, obviously there would be nothing left to hope for. But God has set a portion of our redemption aside and said to us, "You cannot have this part now, but you shall receive it in the future."

By faith we trust Jesus Christ for our salvation here and now. That is faith. By hope, we look forward with confidence and eager anticipation to the portion of our inheritance that God has set apart and reserved for the future. But what should be our attitude toward that future portion?

(1) We should realize that it is something which "we see not"; we cannot attain it now, nor at any time during the present life; it is reserved for the future, for eternity.

(2) We should "hope" for it, that is, look forward to it with longing and eager anticipation of possessing and enjoying it in that glorious life of the eternal future.

(3) We should "with patience wait for it", not being impatient under present burdens and sufferings, realizing that our portion now is to glorify God by bearing the cross He has appointed for us, and that in God's own appointed time we shall receive the crown of eternal glory.

This passage emphasizes the eschatological character of real Christianity; it is pre-eminently occupied with the things which are eternal; it does not neglect the present life, but it places the chief emphasis and weight always upon the life eternal. Life here and now is not the main thing; it is only a preparation for eternity. This attitude, which permeates the New Testament through and through, is utterly foreign to the dominant spirit of the twentieth century. We live in a dominant atmosphere of "this-worldliness", in which even expounders of the Christian Faith seem often to

be more interested in the things which are temporal than in the things which are eternal. But every true Christian will adhere to the New Testament in its predominant emphasis on the life of eternity.

The resurrection of the body will be the completion of our redemption and our introduction to the full glory of eternity. Note the wonderful expression of this truth in the Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 90, as follows: "At the day of judgment, the righteous, being caught up to Christ in the clouds, shall be set on his right hand, and there openly acknowledged and acquitted, shall join with him in the judging of reprobate angels and men, and shall be received into heaven, where they shall be fully and for ever freed from all sin and misery; filled with inconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity. And this is the perfect and full communion, which the members of the invisible Church shall enjoy with Christ in glory, at the resurrection and day of judgment."

All lesser hopes will disappoint and fail us. Even if attained, they cannot satisfy our souls. The resurrection, the redemption of our body, is our real and ultimate hope. It will come at the Last Day, at Christ's second coming. Meantime, we must "with patience wait for it." Hope comes to the help of faith, and increases faith for the conflict we are engaged in here and now. For our victory over sin, over our old nature, is necessarily incomplete and imperfect in the present life. But there is always that Christian hope before us — the thought of our sure destiny, absolute perfection, moral, intellectual and physical, to encourage us. The afflictions of this present time are indeed not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

#### Questions:

1. What is the resurrection called in 8:23?
2. What part of our redemption is reserved for the future?
3. What is meant by the statement "We are saved by hope"?
4. What is the difference between faith and hope?

5. What should be a Christian's attitude toward that portion of his redemption which is reserved for the future?

6. How are we to glorify God during this present life?

7. What characteristic of Christianity is shown by 8:24,25?

8. How is this characteristic contradicted by the dominant spirit of the twentieth century?

9. What is the sure destiny of every true Christian?

10. What effect does hope have on our faith?

## LESSON 28

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued

#### D. The Christian's Reasons for Encouragement During this Present Life. 8:26-39

##### The Experience of the Help of the Holy Spirit. 8:26,27

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities" — our weaknesses. There is a special help for our weakness from the Holy Spirit. The apostle cites just one example of such special help, chosen from the various things he might have mentioned. That is the help of the Holy Spirit in the matter of prayer.

"For we know not what we should pray for as we ought." There are two things about prayer that we do not know of ourselves — what to pray for, and how to pray for it. We can make some progress in learning them, of course, but never in this life will we acquire this knowledge completely and perfectly. Always we shall need the special help of the Holy Spirit in the matter of prayer.

We know that we should pray for things in accordance with God's will, yet how often we pray, ignorantly, for things that are not really in accordance with God's will. But Holy Spirit comes to our help, making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Jesus Christ our Saviour is making intercession for us in heaven, at the right hand of God the Father. But this intercession of the Holy Spirit is something different. It is not in heaven, but here on this earth, in our hearts and minds. The Holy Spirit dwells and has His abode in the heart of every Christian, as we saw from 8:9b, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his". It is the Holy Spirit that stirs up in our hearts the desire to pray, and that enables us to pray aright.

But our prayers that we put into definite words are often foolish and childish prayers, and not really in accordance with the will of God. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His thoughts higher than our thoughts, and His ways than our ways. His judgments are a great deep. But underneath the definite spoken prayers that we form into definite words, there arise within our hearts desires and yearnings and longings that we cannot express in words. These are

the work of the Holy Spirit, making intercession in us, "with groanings which cannot be uttered".

"The Spirit of God in us, knowing our wants better than we know them ourselves, pleads in our prayers, raising us to higher and holier desires than we can express in words, which can only find utterance in sighings and aspirations" (Alford).

"The Spirit dwells in the believer as a principle of life. In our consciousness there is no difference between our own actings and those of the Spirit. There is, however. . . a joint agency of the divine and human in all holy exercises, and more especially in those emotions, desires and aspirations which we are unable to clothe in words" (Charles Hodge).

The Greek word translated "infirmities" includes both the idea of weakness and that of suffering. The word "helpeth" means, in the Greek, "to take hold of anything with another", to share a burden or task, and thus to render effective aid. Thus we see that the help of the Holy Spirit in prayer is not a mere teaching or persuasion, but an actual help by the exercise of divine power which shares our task and thus helps our weakness.

"And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God". The Father notes not merely our own childish and often foolish prayers, but also the unexpressed desires and yearnings of our hearts which arise within us from the Holy Spirit making intercession in us. This intercession, which, as far as we are concerned, is merely "groanings which cannot be uttered", the Father understands, because it is an intercession completely in accordance with His holy will. This intercession meets with the approval of God. It is therefore certain to be accepted and answered. The realization of this should be a great comfort to every Christian.

#### The Certainty that Providence is Friendly to Us. 8:28

"God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions" (Shor-

18102  
Les BK

*God's purpose is to conform  
Christians to the image of  
Christ.*

ter Catechism, Q. 11). God's providence is all-inclusive. It takes in all that ever comes to pass. All things are under God's control; all work together as parts of a great plan devised by God in eternity. From the evaporation of a dewdrop to the motion of the forty billion separate stars in the Milky Way; from the fall of a sparrow to the rise of an empire; from the splitting of an atom in a laboratory to the melting of the elements with fervent heat at last (2 Peter 3:10) — every fact, every event, is completely under the providential control of God, to whom there are no surprises and no frustrations, who is sovereign over all, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11).

This great plan does not function by blind chance, nor by mere natural laws and mechanical forces. Beneath and beyond all laws and all forces is the mind and will of a Person — the Infinite Person, Almighty God, our Father in heaven. This Person, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth, absolutely controls all that ever comes to pass. And verse 28 tells us that this stupendous divine plan is so constituted that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

All things work together for good, not to everybody, but to people included in a certain class, namely, those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose. This verse is often misused by being incompletely quoted and wrongly applied. Even worldly people sometimes say, "All things work together for good". Christian preachers sometimes give a terribly wrong impression by preaching on this text and failing to make it clear that the truth stated is limited to Christians. Thus people who do not love God and who are not the called according to His purpose get the idea that they can continue in their miserable, self-centered, God-ignoring life, and somehow all things will work together for good.

As a matter of fact, all things work together for evil to those who do not love God and are not the called according to His purpose. Even God's good gifts and blessings in the realm of nature turn into curses in the end to those who are not God's children. Finally they will spend eternity in hell, where nothing works together for good to anyone. But to the Christian it is true that all things work together for good.

"Called according to his purpose" is also misunderstood. In this and similar verses, the verb "called" does not mean merely "invited". It is "called ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE". That purpose is an unbreakable, unchangeable purpose of grace to God's elect. The person who is called according to that purpose is EFFECTUALLY called. This is an invitation that brings

about a favorable response. Those thus called are actually made partakers of salvation in accordance with God's purpose of grace. (See The Shorter Catechism, Q. 31, for a definition of "Effectual Calling"; and the texts listed under that question, for Scripture proof of this doctrine).

"All things work together for good", of course does not mean "All things turn out the way we want them to", nor "All things work together for what we think is good". It means our real and permanent good, as purposed by God, and as we shall see and realize ourselves when we look back at our life on earth from the glory of heaven.

"I'll bless the Hand that guided,  
I'll bless the Heart that planned,  
When throned where glory dwelleth,  
In Immanuel's Land."

Worldly people, poets and philosophers, wonder and speculate as to whether the universe is friendly or hostile to man. They can wonder and theorize and discover facts that seem to be on both sides of the question. But the Christian knows the real answer — the universe is friendly to the person who is a friend of the universe's God, and the whole universe is an enemy, at war with, the person who is an enemy of the universe's God.

Only the Christian can have the conviction that all things work together for good. It comes by faith in God's all-inclusive providence, faith that behind nature there is a personal God, infinite in both power and love. The worldly person does not have that faith, so he can never enjoy the confidence that the Christian enjoys.

#### Question:

1. Why do we need the special help of the Holy Spirit in prayer?
2. What is the meaning of "groanings which cannot be uttered"?
3. Why is the Spirit's intercession sure of acceptance and answer?
4. What are God's works of providence?
5. What is back of all the laws and forces of the universe?
6. For whom do all things work together for good?
7. How is Romans 8:28 often misused?
8. What is the meaning of "called according to his purpose?"
9. When will we understand how all things worked together for our good?
10. Why can worldly people not decide whether the universe is friendly or hostile?

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued

D. The Christian's Reasons for Encouragement During this Present Life. 8:26-39, Continued

The Assurance that God's Work of Saving Grace will be Completed. 8:29,30

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Here for the Christian's encouragement during the difficulties of the present life, he is clearly assured that God's work of saving grace in him will certainly be completed, even to his final glorification. What God has begun shall be carried through to completion. Those whom God foreknew, predestinated, etc., shall certainly receive eternal glory.

*Pg. 104 Les. BK.*  
Many people have misinterpreted this passage in an effort to eliminate from it the idea that God, from all eternity, has decided who shall be saved. This passage, in its proper meaning, teaches very clearly and forcefully the doctrine of sovereign election on God's part — that ultimately the determining factor in an individual's salvation is not that person's own decision but God's choice. Man's decision in time is subordinate to God's choice in eternity.

The word "foreknow" may mean to know something beforehand, to possess advance information about something. The term "foreknowledge" is used in this sense in Acts 2:23. But in Romans 8:29 the word "foreknew" cannot have this meaning, for this verse does not speak of all human beings, but of a certain class only, namely Christians; but God "foreknew" everything about every human being that ever lived or ever will live, if the term "foreknew" in this verse means "to know something beforehand" or "to possess advance information about something". Since God foreknew all human beings, in the sense of knowing about them beforehand, and since Rom. 8:29 obviously speaks not of all human beings but of a special class, the term cannot here be used in the sense of knowing beforehand about them.

Those who object to the doctrine of sovereign election, therefore, have to add something to the verse in order to obtain a meaning that will suit the idea of "foreknew" as "knowing something beforehand". Accordingly, they say that the verse means: "For those persons concerning whom he foreknew that they would (of their own free will) repent and believe on Christ, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the

image of his Son", etc. This interpretation makes man's free will the determining factor in his salvation, and reduces God's predestination to a rubber-stamp ratification of what he knew beforehand that certain persons would decide to do. In other words, the work of salvation is divided between God and man, and the deciding factor is taken out of the hands of God and placed in the hands of man. It is this doctrine that leads some prominent evangelists to say such things as: "God wants to save you, but His hands are tied; He can only wait for you to make your own decision"; "God has done all He can; He is helpless until you make your own decision". This teaching exalts sinful man and his powers by degrading God and taking the eternal issues of life out of His hands.

The interpretation we have just been discussing is, however, quite unwarranted. God's election or predestination is not a rubber-stamp act. God's eternal predestination is not subordinate to, or contingent upon, any act of man during this present life or at any time. God's foreknowledge (knowing about everything beforehand) depends upon his predestination, by which He has, from all eternity, foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. God knows what will happen next year precisely because God has, from all eternity, DECREED all that will happen next year, down to the smallest detail. God is of course omniscient, that is, He knows everything. As He knows everything, He also knows His own plans and decrees. Therefore His foreknowledge is based on His eternal foreordination. Note Acts 2:23, where the betrayal of Jesus Christ is stated to have been done "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God". Note that God's DETERMINATE COUNSEL is mentioned first, and His FOREKNOWLEDGE afterwards. God knew beforehand that Jesus would be delivered up, because He had decreed from eternity that this would be done.

The unsound interpretation that we have been discussing is really a denial, or at least an evasion, of the doctrine of predestination which is so clearly taught in the Bible. It has been called, not unfairly, the doctrine that "God elects those that elect themselves". The truth is, of course that those whom God has (from eternity) chosen, will in time repent and believe. Note Acts 13:48: ". . . and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." That is the order that God has established.

Having now disposed of a very common (and very old) unsound interpretation of Rom. 8:29, let us now consider what this verse really does mean. The words "foreknow", "foreknowledge", etc., in the Bible do not always mean "to know

something beforehand". They also have a different meaning, namely, to love with a special love, to set one's affection upon in a special way, to prefer as the object of special affection. We shall show from the Bible that this is true. God said to the Children of Israel: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). Certainly God knows all the people of the world, and all about all of them; yet to Israel He said, "You only have I known. . .". Clearly "known" here means "loved", "regarded as object of special favor". To the five foolish virgins in the parable the bridegroom (Christ) said: "Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Matt. 25:12). He knew ALL ABOUT them, but He did not know them as His own. At the Judgment Day many will claim to belong to Christ, to have cast out devils in His name, etc., but He will reply to them, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23). In these texts, again, we see the terms "know", "knew", used in the sense of "love", "regard as object of favor", etc.

Similarly, in Rom. 8:29, "foreknew" means "loved beforehand" (from eternity), "regarded (from eternity) as object of special favor". The Greek word for "foreknew" is the same as the word for "knew" in Matt. 7:23, with the prefix "pro", meaning "before", "antecedently". So we see that our text teaches that God, from all eternity, set His love, His special affection, upon certain persons, who were thus singled out from the mass of the human race. He did this for His own reasons; we cannot say what those reasons were; only we know that they did not concern any foreseen good character, good works, repentance, faith, or other acts of the persons concerned.

Next, we are told that those whom God "foreknew" (loved specially from eternity), He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. This means that those who are the objects of God's special love are to be changed until they are like unto Christ, God's Son. "We are to be like our Saviour in moral character, in our present sufferings and in future glory" (Charles Hodge). God did not choose us because He saw that we would someday become like His Son; on the contrary, we will someday be like His Son BECAUSE HE HAS CHOSEN

US. He has predestinated His people TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON.

"That he might be the firstborn among many brethren". Here we see that the plan of salvation is designed to further the glory of God. It is not intended simply or primarily for the welfare of human beings. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son, so that the Son may be glorified and exalted in having many brethren in heaven redeemed by Him.

#### Questions:

1. In what way is Rom. 8:29,30 intended to encourage the Christian during this present life?
2. What prejudice lies back of many attempts to misinterpret 8:29?
3. Why can the term "foreknew" in 8:29 not have the meaning of "knowing about something beforehand"?
4. What idea has to be added to 8:29 to make the verse give a sensible meaning if "foreknew" is taken in the sense of "knowing about something beforehand"?
5. What unscriptural statements are made by some prominent evangelists concerning God's power to save sinners?
6. What is meant by reducing God's predestination to a rubber-stamp ratification of the acts of men?
7. Is God's predestination dependent on His foreknowledge of what will happen anyway, or is His foreknowledge dependent on what He has decreed?
8. What is wrong with the statement: "God elects those that elect themselves"—?
9. What is the meaning of the word "known" in Amos 3:2?
10. Why did the Bridegroom say to the five foolish virgins, "I know you not"—?
11. What is the meaning of being conformed to the image of God's Son?
12. What is the great design of God's Plan of Salvation, as illustrated by Rom. 8:29?

### LESSON 30

#### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued

##### D. The Christian's Reasons for Encouragement During this Present Life. 8:26-39, Continued

##### The Assurance that God's Work of Saving Grace will be Completed. 8:29, 30, Continued.

"Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them

he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Here we have a chain of acts of God: foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, glorified. It is a chain that starts in the eternity that is

*new creatures in Christ*

past, before the creation of the universe, when God foreknew (set His love upon) and predestinated certain particular persons, thus electing or choosing them from out of the mass of the human race. (For a very clear proof of election before the creation of the universe, see Ephesians 1:4). It is a chain that reaches clear through this present life and on into the eternity that is still future. Those whom God foreknew in the eternity before the creation, shall certainly be glorified in the eternity after the Judgment Day.

"Whom he did predestinate, them he also called". The word "called" here does not merely mean "invited"; it does not merely mean the external call of the Gospel that a person hears with his ears. The meaning may be seen from 1 Corinthians 1:23, 24, 26: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are CALLED, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. . . For ye see your CALLING, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are CALLED. " Note also 1 Cor. 1:2, ". . . them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, CALLED to be saints". This is what is known as "effectual calling", an inward work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of God's elect. (For a definition of "effectual calling", see The Shorter Catechism, Q. 31; Larger Catechism, Q. 67; Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter X). Clearly in Romans 8:30 the word "called" is used in the sense of effectual calling, a powerful inward work of the Holy Spirit, by which the persons "called" are brought into union with Christ.

For the meaning of the term "justified", the student is referred to previous lessons of the present series, where the matter is fully expounded (April-June, 1951, pages 90-95, Lessons 11-13).

"Glorified", of course, means the completion of the work of redemption in the Christian by his bodily resurrection at the Last Day and his inheritance thereupon of the eternal kingdom of glory. For a summary see Rom. 8:16-23, and The Larger Catechism, Q. 87, 90.

We should understand that this chain of divine acts which we are considering is an unbreakable chain. It contains no open links which might permit part of the chain to drop off and be lost. Everything is fast, solid and secure. The very grammar of the sentence, in English as in the original Greek, shows that this is an unbreakable chain. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. . ." The number predestinated is identical with the number foreknown. He did not predestinate part, but all, of those whom he foreknew. And so on through verses 29 and 30. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called" — not part, but all, of those predestinated are called. "Whom he called, them

he also justified" — not part, but all, of those called are justified. "And whom he justified, them he also glorified" — not part, but all, of those justified are to be glorified. With mathematical exactitude and certainty, every individual human being that was foreknown by God from eternity (singled out as the object of His special affection) will be glorified in the eternity that is future. The language of Rom. 8:29,30 leaves no openings for any of those originally foreknown to drop out anywhere in the long process. When the glory of eternity dawns at the Resurrection Day, all those foreknown back in eternity will be present and accounted for. There will be none listed as missing. God is almighty; He completes what He plans. " whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, and all deep places" (Psalm 135:6). "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations" (Psalm 33:11). "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand" (Prov. 19:21).

We sometimes begin work that we are not able to finish. But not God. What God begins He carries on to completion, for His power is infinite. So if we are conscious of the work of God's saving grace in our hearts now, think what this means with respect to our eternal destiny! What God begins, He carries through to perfection, to completion. He does not start a work and then abandon it. If we are really partakers of God's salvation now, then we may enjoy assurance that having been called and justified, we shall certainly be glorified. If we have received the first part, we shall receive the last part, too. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever: forsake not the works of thine own hands" (Psalm 138:8). "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

#### Questions:

1. Why can the divine acts mentioned in 8:29, 30 be likened unto the links of a chain?
2. Where does this chain start and where does it end?
3. What verse in the Epistle to the Ephesians affords clear proof of the doctrine of election before the creation?
4. How do we know that the word "called" in 8:30 means more than merely "invited"?
5. How is "effectual calling" defined in the Shorter Catechism?
6. Why is the chain of salvation in Rom. 8:29,30 an unbreakable chain?
7. Give some verses from other parts of the

Bible to prove the sovereignty and almighty power of God.

8. Give some Bible texts that prove that God will carry His saving grace in His children through to completion.

9. If we have truly experienced the saving grace of God in our lives, what assurance are we warranted in enjoying?

10. What comfort should we derive from the fact that every link in the chain of Rom. 8:29,30 is an act of God, not an act of ourselves?

## LESSON 31

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued

#### D. The Christian's Reasons for Encouragement During this Present Life. 8:28-39, Continued

##### The Realization that Almighty God is For Us. 8:31-39

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

God has given us the greatest gift of all, the gift of His own Son; all lesser gifts and benefits must necessarily be included. Those who receive God's lesser gifts, and natural blessings, do not always receive the greatest gift. But those who have already received the greatest gift — Christ — really have a title deed to all the rest. Everything is included with Christ.

Christ is the firstborn among many brethren; God's children are His brethren, hence they are members of God's family; therefore they have an inheritance of everything along with Christ — they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, as we saw in verse 17. This does not mean that we have possession of everything to enjoy here and now, but that we are assured of this possession for the life of eternity.

Christ is called God's OWN Son in contrast to Christians, who are God's ADOPTED sons. Christ, God's own Son, was delivered up to suffering and death for us all, that is, for all of us Christians, for all of God's elect. "For us all" means not merely for our benefit in general, but as a substitute to suffer and die in our place. Here we see that the sufferings and death of Christ, His sacrifice, were part of the plan and purpose of God.

"How shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" As the gift of Christ includes all other gifts, it must also include the gift of the Holy Spirit to apply Christ's redemption to us, working faith in us, and so uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling. "The believer is assured of salvation, not merely because he is assured of his own constancy, but simply because he is assured of the immutability of the divine love, and he is assured of its immutability because he is assured of its greatness. Infinite love cannot change. A love which spared not the eternal Son

of God, but freely gave him up, cannot fail of its object" (Charles Hodge). "Christ was not sent to us bare or empty, but accompanied by all heavenly treasures, lest anything should be lacking for the full blessedness of those who possess Him" (John Calvin).

Everything that is necessary for salvation and eternal life is included in God's gift of His Son. This includes not only all that God has done FOR His people, but also all that He, by the Holy Spirit, does IN His people. We should realize that our own repentance, our own faith, our own praying, our own love to God — all these are **GIFTS OF GOD TO US** just as truly as Jesus Christ is God's gift to us. Of ourselves we would not repent, we would not believe, we would not love God. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). It is God the Holy Spirit that gives us these gifts, enabling and helping us to repent, believe, etc. Of ourselves alone we would never do any of these things. This gift of the Holy Spirit is part of the "all things" that are freely given to those to whom God has already given His own Son.

We can see, then, the crude error of all those who try to separate between receiving Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit, as if a person could be a Christian and have Christ without having the Holy Spirit. The redemptive work of Christ and the applying work of the Holy Spirit cannot be separated or divorced in this way. There is an organic bond of connection between them. To those for whom God's own Son was delivered up, all things (including the Holy Spirit) are given. The Holy Spirit brings these particular persons to repentance, faith in Christ, and all other saving graces. It is all linked up together, it is all wrapped in one and the same package.

#### Questions:

1. What is the greatest of all God's gifts to men?
2. What is included together with this greatest of all gifts?
3. Does 8:32 mean that Christians shall receive all things to enjoy during this present life? What is its real meaning?

4. Why is Christ called God's OWN Son? What contrast is implied in this expression?

5. What is meant by the statement that Christ was delivered up for us all?

6. What benefits does the gift of the Holy

Spirit bring to God's elect?

7. Why is it wrong to try to separate between receiving Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit?

8. Why would we, if left to ourselves, never repent or believe on Christ?

## LESSON 32

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued

#### D. The Christian's Reasons for Encouragement During this Present Life. 8:26-39, Continued

##### The Realization that Almighty God is For Us. 8:31-39, Continued

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

God has justified the Christian; who then can condemn him? When a person is justified, it is declared that all claims of justice in his case are fully satisfied. There is no tribunal that can reverse the judgment of the supreme court of the universe, the judgment throne of God Himself. "To justify, is to declare the claims of justice satisfied. If God, the supreme judge, makes this declaration, it must be true, and it must stop every mouth. No rational creature, no enlightened conscience, can call for the punishment of those whom God justifies. If justice is not satisfied, there can be no justification, no peace of conscience, no security either for salvation or for the moral government of God. The Bible knows nothing of mere pardon. There can be no pardon except on the ground of satisfaction of justice. It is by declaring a man just, (that is, that justice in relation to him is satisfied,) that he is freed from the penalty of the law, and restored to the favor of God" (Charles Hodge).

"Who is he that condemneth?" The meaning is, No one can condemn the Christian, whom God has justified, or pronounced righteous. The apostle next presents four strong reasons why no one can condemn the Christian, namely, 1. Christ's death: 2. Christ's resurrection. 3. Christ's exaltation at the right hand of the Father. 4. Christ's heavenly ministry of intercession for his people:

Note that Paul makes no mention of any works of the Christian among the reasons why no one can condemn him. He does not say that the believer's earnestness, faithfulness, zeal, love, good deeds, religious worship, etc., keep him from ever being condemned. These are not even mentioned. What keeps the Christian from condemnation is not his own character, works or faithfulness, but the four great redemptive facts about Christ that are listed in verse 34.

Incidentally, this verse proves that Christ's death on the cross was not a mere manifestation of the love of God, as people so often hold today, but a true sacrifice for the satisfaction of divine justice. For if Christ died merely to reveal to men the love of God, how could his death keep the Christian from ever being condemned? It is because His death was a sacrifice, a satisfaction of the demands of divine justice, a bearing of the wrath and curse of God in our stead, that it keeps us from condemnation. Nothing can bring a person under condemnation except guilt, and guilt comes only from sin, and all the sin of the Christian—past, present and future sin—was laid on the Lord Jesus Christ and its penalty fully borne by Him On Calvary, so that all claims of divine justice were fully satisfied. He who would condemn a Christian must find a sin that Christ did not bear the penalty of on the cross. But there are no such sins of Christians; Christ bore them all; all were laid upon Him.

"Who is even at the right hand of God". This refers to Christ's exaltation in heaven, where He as Mediatorial King rules over the entire universe (Psalm 110:1; Eph. 1:20; Rev. 3:21; Heb. 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:24-28). All authority is given by the Father to the risen Christ, both in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). The Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man, is on the supreme throne of the universe, all except God the Father being made subject unto Him. And it is this Christ who undertakes to save His people from their sins, not only now, but eternally.

"Who also maketh intercession for us". This means that Christ is our advocate, to plead our cause in heaven. When we fall into sin, Christ is there to plead our cause, showing that His own precious blood was shed to atone for that very sin. Think what this means for the security and encouragement of the Christian. We should realize, of course, that when the Bible speaks of Christ sitting at the right hand of God, pleading our cause, etc., this involves the use of figurative language. God is a pure spirit and does not have a body with hands. Charles Hodge puts it this way: "Of course this language is figurative; the meaning is, that Christ continues since his resurrection and exaltation to secure for his people the benefits of his death, everything comes through him, and for his sake."

**Questions:**

1. When a person is justified, what does this mean concerning the claims of justice against him?
2. What is the meaning of Hodge's statement: "The Bible knows nothing of mere pardon"? Why is this very important?
3. Why can no one reverse God's sentence of justification of a person?
4. What four strong reasons does Paul give why no one can condemn a Christian?
5. What kind of acts are strikingly absent from Paul's list of strong reasons why a Christian cannot be condemned?

6. What does 8:34 prove concerning the meaning and purpose of Christ's death on the cross?

7. Why can sins committed by a Christian not bring him into condemnation?

8. What kind of sin would have to be found to bring a real Christian under condemnation? Why can such sin not be found?

9. Give some Bible texts that speak of Christ's exaltation to supreme power in heaven.

10. How does Christ's exaltation in heaven affect the Christian's security?

11. What is the meaning of Christ's heavenly intercession for us?

**LESSON 33****THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION. 6:1 to 8:39, Continued****D. The Christian's Reasons for Encouragement During this Present Life. 8:26-29, Continued**

**Nothing can Separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. 8:35-39.**

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Quite evidently, it is Christ's love for us, not our love for Him, that is spoken of here. Paul is trying to encourage Christians, to impart confidence to them. To speak of their love for Christ would not serve his purpose in this passage; it would not in any way encourage them; rather, they would feel discouraged because their love to Christ is so often weak and inconsistent. But Christ's love for us in another matter. In that there is no weakness, no inconstancy, no intermission. It can never change. Those for whom He suffered and died and rose again, He will love for ever. And that very fact guarantees that they will remain in union with Him forever. For His love is a love that accomplishes its purpose.

"The great difficulty with many Christians is that they cannot persuade themselves that Christ (or God) loves them; and the reason why they cannot feel confident of the love of God, is, that they know they do not deserve his love, on the contrary, that they are in the highest degree unlovely. How can the infinitely pure God love those who are defiled with sin, who are proud, selfish, discontented, ungrateful, disobedient? This, indeed, is hard to believe. But it is the very thing we are required to believe, not only as the condition of peace and hope, but as the condition of salvation. If our hope of God's mercy and love is founded on our own goodness or attractiveness, it is a false hope. We must believe that his love is gratuitous, mysterious, without any known or conceivable cause, certainly without the cause of loveliness in its object; that it is, in short, what it is so often declared to be in the Bible, analo-

gous to the love of a parent for his child. A father's or mother's love is independent of the attractiveness of its object, and often in spite of its deformity" (Charles Hodge).

The apostle mentions sixteen things, none of which can separate a Christian from the love of God in Christ, namely tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth. Then to this already long list he adds a broad, inclusive expression: "nor any other creature". Think how safe a Christian really is! Nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate him from the love of Christ.

And yet in spite of all that the apostle has said, there are those who hold that a Christian can fall away from God's grace and perish in hell. They hold that a Christian may be a saved person today, but at some future time he may backslide and perish, losing his salvation. Such people freely admit that tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, etc., cannot separate a Christian from the love of Christ. They say that nothing outside of the Christian himself can do it. But they add, a Christian can fall away from Christ of his own free will, so so perish for ever.

What a superficial type of thinking such an idea discloses! Among the things mentioned by Paul, which cannot separate a Christian from Christ, are "things present" and "things to come". Surely a Christian's free will comes under these categories; his free will today is a "thing present", and his free will in the future is a "thing to come". Therefore it cannot separate him from Christ. Again, the apostle says, "Nor any other creature...". Is human free will a creature, or not? Is it a created thing, or not? If not created, it must be divine, for of all that exists, only God is not a creature. So if our human free will is not di-

vine—if we are men and not God—then it is a creature. Then it falls into Paul's category of "any other creature"—it cannot separate a Christian from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The Christian is not only saved, but also safe, eternally safe.

Those who hold the Arminian view of human free will regard the human will as creatively original. They believe that man's choices and decisions are independent of the foreordination of God, so that man is the absolute, ultimate source of all his own decisions. Thus the human will is regarded as not subject to the foreordination and providence of God. This position virtually, though not explicitly, denies that the human will is a creature. But Arminianism is certainly false. The truth is that the human personality, including the human will, is a creature of God, and all its functioning has been foreordained by God and is under God's providential control. The Bible definitely teaches this. It teaches that the free decisions of the human will are in every case foreordained and controlled by God. A few Bible texts may be cited in this connection. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1). "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, FOR TO DO WHATSOEVER THY HAND AND THY COUNSEL DETERMINED BEFORE TO BE DONE" (Acts 4:27,28). "Notwithstanding, they (Eli's sons) hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them" (I Sam-2:25). "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God. . . But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 45:8; 50:20). The human mind and will are not "creative" in the real sense; they can really originate nothing; every thought in a human mind was first in the mind of God, and foreordained by God from eternity; every decision of a human will was first in the mind of God, and foreordained by God from eternity. Man really creates or originates nothing; God is the only Creator, the only real Originator. Man may invent a complicated machine such as an automobile engine, but it was all in the mind of God and in the purpose of God before the idea ever occurred to the human inventor. Man by his life, decisions and actions, merely reproduces in the world the eternal thoughts and purposes of God. Neither man's thinking nor his will are ever truly independent.

We have turned aside a little from our study of Romans, to say something about the Arminian notion of free will, because of the conviction that the Arminian notion of man's freedom and independence is not only false, but also religiously injurious. It is contrary to the true

relation between creature and Creator. It undermines the basis of a truly religious relation between man and God. It regards man as the ULTIMATE determiner of his own life and destiny. In a word, the Arminian view attributes to man what the Bible attributes to the Lord God, and in doing so detracts from the glory and majesty of God and provides man with a false ground of glorying and self-confidence.

We realize, of course, that multitudes of Arminians are saved Christians. But this is in spite of their Arminian views, not because of them. It is because they hold their Arminian views inconsistently, not following them through to their final logical conclusion. For example, Arminians who believe that human will is absolutely free, nevertheless pray to God for the conversion of sinners. The same evangelist will say "God's hands are tied, He cannot save people until they make their own decision", and then offer earnest prayer that God will bring people to repentance and faith in Christ. We rejoice in the Christian faith and testimony of our Arminian brethren, but at the same time we must insist that it is because of a happy inconsistency that they can be Christians.

#### Questions:

1. What is the difference between our love for Christ, and Christ's love for us?
2. Why is it difficult for us to believe that the holy God really loves us?
3. How many things does Paul mention that cannot separate a Christian from the love of Christ?
4. At the conclusion of this list of things that cannot separate us from the love of Christ, what inclusive expression is added?
5. What is the doctrine of "falling away from grace" that is held by some Christians?
6. According to the doctrine of "falling away from grace," what is there that can separate a Christian from the love of Christ?
7. How can it be shown that human free will cannot separate a Christian from the love of Christ?
8. What is the Arminian view of human free will?
9. According to the Arminian view, what is the relation between human decisions and God's eternal foreordination?
10. Show from the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New, that the free decisions of the human will are foreordained by God.
11. Why is it wrong to say that the human mind and will are "creative" in the real sense?

12. How should Arminianism be appraised from the religious point of view?

13. How is it that multitudes of Arminians, holding the views they do, can still be devout Christians?

14. What inconsistency is often noted in the actions of Arminian evangelists?

15. What is meant by saying that Arminianism divides the work of salvation between God and man and places the deciding factor in the hands of man?

### LESSON 34

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

**A. God's Rejection of the Jews and Calling of the Gentiles not Inconsistent with His Promises. 9:1-24**

**Paul Expresses his Love and Concern for his Jewish Brethren. 9:1-5**

Paul's discussion of the Plan of Salvation, in the strict sense, closed with the end of chapter 8 of the Epistle. He now proceeds to discuss the great question of God's calling of the Gentiles and His rejection of the Jews. As this was a subject which was bound to be very painful and embarrassing to the Jewish readers of his Epistle, he approaches it very cautiously and tactfully, so as to give as little offence as possible. "Fidelity does not require that we should make the truth as offensive as possible. On the contrary, we are bound to endeavor, as Paul did, to allay all opposing or inimical feelings in the minds of those whom we address, and to allow the truth, unimpeded by the exhibition of anything offensive on our part, to do its work upon the heart and conscience" (Charles Hodge).

Accordingly, Paul protests earnestly that he is deeply concerned for the welfare and salvation of his Jewish brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost" — a very earnest, solemn and emphatic way of introducing a statement.

"I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart". The Jews had rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ. Their special blessings, standing and privileges were to be taken away. They would be left forlorn and hopeless in this world. As Paul thinks of this situation, he is filled with sorrow and is burdened with heaviness.

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. . .". This verse has been greatly misunderstood by those who say it teaches the idea that a person should be willing to be damned for the glory of God. The Chinese Bible (Kuoyu Union Version) wrongly translates the verse so as to make it mean: "For I am even willing that myself should be accursed, separated from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." But we should note that Paul does not say "For I wish. . ." or "For I do wish. . .", but "For I COULD wish. . .", which is a very different idea. He merely says that if such a thing were

proper, or if it were possible, he would be willing to make such a sacrifice for the salvation of his Jewish kinsmen. Of course it was not proper, nor was it possible. As Charles Hodge points out, "There seems to be a contradiction involved in the very terms of the wish. Can one love God so much as to wish to hate him? Can he be so good as to desire to be bad? We must be willing to give up houses and lands, parents and brethren, and our life also, for Christ and his kingdom, but we are never required to give up holiness for his sake, for this would be a contradiction."

Paul's meaning in verse 3 evidently is, then, that he COULD wish himself separated from Christ for his brethren's sake, if it were not wrong to wish for such a thing, and if the thing wished for were not itself impossible.

Next, in verses 4 and 5, Paul sums up briefly the privileges enjoyed by the children of Israel. He mentions eight particulars, as follows: 1. The adoption. 2. The glory. 3. The covenants. 4. The giving of the law. 5. The service of God. 6. The promises. 7. Descent from the fathers. 8. Human parentage of Christ.

"To whom pertaineth the adoption". The adoption mentioned here cannot be identical with that mentioned in chapter 8, for that adoption is a part of the Christian's experience of salvation. What is spoken of here in chapter 9 is an adoption to external privileges and standing, because Paul is here not talking about Christians and their experience of salvation, but about the natural or national Israel. The children of Israel were chosen from among the nations of the world to receive special privileges and blessings from God. Note the statements of the Old Testament on this subject, such as Ex. 4:22, Deut. 14:1, Jer. 31:9. Israel's external, national adoption and sonship was a type which prefigured the Christian's personal spiritual adoption and sonship. During the whole period from Moses to Christ, the children of Israel enjoyed a special standing and special privileges, and so were nationally God's children even though many of them — sometimes most of them — were personally strangers to God's saving grace.

"And the glory". What glory does the apostle refer to here? Probably he is referring to the Shekinah, the supernatural cloud of glory which appeared in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle and Temple, above the ark of the covenant, sym-

bolically to represent the presence of God among His covenant people in the place where the sacrifices were offered, with the shedding of blood, to atone for sin. See Ex. 40:34; 29:43; Levit. 16:2; 1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron. 5:14; Hag. 2:7. No other nation possessed any such evidence of the living God dwelling in their midst. It was a special privilege of Israel.

"And the covenants". There is only ONE Covenant of Grace, and the entire history of Israel from Abraham to Christ is subordinate to that one Covenant of Grace. But here we read of "the covenants", in the plural. What does this mean? Obviously it cannot mean "the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace", for the Covenant of Works was broken, and superseded by the Covenant of Grace, ages before Abraham was born. By "the covenants" Paul no doubt refers to the various times when God entered into covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the children of Israel, thereby confirming to them special privileges connected with the one Covenant of Grace. While the real spiritual blessing of these covenants (forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation) was given only to a part of the children of Israel, not to all, still there were many blessings and privileges which came to the nation as a whole by reason of the covenant standing.

"The giving of the law". It was the possession of the specially revealed law of God that singled the children of Israel out especially from all other nations of the world. "Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? . . . Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he showed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire" (Deut. 4:33,36). The other nations had their myths and legends, their philosophers and their religious teachers; but Israel had heard the living voice of God, Israel had **divine special revelation**, Israel had the infallible written Scripture, the very word of God.

"And the service of God". This expression evidently means the whole ritual service, everything connected with the priesthood, the sacrifices, the Tabernacle and the Temple. While other nations worshipped in blind ignorance, bowing down to dumb idols or expressing homage to some "unknown God", Israel had divinely appointed ordinances of divine service, ordinances which themselves were revelatory of God's plan of redemption through Christ.

"And the promises". Undoubtedly the reference here is to the **Messianic** promises of the Old Testament, the promises of the coming of a Redeemer, of His person and work, of His kingdom and glory. The Messianic promises, beginning with Genesis 3:15, became more and more definite

and particular as time passed. First it is only "the seed of the woman", then "the seed of Abraham", then it is to be One of the Tribe of Judah, then the Son of David. God made it clear that the promises of a Redeemer were linked with the children of Israel.

"Whose are the fathers". This refers, of course, to the great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, from whom it pleased God to raise up the nation of Israel. The Jews of Paul's day regarded it as a great honor and blessing to be descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and indeed it was, only they should not have rested upon descent from Abraham for their salvation, as many of them seem to have done.

#### Questions:

1. What division of the Epistle to the Romans is closed by the end of chapter 8?
2. What new subject is introduced with the beginning of chapter 9?
3. What would be the attitude of many Jewish readers of the Epistle to the new subject Paul is about to discuss?
4. In view of this attitude on the part of Jewish readers, what special precaution does Paul take in introducing the subject?
5. Does verse 3 mean that Paul was really willing to be accursed from Christ? If not, what is the meaning of his statement?
6. What is the meaning of "the adoption" mentioned in verse 4, and wherein does it differ from the kind of adoption discussed in 8:14-17?
7. What is the probable meaning of "the glory" in 9:4?
8. What are "the covenants" of 9:4, and what was their connection with the Covenant of Grace?
9. How did "the giving of the law" distinguish the children of Israel from all other nations of ancient times?
10. What is included in the expression "the service of God" in 9:4?
11. What kind of promises were specially given to the children of Israel?
12. What Old Testament characters are meant by "the fathers" in 9:5?

## LESSON 35

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

**A. God's Rejection of the Jews and Calling of the Gentiles not Inconsistent with His Promises. 9:1-24, Continued**

**Paul Expresses his Love and Concern for his Jewish Brethren. 9:1-5, Continued**

"And of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." (9:5b).

Here we have presented the crowning honor and glory granted by God to the Jewish people, namely that the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, was, as to His human nature, born of them. The "Seed of the Woman" predicted from of old, was at last born of the descendants of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah and of the royal family of David. But this human descent, important as it was (as shown by the carefully recorded genealogies in Matthew and Luke) was only one aspect of the matter, so the apostle carefully qualifies his statement. He carefully says that it was "as concerning the flesh" that Christ was descended from the children of Israel, for in another sense He was not of human descent at all, but the eternally begotten Son of the Father. "As concerning the flesh" means simply "as to His human nature". The word "flesh" here does not have any sinful implication; it is merely a term to designate that which is human.

"Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." This is one of the great Bible texts which prove the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus Christ. This text teaches the Deity of our Lord so clearly and conclusively that various attempts have been made to translate the Greek so as to avoid this doctrine. The American Revised Version (1901) gives in the text a translation similar to that of the King James Version, but in the margin it gives as an alternative translation the following: "he who is over all, God, be blessed for ever." This takes the statement as applying to God the Father, not to Jesus Christ. The Revised Standard Version (1946) translates: "God who is over all be blessed forever". Various other modern translations give a similar reading, eliminating completely the idea of the Deity of Christ from the text. It may be safely be affirmed that these modern translations of the verse are motivated by doctrinal prejudice (desire to get rid of the idea of the Deity of Jesus Christ), not by the rules and usages of Greek grammar. Charles Hodge says: "There is but one interpretation of this important passage which can, with the least regard to the rules of construction, be maintained". He then sets forth the accepted interpretation which is in harmony with the verse as translated in the King James Version. Henry Alford in his "Greek Testament" translates the expression: "who is God

over all blessed for ever", and adds that this translation is "not only that most agreeable to the usage of the Apostle, but the only one admissible by the rules of grammar and arrangement. It also admirably suits the context: for, having enumerated the historic advantages of the Jewish people, he concludes by stating one which ranks far higher than all, — that from them sprung, according to the flesh, He who is God over all, blessed for ever."

It is obvious that verse 5 embodies a contrast. The apostle has mentioned that Christ, so far as His human nature is concerned, was descended from the children of Israel. But the mention thus of His human nature ("as concerning the flesh") implies that there is more than His human nature, that He has also another nature which is higher than human, His divine nature. So there is a contrast between our Lord's human nature and His divine nature. As to His human nature, He is descended from Israel; but as to His divine nature, He is the One who is over all, He is God, He is blessed for ever.

What honor and glory is here ascribed to our Lord Jesus Christ! He is said to be the One who is GOD OVER ALL. The fact that God is OVER ALL is the fact of His sovereignty; all that exists, except God Himself, is the product of God's work of creation, over which God rules in supreme power and dominion. This absolute sovereignty is here in Romans 9:5 ascribed to Jesus Christ.

In the theological world of the present day, the expressions "the divinity of Christ" and "the deity of Christ" are like money which has gone off the gold standard. These phrases are used constantly as pious camouflage by men who do not for one moment really believe that Jesus Christ is God. These men talk glibly about Christ's "divinity" and His "deity" and thereby deceive many a simple Christian who is not aware of the inflation of theological coinage today. But if sufficiently pressed they may explain what they mean by the "deity" or "divinity" of Christ, and then it becomes evident that they do NOT mean by these terms what the Christian Church through its history has meant by them.

Thus one man will say, "By affirming Christ's divinity I mean that He is perfectly human; His perfect manhood shows Him to be more divine than any other human being." Another will say: "By saying that Christ is divine, I mean that He is the first man who ever dared to be divine". Still another will say: "When I call Christ divine, I do not mean that He is really God, but that He possesses the value of God to us." These are just a few examples of this theological double-talk, here considerably condensed for the sake of

brevity. The men who use language in this way are really dishonest, they are unethical. Language is the currency of thought just as money is the currency of commerce. The man who uses language in other than its commonly accepted meaning, and does not define his terms, is a chiseler and should be regarded with contempt. Lewis Carroll's character, Humpty Dumpty, said: "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less". Many theological scholars, regarded by some as "authorities", use words very much after the fashion of Humpty Dumpty.

Some of these modernists will say right out, without hesitation, that "Jesus is God". This sounds like a real confession of the truth, but it means practically nothing. For the meaning of the statement "Jesus is God" depends entirely on what the person making the statement means by "God". Many modernists have a pantheistic idea of God, that is, they regard God as just "the soul of the universe", "the integral wholeness of things", or some similar concept. They think of God as an aspect of the universe, or as the intelligence or moving power of the universe, but they do not think of God as the Creator who exists independently of His creation. When such men say that they believe that "Jesus is God", this is not because they have a high view of Jesus but because they have an extremely low view of God.

In the Bible there is no doubletalk. And there is no doubletalk in the great historic creeds and confessions of the Christian Church. The Bible and the creeds of the Church speak an honest, gold standard language; their statements are to be taken at face value. And in the text before us the Bible tells us, plainly and simply, the stupendous truth that Jesus Christ is none other than GOD OVER ALL and BLESSED FOREVER. It was this Person, whom we know as the Lord Jesus Christ, that created the starry heavens and the earth (John 1:3). The vast Milky Way with its forty billions of separate stars was created by Him and is sustained in existence by Him from moment to moment. The Andromeda Nebula, affirmed by competent astronomers to be some 4,704,000,000,000,000 miles distant from this earth, is held in the hollow of His hand. To Him a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a

thousand years. He is the Infinite Christ. And yet He became flesh, and dwelt among us. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. He experienced hunger, thirst, and weariness; He was crucified, dead, and buried, and continued under the power of death for a time. But through all this earthly career, in "the days of His flesh", He never ceased for one moment to be GOD OVER ALL, BLESSED FOREVER. He emptied Himself of the glory and joy of heaven that He might experience the humiliation and bitterness of earth, but He never emptied Himself of His Deity. Always He was GOD OVER ALL, BLESSED FOREVER. As Paul exclaimed in another epistle, "Great is the mystery of godliness: GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH. . ." (1 Tim. 3:16).

#### Questions:

1. What was the greatest honor granted by God to the Jewish people?
2. What is the meaning of the expression "as concerning the flesh" in 9:5?
3. Why do some scholars object to the way 9:5 is translated in the King James Version?
4. How does the Revised Standard Version (1946) translate the latter part of verse 5?
5. What did Charles Hodge say concerning the interpretation of 9:5?
6. What contrast is involved in 9:5?
7. What words in verse 5 set forth the sovereignty of God?
8. How are the terms "divinity of Christ" and "deity of Christ" misused at the present day?
9. Why is it dishonest to use language in other than its commonly accepted meaning?
10. Why does the statement "Jesus is God" sometimes not mean what these words properly mean?
11. What divine act is ascribed to Christ in John 1:3?
12. What truth caused Paul to exclaim "Great is the mystery of godliness"?

### LESSON 36

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

##### A. God's Rejection of the Jews and Calling of the Gentiles not Inconsistent with His Promises. 9:1-24, Continued

##### God is Absolutely Sovereign in Bestowing His Favors to Men. 9:6-24

Having expressed his love and concern for his Jewish brethren, in verses 1-5, Paul now takes up

the subject of God's rejection of the Jews and His calling of the Gentiles.

In 9:6-8 the apostle shows that the promises of God were not made to the Jews as such, as natural descendants of Abraham, but to a smaller group called "the children of the promise" who "are counted for the seed" (verse 8).

If God's rejection of the Jews and calling of

the Gentiles involved the breaking of any of God's promises, then it would be "as though the word of God hath taken none effect" (verse 6), that is, it would be as though the word of God had been cancelled or nullified, made void. But Paul says that it is NOT as though the word of God had been cancelled. This means that God's rejection of the Jews and calling of the Gentiles must be regarded as perfectly consistent with all of God's promises and with everything in the Old Testament Scriptures.

But to any zealous Jew such an act on God's part would certainly SEEM to be inconsistent with God's promises and His past actions toward the Jews. So Paul undertakes to explain the apparent inconsistency. He explains that the word "Israel" is used in two different senses: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (9:6). We might paraphrase this, "For not all the people of Israel are genuine Israelites". There is an Israel in the external sense, the nation of Israel, the natural posterity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This external Israel includes people who truly know God and people who do not truly know God. It includes true believers such as Samuel and David, and it includes also wicked men such as Saul and Ahab. In this external sense Saul and Ahab were Israelites just as truly as Samuel and David were.

But within this inclusive external Israel, there is an inner core or kernel of real children of God, true believers, saved persons. This inner core is the real Israel, it is the Israel that has real significance in God's plan, it is the Israel with which God is truly in covenant, it is the Israel to whom the promises were made. It is the vital Israel within the larger body of the external Israel.

It is a very common and harmful error of the present day to hold that the gracious promises of God were made to the inclusive, external nation of Israel, to the natural posterity of Abraham as such. This false notion leads on to various other harmful errors concerning the future of the Jewish nation, the return of the Jews to Palestine, and other related matters. The truth is that the gracious promises of God were made to the spiritual, believing core, the Israel within Israel, "the children of the promise" that "are counted for the seed" (verse 8). Only those in that inner, genuine core had any claim on the promises of God.

To make this plain, Paul continues: "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (9:7,8).

Let us paraphrase this as follows: "Nor are all the people of the nation of Israel to be regarded as children of God just because they are descended from Abraham; for God said to Abraham, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called'. That is to say, those that are mere natural descendants of Abra-

ham, as Ishmael was, are not counted as the children of God, but the children to whom God's promise really belongs, are regarded and treated as the real seed of Abraham."

We should realize that the Jews or the children of Israel were only a part of the descendants of Abraham. Abraham also had a numerous posterity through Ishmael and through the sons of Keturah (Gen. 25:1-18). If mere physical descent is what counts, we will have to admit that Abraham's blood flows in the veins of the Arabs as well as those of the Jews. But nowhere in the Bible is mere physical descent from Abraham made the key to the gracious promises and blessings of God. The promises are made and the blessings given to the group that is truly in covenant with God, not to the inclusive, external nation of Israel.

God made this clear to Abraham when He said to him, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called". Abraham thought that Ishmael might be the promised "seed", and he said to God, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Gen. 17:18). But God had other plans, and He replied to Abraham, "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. BUT MY COVENANT WILL I ESTABLISH WITH ISAAC, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year" (Gen. 17:19-21). Prosperity and worldly success are promised to Ishmael and his descendants, "but my covenant will I establish with Isaac". Then when Ishmael and Hagar were finally cast out, God said to Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen. 21:12). Thus it was made clear to Abraham, during his own lifetime, that the gracious promises of God and the covenant relationship were not to be given to ALL of his posterity, but only to part, to part chosen by God with whom His covenant would be established, and who would be counted as his "seed".

#### Questions:

1. Did God's rejection of the Jews and calling of the Gentiles involve the breaking of any of God's promises?
2. How would the zealous Jews of Paul's day regard the doctrine of God's rejecting the Jews and calling the Gentiles?
3. In what two senses is the word "Israel" used in 9:6?
4. What were the characteristics of the smaller "Israel" in contrast to those of the larger "Israel"?

5. What harmful error concerning the promises of God to Israel is very common today?

6. Why did God say to Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called"?

7. How can it be shown that mere physical descent from Abraham was never the key to the gracious promises and blessings of God?

8. What idea did Abraham have concerning Ishmael?

9. What promises did God make concerning Ishmael, and what different promise did He make concerning Isaac?

10. What people besides the Jews are descended from Abraham?

## LESSON 37

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

#### A. God's Rejection of the Jews and Calling of the Gentiles not Inconsistent with His Promises. 9:1-24, Continued

##### God is Absolutely Sovereign in Bestowing His Favors on Men. 9:6-24, Continued

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

God's sovereignty in bestowing His favors on men is exemplified, first, in the birth of Isaac, the divinely-chosen heir to the promise, in spite of Abraham's own ideas about Ishmael (Gen. 17:18). According to man's viewpoint, Ishmael might have been a good choice, but God in His sovereignty rejected Ishmael and chose Isaac (Gen. 17:21).

By God's "sovereignty" we mean God's absolute, unchallengeable supremacy, by reason of which He deals with all His creatures as He Himself sees fit, being responsible to no one but Himself. The Westminster Confession of Faith summarizes God's sovereignty as follows: "God. . . is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever Himself pleaseth. . . To Him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service or obedience He is pleased to require of them" (II 2). There is an expression used many times in the Bible, and also in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, to describe the operation of God's sovereignty: "It pleased the Lord. . .". When we read that "it pleased the Lord" or "it pleased God" to do this, or to do that, we are to understand that we are face to face with God's sovereignty, with an act of God which proceeds from His own choice. We may mention a few instances of this expression. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him" (Isa. 53:10); "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done

whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psalm 115:3); ". . . thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee" (Jonah 1:14); ". . . it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21); "But when it pleased God. . . to reveal his Son in me. . ." (Gal. 1:15,16). From the Confession of Faith: "Therefore it pleased the Lord. . . to reveal Himself. . ." (I.1); "The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by; . . ." (III.7); "Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; . . ." (VII.3); "It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man; . . ." (VIII.1).

We cannot understand the Bible without accepting the truth of the sovereignty of God, and especially we cannot grasp the teaching of Paul's Epistle to the Romans without knowing and accepting this doctrine. God's sovereign acts and choices cannot be explained by human reason, they cannot be justified by maxims of human conduct. There is no Person higher than God, to whom God must give an account of His deeds. He is supreme, He is sovereign, He is responsible only to Himself and not to created beings.

Next, God's sovereignty in bestowing His favors on men is proved by the history of Jacob and Esau. Contrary to all human custom and propriety, God said of Jacob and Esau, "The elder shall serve the younger". According to human custom, especially in eastern lands, the elder brother takes precedence over the younger; the elder is the head of the family whom the younger must obey. But God in His sovereignty can and does reverse this natural and customary order, saying "The elder shall serve the younger."

Moreover, this statement was made by God before Jacob and Esau were born, prior to all action of their own, whether good or evil, as Paul tells us, precisely in order that it might be clear that the decision proceeded from God's sovereignty and not from the conduct of Jacob and Esau

themselves. The choice was announced prior to the birth of Jacob and Esau, "THAT THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION MIGHT STAND, NOT OF WORKS, BUT OF HIM THAT CALLETH" (9:11). If the choice had been announced by God after Jacob and Esau had been born and grown up, it might appear to be based on the good or bad conduct of one or the other of them. But Paul tells us that this purpose of God was ACCORDING TO ELECTION—it was a sovereign choice of God; and it was NOT OF WORKS—not based on the moral character or conduct of Jacob or Esau. He adds, "BUT OF HIM THAT CALLETH"—that is, this choice proceeded from the pure sovereignty of God, to which we human beings can assign no reasons and for which we can give no explanations. Before Jacob or Esau were born, God chose the former and rejected the latter.

We may note here, in passing, that the Arminian notion that God's election is based upon His foresight of men's repentance and faith, is disproved by the passage before us. The Arminian idea is that God, from eternity, saw and knew beforehand what persons would repent and believe, and predestinated or elected unto eternal life those persons whom He foresaw would (of their own free will) repent and believe. According to this idea, God elects people before they are born, but it is still on account of those persons' own actions (repentance and faith) that God chooses them. It has been not unfairly said that according to Arminianism, God from eternity elected those whom He foresaw would elect themselves; or that God from eternity chose those whom He foresaw would someday choose Him. But the apostle Paul cites the choice of Jacob and rejection of Esau BEFORE THEY WERE BORN as evidence that this divine choice was NOT OF WORKS: ". . . that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth"). Evidently Paul did not hold the Arminian view of election, for it never occurred to him to suppose that God might have chosen Jacob, before the latter's birth, because of foreseen repentance, faith, good works, etc. As a matter of fact, the whole Arminian construction of election based on foreseen acts of men simply cannot be fitted in with Paul's argument in Romans 9:10-13.

All non-Christians, as well as many Christians, object violently to the doctrine of sovereign election which is taught in this passage. The purpose of the present series of lessons is not to apologize for the teachings of Scripture, but to expound them. The doctrine of sovereign election is there in the inspired text, and not only in this chapter, not only in the Epistle to the Romans, but throughout the whole Word of God, both Old Testament and New. We may not like it, but it is there, and we cannot eliminate it. If we object to this doctrine, our quarrel is with

God the Holy Spirit, the Author of Holy Scripture.

Verse 13 is quoted from Malachi 1:2,3. "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated". "This passage, as well as the one quoted in verse 12. . . relates to the descendants of Jacob and Esau, and to the individuals themselves; the favor shown to the posterity of the one, and withheld from that of the other, being founded on the distinction originally made between the two brothers. The meaning therefore is, that God preferred the one to the other, or chose one instead of the other. As this is the idea meant to be expressed, it is evident that in this case the word hate means to love less, to regard and treat with less favor" (Charles Hodge). This usage of "love" and "hate" is well known in the Bible, as shown by Matt. 6:24, Luke 14:26, John 12:25, and other places.

The apostle has shown that God is perfectly sovereign in his bestowal of His favors on men. He does not have to conform to any human pattern or principle, He does not have to explain or justify His choices to us. This is proved by the history of Jacob and Esau.

#### Questions:

1. How was God's sovereignty exemplified in His choice of Isaac in preference to Ishmael?
2. What do we mean by God's "sovereignty"?
3. What expression is often used in the Bible and in the Westminster Confession of Faith to describe the operation of God's sovereignty?
4. Give some instances of the use of this expression in the Bible, and in the Confession of Faith.
5. Why is God responsible only to Himself for His decisions and acts?
6. What statement to Rebekah concerning her sons proves the sovereignty of God?
7. What is the importance of the fact that this statement was made before Jacob and Esau were born?
8. How does Paul describe God's purpose of election, in 9:11?
9. What does Romans 9:10-13 show concerning the Arminian teaching that God from eternity elected persons because he foresaw that they would repent and believe?
10. Did God choose Jacob because Jacob was going to become a godly man, or did Jacob eventually become a godly man because God had chosen him?
11. Why do many people object violently to the doctrine of sovereign election?
12. What is the meaning of the statement "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated"?
13. What is the bearing of this discussion of Jacob and Esau on the matter of God rejecting the Jews and calling the Gentiles?

## LESSON 38

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

## A. God's Rejection of the Jews and Calling of the Gentiles not Inconsistent with His Promises. 9:1-24, Continued

## God is Absolutely Sovereign in Bestowing His Favors on Men. 9:6-24, Continued

*Paul's Summary*  
Having set forth the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty, and shown that it is true from the history of Jacob and Esau, Paul next proceeds to deal with two objections which people might raise against this doctrine. These objections, on the surface, seem plausible, and therefore they require to be evaluated and answered.

He takes up the first objection in 9:14-18, and the second one in 9:19-24.

The first objection is that the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty in His bestowal of favors on men, represents God as being unjust. "What shall we say then: Is there unrighteousness with God?" The objection is, in essence, that if God in His sovereignty gives His favor to one person and withholds it from another person, He is unjust or unfair. Back of this objection lies the assumption that in order to be fair or just, God must treat all persons exactly alike. That is to say, back of the objection lies the notion that God OWES SOMETHING TO PEOPLE, that what God gives to one, every other can claim as a right.

Following his usual method, Paul first emphatically denies the point of the objection. He says, "God forbid". Then, having denied it, he proceeds to state his reasons. First he quotes the Old Testament Scripture (Ex. 33:19) to show that God, in His Word, expressly claims this absolute sovereignty: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion". Those were God's own words to Moses; from them there is no appeal. This sovereignty which God so plainly claims for Himself cannot be subordinated to human ideas of "fairness" or "justice". So Paul draws the inference (9:16), "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy". A person's election, his salvation, his receiving the gracious favor of God, does not depend, ultimately, on his own will or decision ("not of him that willeth"), nor upon his own conduct, works or actions ("nor of him that runneth"), BUT UPON THE FREE AND SOVEREIGN GRACE OF GOD ("but of God that showeth mercy").

*13:116 of Lec. 84.*  
Next, Paul illustrates this truth from the history of Pharaoh (9:17): "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared

throughout all the earth". This is quoted from Exodus 9:16. Charles Hodge comments on this: "It is not the design of Pharaoh's creation that is here asserted; but the end for which God determined his appearance and position in the history of the world. Nor does the apostle refer Pharaoh's wickedness to God as its author, but his appearance at that period, the form in which the evil of his heart developed itself, and the circumstances attending its manifestation, were all determined by the providence of God, and ordered for the promotion of his infinitely wise and benevolent purposes".

That is to say, God raised Pharaoh up, and determined the events of his career, not for Pharaoh's own benefit, but for a wider purpose of God — a purpose which involved the destruction of Pharaoh in order that the glory of God might be magnified. It was not that Pharaoh was worse than other Egyptians, nor that he was by nature any worse than Moses or Aaron, but that God might be glorified. God was glorified by Pharaoh's destruction as truly as He was glorified by the salvation of Moses or Aaron.

"The ground, therefore, on which Pharaoh was made an object of the divine justice, or the reason why the law was in his case allowed to take its course, is not to be sought in any peculiarity of his character or conduct in comparison with those of others, but in the sovereign pleasure of God" (Charles Hodge). God might have chosen to save Pharaoh and give him eternal life; actually, He chose to bring Pharaoh under judgment unto destruction; the one choice was as proper for God as the other.

Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (9:18). This statement forms the conclusion, not only to the preceding verse, but to the entire passage consisting of verses 14-17. Paul sums it all up by an unqualified affirmation of the sovereignty of God in bestowing His gracious favor upon men. God has mercy on those on whom He chooses to have mercy; He withholds mercy from those whom He chooses to withhold mercy. Those from whom He chooses to withhold mercy, are inevitably hardened in their sins.

To return to the question, "Is there unrighteousness with God?" (9:14) — does the doctrine of God's sovereignty imply that God is unjust, or unfair? We have already remarked that back of the objection there lies an assumption that God is somehow under obligation to treat all persons exactly alike, to give to all what He gives to any. But this idea that God must distribute His favors with absolute equality, like a ration

board issuing coupons to purchase commodities during war time, is not founded upon the Bible, but upon sinful human prejudices.

Justice means to give every person what that person **DESERVES**. God would be unjust if He were to punish those who deserve to be rewarded. He would be unjust if He were to reject persons who deserve to be elected, if He were to treat the righteous as if they were wicked. Such action on God's part would certainly be **UNJUST**, it would certainly be **UNFAIR**.

But that is not the real situation at all. The whole human race has fallen away from God and is sunk in sin. Of all this mass of human beings, there is none that deserves anything from God except His wrath and curse, judgment unto condemnation, punishment in hell. That is what **ALL MANKIND ALIKE** deserves. If God were to condemn and punish all mankind alike, it would not be unjust, it would only be what men deserve, it would be strictly in accordance with justice.

But out of the mass of fallen humanity God in His sovereignty has elected **SOME**—not all, but some — to eternal life. This is not because they deserve it, but because of the free mercy and love of God granted to the elect. Now the objector comes and says, "God is unjust; if He saves any, He must save all; He has no right to give salvation as a free gift to some, and leave others to perish in their own sins."

But where does the objector get this idea that "God has no right" to give to some what He withholds from others? Even men do not act on such a principle. If we give a dime or a quarter to a hungry man to buy some food, are we unfair if we do not give the same amount to every hungry man in the world? Why is God obligated to do for all what He does for some? Neither from Scripture nor from reason can such a claim be vindicated. This objection comes from Satan, the father of lies, who wants men to impugn the justice of God.

Certainly the Bible represents God as treating men **UNEQUALLY**, in giving mercy to some while withholding it from others. But this is not injustice, for God owes nothing to any human being, and He never punishes any person except as that person himself deserves.

#### Questions:

1. What objection to the doctrine of God's sovereignty does Paul take up in 9:14-18?
2. What assumption lies back of this objection in the minds of the objectors?
3. What does Paul first say in reply to this objection?
4. What statement of God does Paul quote from Exodus and what is the bearing of this statement on the objection being faced?
5. What is the meaning of the statement of 9:16?
6. How is God's sovereignty illustrated in the history of Pharaoh?
7. Why was Pharaoh judged and punished for sin when Moses was saved and given eternal life?
8. What happens in a person's life and character when God's saving mercy is withheld from that person?
9. Does God have to issue His gracious favors with absolute equality like a ration board issuing coupons?
10. What is the meaning of Justice?
11. What kind of action on God's part would really be unjust?
12. Why would it not be unjust for God to condemn and punish the entire human race without electing and saving any?
13. What is the real source of the idea that "God has no right" to withhold from some what He gives to others?

### LESSON 39

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

##### A. God's Rejection of the Jews and Calling of the Gentiles not Inconsistent with His Promises. 9:1-24, Continued

##### God is Absolutely Sovereign in Bestowing His Favors on Men. 9:6-24, Continued

Paul has already disposed of one objection to the doctrine of God's sovereignty in bestowing gracious favors upon men, namely the objection that this doctrine represents God as being unjust or unrighteous. This objection was answered in 9:14-18.

The apostle now takes up the second objection to the doctrine. This objection is, essentially, the claim that the doctrine of God's sovereignty destroys human responsibility. The claim is that if God is sovereign in bestowing salvation on men, then men are not themselves responsible for their sinful condition and their sinful actions.

"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" (9:19.) If God has decreed from all eternity, of His mere good pleasure, to redeem part of the

human race from their sins, while passing by the rest and leaving them to perish in their sins, then — so ran the objection — why does God hold men responsible for their sinful condition and life? Everything is foreordained by God from all eternity; nobody can possibly thwart or successfully resist this eternal decree of God; men fulfil the divine decree in spite of themselves; so why should God hold them responsible? Does not the doctrine of divine sovereignty reduce men to mere puppets manipulated by strings, to mere machines with no real freedom of their own? Such was the thinking involved in the objection “Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?”

If Paul had held the Arminian theology which is so common and so popular today, he could have answered this second objection very easily. He would only have needed to say, “God’s eternal decree of election is based on His foresight of men’s future actions. God from eternity foresaw who would repent and believe, and who would not. All God’s decree of election means is that He has decided to choose those whom He foresaw would of their own accord repent and believe. Therefore this doctrine does not destroy human responsibility at all. It is man and not God that really decides the great question of salvation.” If Paul had had the Arminian scheme in mind, we should certainly expect him to answer the objection by some such statement as the above. But he did nothing of the kind. Instead of explaining God’s sovereign election away, saying it is really only a following-up of man’s own decision, Paul answers the objection in a very different way.

He does not tone down the divine sovereignty nor try to explain it away. Nor does he undertake to reason with the objector on the basis of human logic or philosophy. Instead, Paul rules the objection out of court by citing the Creator-creature relationship. “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (9:20).

The man who argues against the divine sovereignty on the ground that it destroys human responsibility **forgets that he is a creature and God is the Creator**. This man holds that he cannot be responsible for his acts if God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. He sets up an antithesis between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, and says: Either God is sovereign, or man is responsible, one or the other, but not both. And then he proceeds to deny God’s sovereignty in order to hold on to man’s responsibility.

This man who forgets that he is a creature and God is the Creator, thinks that he cannot be responsible for his acts unless he is the ultimate, absolute originator of them — unless his acts are outside of the great eternal plan of God. In other words, he holds that man cannot be responsible as long as God is really God.

The truth is, of course, that all that comes to pass has been foreordained by God from all eternity, yet man is a free agent and is therefore morally responsible for the state of his heart and for his thoughts, words and deeds. This involves a paradox which human reason cannot solve — an apparent contradiction. How God can be sovereign and man can be free (and responsible) is, we repeat, a paradox which human reason cannot solve. But we are not intended to try to solve it by human reason. This paradox will be a stumbling-block only to the person who insists on exalting human reason above the divine revelation in the Bible. There is not the slightest question as to the fact that the Bible teaches BOTH God’s sovereignty and man’s freedom (and responsibility). If we give up either of these truths, we only land in far greater problems and difficulties. The only safe course, and the only right course, is to take what the Bible tells us, and leave the insoluble mystery to God. We should beware of any teacher who claims that he can solve this paradox. It has been recognized for centuries that it cannot be solved; it is one of the secret things that belong to the Lord our God. We should firmly hold on to BOTH the truth of God’s sovereignty and that of man’s responsibility, and reverently refuse to attempt to cut the knot by human reason.

As Paul points out, a recognition of the Creator-creature relationship should keep us from raising such an objection as that of verse 19. The person who is willing for God really to be God will not raise it. The person who has the slightest notion of the infinite greatness of the Creator and the absolute dependence of the creature will not raise it. The person who has any truly religious reverence for God as his Creator and Sustainer, the One in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being, will not raise such an objection. He will humbly acknowledge that God has foreordained all that comes to pass, and still man is free and responsible. God has foreordained man’s acts without thereby destroying man’s freedom.

God is the Potter, and man is the clay. God has so created and fashioned man that man’s actions are free — he is responsible for them — and yet they are foreordained by God from eternity. Those who object to this are not willing to be the clay in God’s hands; they want to dictate to the divine Potter.

For the clay is dependent, but the Potter is independent. If man were independent, as God alone really is, his free actions could not have been foreordained. But precisely because man as a creature is dependent upon God, the Independent Creator and Ruler of all, man’s actions are free even though foreordained. God created man that way. He fashioned man to be that kind of a creature. God fashioned man as a being whose actions are to be foreordained and yet free. God fashioned man as a dependent being, to think

God's thoughts after Him and to live out in human history the plan that God had made in eternity. God did not create man to be an independent being, the absolute originator of his own ideas and acts.

Man is not only a creature of God, and therefore dependent on God; he is also a SINFUL creature of God, and therefore without any claim on the love and mercy of God. God has a perfect right to elect some sinful human beings to eternal life, while passing by others and punishing them for their sin. This involves no injustice, it gives no one any ground for complaint. The reprobate are punished for their sins; that is only what they deserve. The elect are saved from their sins; that is the free mercy of God, which He gives to whom He will.

Paul next calls the objector's attention to something else that he has forgotten, namely that the punishment of wicked men, no less than the salvation of the elect, serves to manifest the glory of God. This is brought out in verses 22-24. God in much long-suffering endures the "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction", because He is "willing to show his wrath" and "to make his power known". "The punishment of the wicked is not an arbitrary act, having no object but to make them miserable; it is designed to manifest the displeasure of God against sin, and to make known his true character. On the other hand, the salvation of the righteous is designed to display the riches of his grace. Both in the punishment of the one class and the salvation of the other, most important and benevolent ends are to be answered" (Charles Hodge).

Our own age, with its unbalanced and unbiblical over-emphasis on the love of God, has all but forgotten that the punishment of the wicked glorifies God as truly as does the salvation of the elect. The punishment of the wicked manifests God's JUSTICE, as the salvation of the elect manifests His MERCY. Today we have all but forgotten that there really are people whom the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture calls "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction". Yet this is a truth of God's Word beyond a doubt.

If we had a truly Biblical viewpoint and emphasis, we would marvel, not that some human beings are eternally lost, but that any are saved. That is the real wonder. The early Church, as portrayed in the New Testament, was not scandalized by the idea that some human beings are

vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. That was quite obvious. But the early Church was filled with a great wonder and amazement at the Good News that God had provided salvation at all for sinful human beings.

Paul points out, then (9:22-24) that God is glorified BOTH in the destruction of the wicked and in the salvation of the elect. He adds that the elect, who shall be saved, are "not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles" — something which seems obvious to us today, but which was a new and difficult truth in Jewish and Jewish-Christian circles, at the time he was writing this epistle.

#### Questions:

1. What is the second objection to the doctrine of divine sovereignty which Paul takes up?
2. If Paul had held the Arminian theology, how could he easily have answered this second objection?
3. How does Paul first deal with the objection that God's sovereignty rules out man's responsibility?
4. What is the meaning of the term "paradox"?
5. What great paradox is involved in man's relation to his Creator?
6. What will be the result if we deny either God's sovereignty or man's freedom?
7. To what kind of people will this paradox be a stumblingblock?
8. What should be our attitude toward this great paradox of divine sovereignty and human freedom?
9. What truth is implied in the fact that God is the Potter and man is the clay?
10. What is involved in the truth that God fashioned man as a dependent being?
11. Why is it not unjust or wrong for God to elect some to eternal life while passing by others and leaving them to perish in their sin?
12. In what ways does the destruction of wicked men manifest God's glory?

**Note:** This series of lessons on the Epistle to the Romans will be continued in our next issue.—Ed.

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## **CORRESPONDENCE**

From an alert reader the editor has received a most interesting letter which contains the following paragraphs, which are well worth publishing here:

"Recently I have read the April-June (1951) 'Blue Banner Faith and Life'; as always I have found it a blessing.

"In reading over on page 60, I noticed the

article speaking of Luther climbing the steps of St. Peter's Cathedral on his knees. It is my impression that this was not St. Peter's Cathedral but the Santa Scala — the Holy Stairs. I think I am correct in this, though of course in such things there is always a possibility of mistake. However, there are only three or four steps up to St. Peter's but the Holy Stairs are those which all Roman Catholics hope one day to climb on their knees. I am sure you know the history of them; they are the stairs which the Roman Catholic Church says were in Pilate's Judgment Hall. I think they are probably correct in this. These were brought over to Rome by Constantine's mother and since that time the Roman Catholic Church has taught that one of the best ways to help earn one's way to heaven is to climb these stairs upon the knees. A prayer is said on each stair. Actually the Passionist Fathers have control of these, and I have purchased their little booklets there giving the prayers that are supposed to be said. I have seen the halt and the aged struggling to go up those stairs on their knees, and I have never been so moved with indignation against the Roman Catholic system as standing there and seeing these poor people trying to earn their way to Heaven with the truth kept from them that Heaven is by grace through faith alone — gratis, without price.

"A very interesting thing happened one time to me there. There are a couple of small stairways at the side, by which you can go up and look down. So many million have crawled up those stairs through the centuries that the marble has almost completely worn away, and they have been covered with boards nobody knows how many times, until the new boards too have worn thin. As I stood there with the Chapel at my back in which the Pope says Mass once a year, I think, and which contains the image which supposedly fell down from Heaven, not made by

human hands, there was an Italian by my side. He looked at my face and said, 'You are not a Roman Catholic, are you?' I was so moved with the thing I saw that it must have showed on my face. I answered him in a voice louder than I meant it to be, 'No, and I feel about these stairs just the way Martin Luther felt about them'. At my tone and the name of Luther, the Italian disappeared like a rabbit into the bush when a shot is fired. It was amusing, but it was not to me then, for my heart was heavy with grief for those poor people."

#### Comment

We wish to thank the writer of the above letter for the trouble he has taken to write us. The statement in the April-June 1951 issue (page 60) to the effect that Luther climbed "the steps of St. Peter's Cathedral on his knees" is substantially identical with what appears in many histories of the Reformation and biographies of Luther. It is evident from the more recent books on Luther that our correspondent is correct concerning the particular stairway involved. We are glad to publish the above paragraphs from his letter for the exact and interesting information which they contain. — Ed.

#### A Correction

In the July-September 1951 issue (Vol. 6 No. 3), page 157, column 1, last paragraph of the review of *THE SEED OF ABRAHAM*, the word "not" should be added at the end of the third line of the paragraph, so as to read: "The author holds that denominational church government is a mere human contrivance for reasons of expediency and that Scripture does not require any structure of church government beyond the limits of the local congregation". Thanks are expressed to the reader who called attention to this error. — Ed.

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## *Sketches from Our History*

### *Contending for the Faith Through the Ages*

#### CHAPTER VI

#### THE DAWN OF THE REFORMATION

##### 5. Luther and Cardinal Cajetan

After the publication of Luther's Ninety-five Theses against the doctrine of Indulgences, the Pope ordered Luther to appear at Rome within sixty days. For Luther to have obeyed this summons would have meant certain death. Luther would have become a second John Huss. On the other hand, to disobey such an order would be an act of insubordination to the authority of the Church. From this dilemma Luther was deliver-

ed by the influence of Frederick the Third, Elector of Saxony (called "Elector" because he was one of the German princes holding the right to a vote in the election of the emperor of the Holy Roman (i.e., German) Empire). Frederick favored Luther, and he also regarded the Pope's summons as an attack on the University of Wittenberg, which was under the Elector's jurisdiction. The Emperor Maximilian of the Holy Roman (German) Empire also regarded the Pope's summons in the same light. The result

was that the Pope, Leo X, withdrew the summons, and as a substitute arranged to send a papal Legate to the city of Augsburg, Germany, to confer with Luther.

The man chosen as the Pope's representative to meet with Luther was Thomas de Vio, whose official title in the Church was Cardinal Cajetan. Cardinal Cajetan was an Italian by birth, a monk of the Dominican Order, and a theologian of considerable learning and ability. Unlike many Italian cardinals of his day, Cajetan had the reputation of being a pious man and one who practiced rigorous self-denial. He was known to be favorable to a moderate reform of the Roman Catholic Church. At a later period of his life he favored certain concessions to the Protestants, especially allowing the clergy to marry and giving the lay Christians the wine as well as the bread in the Communion service. But in spite of this favorable attitude toward moderate reform of the Church, Cajetan as a member of the Dominican Order felt that he must defend the extreme claims of the papacy. Consequently he proved utterly unbending with reference to the claims and prerogatives of the Pope.

The Pope had chosen an able man to confer with the monk Luther, whom he regarded as a dangerous upstart. In academic learning Cajetan had the advantage over Luther, although the latter was well educated. But so far as the heart of the Gospel was concerned, Cardinal Cajetan was a blind man. With all his learning, and with all his zeal, he was completely and blindly committed to the sacerdotal view of Christianity (that is, the view that divine saving grace comes to men from God, not directly, but through the mediation of the official priesthood of the Church, by means of the sacraments), and he was completely committed to the claims and pretensions of the papacy. Cajetan was willing and even eager for some reform, but he had no idea of abandoning sacerdotalism in favor of evangelicalism, nor of curtailing in any way the powers of the papacy.

It was October, 1518, when Martin Luther met with the Pope's Legate, Cardinal Cajetan. Cajetan had of course thoroughly studied Luther's Ninety-five Theses and he was an able enough theologian to realize exactly what they meant. When the two men met, the Cardinal immediately singled out just two specific propositions which he demanded that Luther absolutely recant. One of these was a statement in Thesis 58 to the effect the merits of Christ work effectively without the Pope's intervention, therefore the merits of Christ cannot be the "Treasure" supposed to be drawn on in the Indulgences issued by the Pope. The other proposition was found in the "Resolutions" framed upon Thesis 7, by which Luther asserted that the sacraments are without effect unless the person receiving them does so by faith. "Obviously in these two propositions is embodied the essence of evangel-

icalism: salvation the immediate gift of Christ; faith and faith alone the real instrument of reception of grace" (B. B. Warfield in *STUDIES IN THEOLOGY*, N. Y., 1932, pp. 500-1). The Cardinal had put his finger on the real points at issue. The entire interview between him and Luther consisted of a repeated demand that Luther repudiate these two propositions, and a repeated refusal to do so on Luther's part.

When the meeting opened, Luther prostrated himself before the Pope's Legate, as he had been advised to do. Cardinal Cajetan, on his part, treated Luther with a civil courtesy such as men of lower position in the papal Church did not always manifest toward the Reformer. But with respect to the two propositions mentioned above, Cajetan was absolutely insistent. There could be no compromise on those two points. He refused absolutely to enter into any argument with Luther as to the merits of the questions involved. He simply demanded that Luther submit to the Pope's authority and recant on the points specified.

Confronted with this demand, Luther requested time for further consideration which was granted. On the next day he handed to Cajetan a written statement, stating that he could not recant unless he was convinced that the doctrines he held were false, and that he must adhere to all that he had said as Catholic truth. He added, however, that he would be willing to submit to a judicial decision of the Church, and he offered also publicly to defend his Ninety-Five Theses against all comers. Cajetan received this document with a smile, but agreed to receive a more detailed reply later.

On the next day, October 14, 1518, Luther brought his reply to the Cardinal. In this paper, he insisted absolutely on the supremacy of Holy Scripture above all other authorities, even above the decree of the Pope. He refused to compromise on the two crucial propositions which the Cardinal had demanded he recant. But he asked Cajetan to intercede for him with Pope Leo X, that the pope might not thrust his soul, which was seeking the light, out into darkness. At the same time Luther stated that he could not act contrary to his own conscience, and must obey God rather than men; and he added that he was fully confident that the verdict of the Scriptures would be on his side.

When Luther handed this paper to Cajetan, the Cardinal again tried to persuade the Reformer to recant. When Luther refused to do this and tried to argue on the merits of the questions, Cajetan interrupted him with a curt command, "Revoke". He threatened Luther and his friends with the dire penalty of excommunication if they would not submit to the judgment of Rome. Finally the Cardinal said, "Revoke, or do not come again into my presence."

(To be continued)

## Reviews of Religious Books

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

THE WORK AND WORDS OF JESUS, by Archibald M. Hunter. The Westminster Press, Witherspoon Bldg., Philadelphia 7, Pa. 1950, pp. 196. \$2.50.

The author of this book is Professor of Biblical Criticism in Aberdeen University, Scotland. After a brief historical sketch of "The Quest of the Historical Jesus" (pp. 9-14), a section on "Sources and Chronology" and one on "The Background" (Geography, History and Religion), the author takes up the life, words, and works of Jesus from His birth to His resurrection. This forms the body of the book and covers pages 29-130. There follow three Appendices, in which the author presents "The Gospel Sources" as reconstructed by modern Historical Criticism: I. The Text of Q ("the sayings-source behind Matthew and Luke). II. The Text of M (matter peculiar to Matthew). III. The Text of L (Matter peculiar to Luke).

The author attempts to defend orthodox Christianity, but it is a weak and lukewarm attempt for it involves surrendering the outposts of Christianity to modern unbelief. Even a casual examination of the volume is sufficient to show that the author does not accept the infallibility of the Bible. Over and over again he intimates that particular passages are unreliable or cannot be taken at face value. He admits that "Q" is "a first-rate source", states that "L" must be judged second only to Mark and Q, our primary sources", and of "M" he says: "Most scholars admit that the narratives found only in Matthew are of small historical value" (p. 17). Concerning the Gospel of John, he says that in it "history and interpretation are inextricably interwoven" and "we cannot use it in precisely the same way as we use the Synoptics" (Matthew, Mark and Luke) (p. 17). He adds: "To say all this is not to aver that the Fourth Gospel is devoid of historical value — far from it" (p. 17). He concludes this section thus: "Therefore, while we cannot reckon the Fourth Gospel among our main sources, we cannot ignore it . . ." (p. 18).

Concerning the Virgin Birth of Christ, the author says: "Some will judge the evidence sufficient for belief; others will find it inadequate. . . perhaps a majority will feel that the tradition of the Virgin Birth is entirely congruous with the whole picture of Christ in the New Testament"

(p. 30). The account of the Temptation of Jesus is affirmed to be "poetry, not prose" (p. 38). Concerning the miracle of raising Jairus' daughter from the dead: ". . . we may take quite literally Jesus' words about Jairus' daughter, 'The child is not dead but sleepeth' and explain this as a case of coma" (p. 58). Again, "Or in the story of the Gerasene maniac we may reasonably question Mark's statement that Jesus transferred the evil spirits to the swine (as being something quite 'out of character' in Jesus) and, while refusing to doubt that Jesus cured the maniac, hold rather that the wild gesticulations of the maniac sent the swine into a headlong panic" (p. 58).

Isaiah 53 is attributed to "Second Isaiah" (p. 77). Concerning the Judgment scene of Matt. 25:31-46 the author says: ". . . we cannot rely on the general picture it provides" (p. 106). Concerning a whole series of passages (Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62; Luke 12:40; Matt. 24:44; Luke 18:8b; Matt. 10:23; Matt. 25:31) he says: "Critical scholarship will not allow us to accept all these passages as good evidence" (p. 108). The account of the Ascension of Jesus found in Acts 1:9 is dismissed as "not acceptable to the modern man" (p. 128). What is "acceptable to the modern man" seems, indeed, negatively at least, to be the author's final criterion of truth. If something is not "acceptable to the modern man", it is to be doubted or rejected.

The book is a half-hearted affirmation of many conservative positions after the basis of an infallible Bible has been abandoned. At every crucial point in the Gospel history — the Virgin Birth, the Temptation of Jesus, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Ascension — at every one of these crucial points the author is mildly hesitant, lukewarm and half-hearted. The note of solid, enthusiastic conviction is conspicuously absent from this volume. The author's voice is a wavering voice; his message about "the work and words of Jesus" is shot through with doubts, denials and uncertainties. Certainly this is not the message about Christ that a weary and sinful world needs. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8).

The author is evidently a person of distinction in the theological world of Scotland. We must lament:

"Alas! Alas! for Scotland! the once beloved of heaven;

The crown is fallen from her head, her holy garment riven."

Considerable space has been devoted to the review of this unsound, harmful and faith-destroying book in the hope that all readers of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" will realize that publications of The Westminster Press (official publishing house of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. A.) cannot be assumed to be true to orthodox Christianity. No Bible-believing Church should make use of Sabbath School helps or other publications from this source without subjecting the materials to rigid scrutiny to determine their faithfulness to the Bible as the Infallible Word of God.

— J. G. Vos

10,000 BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATIONS, by Charles E. Little. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1951, pp. 632. \$4.95.

In his introduction, Mr. Little has given a fine evaluation of the proper use of illustrations and stresses the fact that Biblical illustrations dignify an address and crystallize a moral lesson in an impressive way. There is a great need to return to the use of Biblical illustrations. This book is designed to help pastors, teachers, students and writers find and use illustrations from Scripture. On the fly-leaf he states that the book contains 7,891 Scripture texts, 10,000 illustrations, 30,000 cross references alphabetically arranged under 1,800 topical headings. One has to examine the book for some time to comprehend the large volume of material in it and the hours of labor that the author has expended on this work.

The illustration for each topic has been well chosen. On the jacket the publishers have made claims which exceed those of the author in his preface. For instance, they say, "First of all this volume places at your disposal an exhaustive selection of no less than 10,000 Biblical illustrations on hundreds of subjects of perennial interest." Mr. Little has given illustrations for over 10,000 topics, but he has given, on the whole, only one illustration for each topic, although in some cases he has given two, rarely more. Yet on some topics the Bible has many illustrations. For instance, for "answered prayer" the author gives the illustration of Solomon's asking for wisdom and God's giving him that and more besides. But many other illustrations of "answered prayer" could be given. The author's purpose is not to give an "exhaustive" list of illustrations, but to illustrate as many topics as possible. This he has well done. Anyone who has a desire to use Biblical illustrations will find this book of great value, for the author has made it convenient for one to find a good illustration for any one of over 10,000 topics.

The value of the book is increased by an

easy-to-follow, numbered cross-reference system. Mr. Little deserves our thanks for placing so many illustrations in such a readily accessible form. He quotes sufficient Scripture each time so that if a person has a fair knowledge of the Bible he will not have to turn to it to get the full story of the illustration. If you are interested in good Biblical illustrations this is a book for you.

— Philip W. Martin

THE MAIN TRAITS OF CALVIN'S THEOLOGY, by Bela Vasady. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1950, pp. 43. \$1.00.

The development of the Reformed tradition in Protestantism is usually assumed to be the exclusive possession of the West. To those in America whose forbears came from the British Isles or the Netherlands such an assumption is understandable. However there was a strong Calvinistic movement that turned from Geneva eastward, and made its most lasting impression in Hungary.

Dr. Bela Vasady has been in this country since 1946 as a visiting lecturer. He has been a leader in the Reformed Church of Hungary, and was professor on the Reformed Theological Faculty at the University of Debrecen, and President of the Theological Department of the 400-year-old College of that city.

This small volume is a translation from the Magyar language, and is an analysis of the theology of Calvin's "Institutes". No attempt is made here to analyze any of the other material that came from Calvin's pen.

In the West we have been trained to think in terms of "The Five Points of Calvinism" because the chief attack upon the Reformed Faith came at specific areas which could best be refuted by those "Five Points". While Dr. Vasady, directing his analysis toward the perspective peculiar to the twentieth century, seeks to appropriate certain common phrases and ideas and apply them to an understanding of the primary thrust of Calvin's theology. He has taken five underlying aspects of this theology, calling them: "belief-ful pragmatism", "belief-ful realism", "belief-ful totalitarianism", "belief-ful agnosticism" and "belief-ful antinomism".

There is the danger of being misunderstood in the use of words which have already received a set pattern in their ordinary usage. However Dr. Vasady seeks to put the continually contemporary "new wine" of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God into the new "wine-skins" of a fresh vocabulary.

To those who are interested in interpreting the Word of God to modern inquirers, this little book will prove stimulating.

—S. Bruce Willson

**THE DRIFT OF WESTERN THOUGHT**, by Carl F. H. Henry. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1951, pp. 164. \$2.50.

Billy Graham writes in the Introduction to this volume: "The ability of the Christ of the Bible to lift our age out of the shambles of paganism runs through this series of lectures as a constant note. Penetrating and persuasive, these lectures will long be recalled by the thousands who heard them in person and by radio, as a sober and scholarly presentation of the only cure for an otherwise fatal sickness of our era."

Dr. Carl Henry continues to use the pen effectively to plead the cause of a Biblical Christianity as the only cure for the tragically partitioned world in which we live. But he points out that the most significant partition is not geographical (east and west), nor temporal (ancient, medieval and modern), but ideological — "a diverse way of discerning facts and of assessing their importance."

To those who have been confused by the welter of conflicting philosophies it will be refreshing to find in this series of lectures a sincere effort to understand the basic thrust of modern movements of thought. Western thought has attempted many times to use Christian language, while depriving it of its real content. It has drifted from its moorings. It can no longer distinguish the source of any certainty. It no longer assumes an ultimate dependence upon the REVELATION of God.

The extent of our "drift" can only be appreciated in a candid recognition of the alternatives we face. "The real alternative to Biblical revelation as qualitatively unique is the denial of Biblical revelation; the real opposition to Hebrew-Christian revelation is a Liberalism from which the enduring significance of Jesus Christ is forever eliminated; . . . The alternatives consistently reduce, in our day as in any, to Biblical theology or naturalistic nihilism" (p. 160).

— S. Bruce Willson

**THE CHRISTIAN AND LITERATURE**, A Symposium. Piet Hein Publishers, 1145 Cass Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 7, Mich. 1951, pp. 47. 75 cents.

"What should be the Christian's attitude toward literature?" — "What are the requirements of 'Christian literature'?" — "Is realism in literature justifiable?" — "What considerations should guide the reading of the Christian?"

These were some of the questions which were directed to the group of six men who write in this symposium on Christian Literature. A group of young men in the Christian Reformed Church posed these questions to some of the leaders of their church. One of the writers summarizes the problem in two questions:

1. How am I, in this day of religious and moral confusion, to write in a truly Christian manner?

2. How am I, as a Christian, to conduct myself consistently in my reading?

The authors point out the inadequacy of judging all literature simply on the basis of whether it avoids profanity, perversity, or filth; for this is simply a negative judgment. Not all literature can be deleted from our reading list because it does not have an ecclesiastical flavor, or argue the relative value of some current standard of moral conduct. The real problem, as projected in this discussion, is How does our literature measure up to the ultimate standard of our Christian life: "the chief end of human life is to know God"—?

After reading the 47 pages of this booklet one cannot but be challenged to examine carefully the motives of our reading. Is the literature of which we approve, truly to the glory of God?

— S. Bruce Willson

**THE CASE FOR THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST**, by Chester E. Tulga. Conservative Baptist Fellowship, 2561 North Clark Street, Chicago 14, Ill. 1951, pp. 61, paper cover. 25 cents.

At the beginning of this little book, Dr. Tulga says: "The misinterpretation and the misuse of the doctrine of the atonement is one of the besetting sins of modern Protestantism. Christianity has fallen upon evil days when its very foundations are questioned and its basic truths are either denied or distorted by self-willed interpreters. Men forsaking the authority of the Scriptures, deny the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, deny the atoning element in His death and offer to a sin-sick world theories of salvation of their own devising, based upon the offerings of Cain rather than the sacrifice of Abel (Heb. 11:4)".

The author continues: "The time has come when the fundamental biblical teachings concerning the death of Christ must be restated and reaffirmed to a gainsaying world, to an unbelieving biblical scholarship, to a ministry which has drifted from the truth. Where there is no atonement there is no gospel, and where there is no gospel there is no salvation, and where there is no salvation there is no assurance. In studying the doctrine of the atonement, we face the heart of the Christian faith, the basis of Christian experience, the very fountain-head of Christian ethics (love and justice) and our assurance of eternal life, through the forgiveness of sins. Modern liberalism considers the atonement from the standpoint of sinful man; the biblical writers present the atonement from the standpoint of Divine Revelation, a significant difference with far-reaching consequences." These statements are well said and very much to the point at the present day.

The book is a defence of the "satisfaction" or substitutionary doctrine of the atonement on the basis of the Scriptures. Dr. Tulga regards the Scriptures as fully inspired and authoritative, and their verdict as final.

The writing is in a clear, readable style, easy to understand. The author does not commit the error of dealing only in general statements; he cites and expounds numerous particular texts and passages of Scripture. It is clearly shown that the Bible teaches the satisfaction doctrine of the atonement, over against the various theories of modernism, liberalism and "neo-orthodoxy". In particular, the author ably shows that the false theories of the atonement, especially those of modern liberalism, are based upon a false, sentimental, unbiblical idea of the love of God, as well as upon a false view of human sin.

The author does not deal with the question of the extent of the atonement (that is, the question of whether the intended purpose of Christ's atonement was to satisfy divine justice with respect to the sins of the elect, or with respect to the sins of all mankind in general). The booklet is not intended to be a study of all aspects of the doctrine of the atonement, but a defence of its substitutionary and expiatory character over against modern denials of these truths.

This book can be heartily recommended.

—J. G. Vos

**THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST**, by Chester E. Tulga. Conservative Baptist Fellowship, 2561 North Clark Street, Chicago 14, Ill. 1951, pp. 59, paper cover. 25 cents.

The prevalence of "Neo-orthodoxy" with its typical yes-and-no attitude toward the great historic facts of redemption renders a new affirmation of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ absolutely necessary. In his Introduction Dr. Tulga quotes from a number of modern writers, both orthodox and otherwise. Among these are Emil Brunner, who wrote in his book *THE MEDIATOR* as follows: "Whosoever asserts that the New Testament gives us a definite consistent account of the resurrection is either ignorant or unconscientious". The situation today is that Neo-orthodox writers loudly claim to believe in the resurrection of Christ, yet they subtly explain it away as something other than a real historical fact. And the older Liberalism and Modernism are by no means dead, though partly eclipsed by the newer movement of Neo-orthodoxy.

Following a Foreword and an Introduction, Dr. Tulga's study is divided into six sections, as follows: I. The Place of the Resurrection in the New Testament. II. The Importance of the Resurrection. III. The Nature of the Resurrec-

tion. IV. The Credibility of the Resurrection. V. The Results of the Resurrection. VI. The Resurrection and the Christian Believer. There is also a concluding Summary.

In the section on "The Nature of the Resurrection", the author defends the bodily reality of Christ's resurrection, including the empty tomb, against theories which reduce it to mere "visionary or spiritualistic appearances". He says: "Liberalism is vainly trying to cling to the 'Easter faith' without accepting the 'Easter fact'".

This would be an excellent book for study by a young married people's or adults' group. It is a pleasure to recommend it heartily.

— J. G. Vos

**THE HEBREW SANCTUARY: A STUDY IN TYPOLOGY**, by Wallace B. Nicholson. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1951, pp. 67, paper cover. \$1.00.

The author of this study of the Hebrew Sanctuary is Minister of the Free Church of Scotland, Vancouver, British Columbia. In his Preface he states that "For various reasons the study of this subject has been generally outmoded, but it is a theme which is in every sense worthy of the earnest study of the Christian." This is certainly a true statement. The study of Biblical typology in general, and of the Tabernacle in particular, has been "outmoded" largely because of the influence of modern "Liberal" theology which has cast discredit upon the divine authorship and infallibility of the Bible. There can be no real typology on the Liberal basis, for Liberalism denies the organic unity and integrity of the Bible, and so of course rejects the idea that particular details of the Old Testament are divinely intended prefigurations of specific realities of the New Testament Redemption and Revelation. It is no wonder, therefore, that Liberalism has abandoned the study of typology.

On the other hand, an extravagant and often fantastic species of typology is common in Fundamentalist circles today, as exemplified, for instance, by the Scofield Reference Bible, which asserts that Abraham in arranging for Isaac's marriage was "a type of a certain king who would make a marriage for his son (Matt. 22:2; John 6:44)" and that Abraham's servant who was sent to fetch Rebekah was a "type of the Holy Spirit", while Rebekah is a "type of the Church", and many other equally far-fetched claims. There exists a sizeable literature expounding this extravagant and too often unwarranted kind of typology. But there is practically nothing of a sound and truly Biblical character available for the ordinary Christian who is not able to read technical works such as those of Fairbairn and others.

It is therefore a cause for thankfulness that Mr. Nicholson has provided students of Scripture with this study of the Hebrew Sanctuary and its typology, a study which is true to the Bible as the infallible Word of God, and which at the same time is ever sober, cautious and moderate in its statements. There is here no ponderous assertion of unproved subjective notions. The author sticks closely to what can be shown from the Scriptures to be truth. For instance, with respect to "The Symbolism of Colour and Numbers" (page 63) the author states that there is evidence for holding that white is an emblem of righteousness or purity, while red is representative of death or life, but beyond this statement he declines to commit himself as to any symbolic significance of the various colors embodied in the Tabernacle and garments of the high priest. This reviewer has seen another book on the same subject which does not hesitate to assign symbolic meanings to the colors blue, purple, scarlet, etc., without giving any evidence or reasons other than the author's mere opinion. Mr. Nicholson's caution is very commendable. He states that with respect to the symbolism of numbers, colors, precious metals and jewels, "caution should be exercised since excessive elaboration tends to lead to puerile interpretations of materials used for convenience, or facts or history referred to which possess no typological significance" (p. 63).

Following an Introduction there is a short chapter on the "General Structure of the Sanctuary" and one on "History of the Sanctuary", which summarize concisely the Biblical facts on the above subjects. Then comes a very able and important discussion of "General Principles of Interpretation", in which types are carefully defined, described, and distinguished from symbols and allegory. Quoting from Fairbairn, the author brings out clearly the important point that what constitutes a type is not merely a resemblance to the antitype (fulfilment of the type), but a God-ordained connection between the type and the antitype. The author says: "Many rules have been given to assist in the correct interpretation of types. The following will be found useful: The type must have some historical basis in Scripture; it must bear a notable resemblance to the antitype; it must bear competent evidence that it was divinely appointed as a type; it must be a type, be susceptible of only one meaning; if typical it must not be of a sinful nature. Nothing in scripture can be considered a proper type which does not possess these characteristics" (pp. 7, 8).

Pages 11-29 present a "Historical Survey of Typology", starting with Philo and Josephus and closing with the twentieth century. This section shows very careful research and provides a wealth of valuable material.

Following this historical survey of the sub-

ject, Mr. Nicholson takes up in turn "The General Significance of the Sanctuary", "The Significance of the Most Holy Place", "The Significance of the Holy Place", "The Significance of the Court of the Sanctuary", "The Significance of the Minister of the Sanctuary", "The Significance of the Sacrifices", and "The Symbolism of Colour and Numbers". At the end of the book there are a Bibliography, an Index of Subjects and an Index of Authors.

The author finds a wealth of truth in the typology of the Sanctuary. His point of view is indicated in the Preface where he states that "the symbols of the Mosaic Sanctuary contain the fundamental doctrines of Christianity as the golden casket in the most holy place treasured up the Law, which is holy, and just, and good, and contains as its quintessence the terms of the New Covenant as well as the old."

It is a pleasure to recommend this book without reservation. It is full of light, help and truth; it is truly edifying. Not only ministers but all serious Christians of ordinary education can obtain benefit from it. Any minister intending to preach a series of sermons on the Tabernacle should by all means purchase and study this book with care.

— J. G. Vos

THE MINOR PROPHETS: A COMMENTARY, EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL, by E. B. Pusey. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1950, two volumes, pp. 427 and 504. Per volume, \$3.50.

This is a beautifully lithoprinted photographic reproduction of a work originally published in England in 1860. The author, Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882) is chiefly known for his connection with the so-called Puseyite movement in the Church of England of the last century, more properly called the Tractarian or Oxford Movement. This movement stressed "high" views of the sacraments, especially the doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. Pusey was a man of great learning, and a very careful scholar. It has been said of him that his "chief characteristic was an almost unbounded capacity for taking pains" (Encyclopedia Britannica). In 1828 he was appointed professor of Hebrew in Oxford University, a position which he held for many years. In 1843 he was suspended from preaching for two years because of a sermon he had preached, entitled "The Holy Eucharist a Comfort to the Penitent", which contained teachings that scandalized the authorities of the time. As a result of this suspension, 18,000 copies of the sermon were sold, and Pusey became famous.

Of Pusey's Biblical studies, the most important is the present work on "The Minor Prophets". The twelve Minor Prophets contain a total of

67 chapters in the Bible, and Pusey's Commentary devotes a total of 931 pages to them, so he devotes approximately 14 pages, on the average, to each chapter of the Prophets. This will give an idea of the painstaking thoroughness and detail of his work. The book follows the usual arrangement of commentaries, with a small portion of the Biblical text — three or four lines, rarely more — printed at the top of each page, with the rest of the page devoted to comments, in slightly smaller type.

Pusey's attitude toward the text of Scripture is, of course, an attitude of faith. He was a believer in supernatural, historic Christianity over against the rationalism and unbelief of his day. He defends the integrity and authority of the Biblical books, and does not try to tone down, apologize for, or explain away supernatural features such as miracles. For instance, Pusey accepts without hesitation the historical character of the book of Jonah, including the account of Jonah's being swallowed by the great fish and surviving the experience. With some heat he denounces the error of Deism and Naturalism which denies both providence and miracle: "How long will men think of God, as if He were man, of the Creator as if He were a creature, as though creation were but one intricate piece of machinery, which is to go on, ringing its regular changes until it shall be worn out, and God were shut up, as a sort of mainspring within it, Who might be allowed to be a primal Force, to set it in motion, but must not be allowed to vary what He has once made? . . . Acute physical philosophy, which, by its omnipotent word, would undo the Acts of God! Heartless, senseless, sightless, world, which exists in God, is upheld by God, whose every breath is an effluence of God's love, and which yet sees Him not, thanks Him not, thinks it a greater thing to hold its own frail existence from some imagined law, than to be the object of the tender personal care of the Infinite God, Who is Love! Poor hoodwinked souls, which would extinguish for themselves the Light of the world, in order that it may not eclipse the rushlight of their own theory!" (Vol. I, p. 407).

Besides a wealth of illuminating exposition, the author provides many practical, moral and spiritual lessons, and all permeated by a warmth of personal conviction, unfeigned faith, and love for God and God's people. Here is no "dry-as-dust" study of dead bones. Pusey's comments are not only informative, they are also interesting, they strike a responsive chord in the Christian heart. The reviewer opened Volume I at random to page 292, where Pusey is commenting on Amos 5:8, "Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name. Here is Pusey's comment on the clause "And turneth the shadow of death into the

morning": "This is no mere alternation of night and day, no 'kindling' of 'each day out of night'. The shadow of death is strictly the darkness of death, or of the grave. It is used of darkness intense as the darkness of the grave, of gloom, or moral benighting which seems to cast the shadow of death over the soul, of distress which is as the forerunner of death, or of things, hidden as the grave, which God alone can bring to light. The word is united with darkness, physical, moral, mental, but always as intensifying it, beyond any mere darkness. Amos first sets forth the power of God, then His goodness. Out of every extremity of ill, God can, will, does, deliver. He Who said, **let there be light and there was light**, at once changeth any depth of darkness into light, the death-darkness of sin into the dawn of grace, the hopeless night of ignorance into the **day-star from on high**, the night of the grave into the eternal morn of the Resurrection which knoweth no setting." It is clear that Pusey not only studied the text of Scripture very closely, but that he loved the Word of God and the God of the Word.

The volumes are very attractively bound in a size and style uniform with the Barnes Notes series of the same publisher.

— J. G. Vos

OUR HOPE OF SURVIVAL, by George L. Murray. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1951, pp. 133. \$1.50.

Unless one reads this little book through to the end, he might, after reading two or three chapters, lay the book down wondering whether there were any hope of survival. Dr. Murray brings into focus the seriousness of the present moral crisis by citing example after example of the decaying morality of world civilizations. He presents the facts of the case with startling but undeniable accuracy, giving numerous symptoms of moral decline about us. There is crime, but worse than that, people are unconcerned about it, and even regard it as a joke when some gangster can "put one over on the cops". There are fears of all kinds — fears centering around atomic warfare and international relations — but none of the only kind of fear that is clean, the fear of the Lord. Little by little we have drifted away from a fixed standard of morality, because we have drifted away from God and from His Word.

The book, besides being an accurate account of our plight, is also an indictment of the Protestant Church. The Church is somewhat, if not largely responsible, according to the author, for the plight of our society. For the Church has denied that she has been built "upon the foundation of the apostles"; she has not "held fast the form of sound words", nor cherished her pristine glory of being "the pillar and ground of the truth". The author makes a plea for the rein-

statement of the Bible as the Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. He charges the ministry with its responsibility to preach the Word, to make sharp the line where the truth lies, and to take a stand with finality for the doctrines which have been obscured and submerged in "the Liberal jumble".

Like the Book of Ecclesiastes, this book presents a picture of things as they are, however somber and sinister they appear; then at the end comes the solution to the problem. The Christian solution to the moral struggle in which the Church is engaged is, as stated in the last chapter, the kind of preaching which the Holy Spirit is pleased to use in calling men to repentance and salvation. Education, science, a false church, cannot bring about a transformation in society by changing, or attempting to change the environment in which men live. Men's hearts are wicked, and if their hearts are not changed, they will be wicked no matter what their environment may be. Regeneration is the answer, and this will become a reality in the hearts and lives of men, as the Church returns to her duties and as she bears faithful witness to God's inspired Word, its doctrine and discipline.

If any criticism is to be made of this book, it should be that it contains numerous quotations from liberal writers, such as Elton Trueblood, Reinhold Niebuhr, Archbishop Temple, Lewis Mumford, J. Harry Cotton, Roland Bainton, Bernard Iddings Bell, and others. This is objectionable inasmuch as the author, who evidently is a conservative throughout, quotes these liberals in support of his own claims, and does not sufficiently warn of their unsoundness in the faith.

There are a number of typographical errors, as follows: four lines of type are erroneously transposed on p. 27; the name McAulay appears twice as "MacAulay" on p. 52; hoyden is misspelled "heyden", p. 66; Velikosky is misspelled "Velekovsky", p. 67; on page 91 "Geneva" should be "General"; on page 99 read "atheism" and "atheist" for "aetheism" and "aetheist".

—Joseph A. Hill

THE THEOLOGY OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR,  
by Edward J. Carnell. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub.  
Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S. E. Grand Rapids 3,  
Mich. 1951, pp. 250. \$3.50.

"An undercurrent of scepticism runs through the entire theology of Niebuhr" (p. 132). His system is a dialectical theology which is supported by an epistemological and metaphysical substructure. Fundamental to it is the psychological concept of the inevitability of pride and egotistic self-assertiveness into which God constantly intrudes with a "moment-by-moment revelation

which cuts across our expectations and which yet meets the depth of our inner man" (p. 32). Such a revelation is always shattering in its message. "It must simultaneously charge man with the tensions of condemnation and forgiveness if the dialectic between heaven and earth is to be maintained" (p. 32). The message of the cross, then, "meets us in the deepest moments of choice, conflict, crisis, catastrophe" (p. 33). The culmination of this "crisis" theology, incorporate in life, is **agape**, a higher sort of love which is the final definition of the law of life. **Agape** is "relevant in society as the regulative principle of morals" (p. 222). It is the leaven of society, "permeating the whole and giving texture and consistency to life. Love is the salt which preserves social relations from corruption" (p. 221). The ideal which Christianity seeks to advance is that of a World Brotherhood fulfilled in history on the basis of love and justice.

Since Reinhold Niebuhr is profoundly a many-sided thinker, and since therefore it would be impossible to summarize and evaluate the full sweep of his labors in one small volume, Dr. Carnell restricts his work to the delineation of one controlling concept, namely, the dialectical relation between time and eternity. The primal concept of his theology, therefore, involves the idea that "the only hope for men comes when they 'suddenly awake to a realization that they are walking upon a ridge between **time** and **eternity** that is narrower than a knife edge' " (p. 35; quoted from Barth, **The Word of God and the Word of Man**).

This double environment in which man "lives and moves and has his being" provides the setting for the inevitability of sin. Man is by nature an other-world mystic. While he is united with a physical frame and hemmed in so that he must remain within the confines of natural limitations all his earthly days, man also lives within the scope of the infinite and has an inescapable attraction toward the infinite. Accordingly, it is when man oversteps his natural boundaries and attempts to transcend the lines of the finite that he sins. Man always falls short of his ideals; and when man attempts, by natural contrivances, to live up to other-worldly ideals, this constitutes his sin. "The locus of all sin and evil in history is the point of tangency between what man as a free being imagines himself to be and what the verdict of natural necessity defines him actually to be" (p. 70). Man's freedom of spirit may delude him into thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think. This is pride; and pride, which is an outgrowth of egotism, is the core and crux of sin. "This ability to stand outside and beyond the world, tempts man to magalomania and persuades him to regard himself as the god around and about whom the universe centers" (p. 70, quoted from Niebuhr, **Human Nature**). The result of this friction between what man de-

sires and what can actually be attained, is anxiety and discontentment, tension and crisis. It is at this point that religion comes to man's rescue. He is a finite creature straddling two environments; and without religion, which transcends the finite, man can interpret himself only in terms of one dimension. This view of sin and salvation is a tenet of Existentialism, whose great exponent was Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish theologian who bequeathed to Barth and Brunner the dialectical framework on which Neo-orthodoxy was constructed.

The moral ideal is ultimately a social ideal, and therefore it has final relevance in history. Niebuhr cleverly adapts the Hegelian dialectic to his theology, by means of which Christianity is stated as a thesis-antithesis-synthesis relationship. The **thesis** of the Christian ethic is the absoluteness of the moral ideal and the endless possibilities for the fulfilment of brotherhood in history. An expression of this thesis is the perfect and absolute love of God in Christ, by comparison with which all altruistic achievements fall short. This thesis is the **wisdom of the cross**. The **antithesis** of the Christian dialectic is the **foolishness of the cross**. Original sin renders impossible the fulfilment of **agape** love, since pride encourages man to pretend far more for himself than the facts will justify. The **synthesis** is the **power of the cross**. Through faith and justification a supply of grace is made accessible to men who are willing to deny self.

Niebuhr's theology is a remarkably fascinating system; but because it is founded upon false premises, it cannot stand under the scrutiny of Christian insight. It does not purport to be orthodox; it is an attempt to mediate between the "absurd literalism" of orthodoxy and the "flippancy of modernism". It must therefore have a liberal view of inspiration and of the Scriptures. It denies propositional revelation; it makes the fall of man an existential experience of the individual rather than a historical fact involving the race as a whole. Dr. Carnell skilfully exposes these and other fundamental errors of Niebuhr's system.

There are numerous typographical errors; especially glaring is the word dialectic, spelled "diolectic" in running heads, pp. 95-123; also read **Moral Man and Immoral Society for Moral Man in Immoral Society**, p. 30; denominator for "dominator", p. 45; discursively for "discoursively", p. 45; aver for "avers", p. 52; an Uebermensch for "a Uebermensch", p. 53; covert for "convert", p. 77; against for "aginst", p. 85.

—Joseph A Hill

THE WAY INTO THE HOLIEST, by F. B. Meyer. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy Street, S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1951, pp. 277. \$2.50.

This is the second of the volumes of Biblical

expositions to be issued by these publishers in their Meyer Reprint Series. They are to be congratulated in bringing back before the public the very inspiring sermons and devotional writings of the great preacher of Christ Church, London. Dr. Meyer, though quite different in style and approach, vies with the great peer of expository preachers, also of London, Charles H. Spurgeon.

THE WAY INTO THE HOLIEST, subtitled **Exposition of Hebrews**, is a consecutive series of thirty-five sermons on the great texts of the Epistle. It is not a commentary on the Epistle, but a series of expository and devotional messages which open up to us the meaning of the book and its application to the daily life of the children of God. The title of the book is Dr. Meyer's theme for the Epistle: the way into the presence of the holy God is through the perfect work of Christ, the eternal Son and Saviour, wrought out in the flesh, completed on Calvary, being made effective from the throne of Grace where he sits as our Priest-King, and appropriated through faith. A text is chosen which is the theme of a passage, and it is expounded out of the context; so that the open Bible is a necessary companion as you read. The Living Word is always the point of focus.

Dr. Meyer's skill in simple language and style makes his presentation most effective and attractive: He begins chapter 1, "The Word of God", "God." "What word could more fittingly stand at the head of the first line of the first paragraph in this noble epistle! Each structure must rest on him as foundation; each tree must spring from him as root; each design and enterprise must originate in him as source." And the last chapter, on the text, ". . . the God of peace . . . . . make you perfect . . . ." (ch. 13: 20, 21) is a fine climax to the opening sentences (p. 276) "The Christian is the workshop of God. In that mortal but renewed nature the divine Artisan is at work, elaborating products of exquisite beauty and marvelous skill. Would that we might be less eager to give the world ourselves, and more determined that there should be a manifestation through all the gateways of our being of the wondrous in-working of the God of peace!" And in the next paragraph he continues, "Our good works can never be the ground of our acceptance or justification. The very best of them can only please God through Jesus Christ. Our purest tears need washing again in his blood. Our holiest actions need to be cleansed ere they can be viewed by a holy God. Our best prayers and gifts need to be laid on the altar which sanctifies all it touches. We could not stand before God for a moment, save by that one sufficient substitutionary sacrifice, once offered by Jesus on the cross, and now pleaded by him before the throne."

The conciseness of his statement is noted in

such sentences as: "We should read the Bible as those who listen to the very speech of God." p. 13. "We need not deny that other men have been illuminated; but the difference between illumination and inspiration is as far as the east is from the west." p. 15. "We need not only a true philosophy of God, but a true philosophy of man, in order to right thinking on the Gospel." pp 38, 39. "The great principles on which God saves the soul are identical in every age, and indispensable." p. 111. "Light views of sin give slight views of the sacrifice of Calvary, of the need for propitiation, and of the dread future penalty on willful wrong-doing." p. 131.

His clear statements of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith are outstanding throughout the book. "The latter experience (falling away) can no more come to a real believer than a second flood of waters to the earth; but it will certainly find out the counterfeit and the sham.

"To fall away is to go back from the outward profession of Christianity—not temporarily, but finally; not as the result of some sudden sin, but because the first outward stimulus is exhausted, and there is no true life beating at the heart, to repair or reinvigorate the wasting devotion of the life." pp. 113, 114.

A similarly happy statement is found on page 149: "We are slow to learn that, as we receive justification, so must we receive sanctification, from the hands of God as his free gift."

His applications of truth are challenging to all alike; the unsaved, the luke-warm, and the zealous. "Let us ask ourselves whether there has been any declension in our heart-religion—less prayerfulness, less closeness in our walk with God, less enjoyment in the worship of his house; for if so, unbelief is sure to manifest itself, as the fungus which grows fat on the damp and foetid soil. Unbelief cannot live in the sunlight of fellowship with God." p. 72.

In speaking of the work of Christ on the cross on page 82, he says, "All was finished, and was very good. Let us, then, cease from our works. Let us no longer feel as if we have to do aught, by our tears or prayers or works, to make ourselves acceptable to God. Why should we try to add one stitch to a finished garment, or append one stroke to the signed and sealed warrant of pardon placed within our hands?"

With but few exceptions we can agree with Dr. Meyer's devotional exposition and highly recommend it to all who would enter into the Holiest.

The first of these exceptions is found on page 48 in the exposition of ch. 2:10, "It became him . . . . in bringing many sons into glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

In discussing why omnipotent God deliberately chose the way of the cross to save man, he says, "Had he wished, the Father might have conducted the Son to glory by another route than the thorny, flintset path of suffering. But the reasons for this experience were so overwhelming that he could not evade them." The conception of omnipotence here is that God is open to a variety of choices any one of which is as good as the other. This explanation, though intended to glorify God's omnipotence, actually compares God to an arbitrary unprincipled potentate who, in this case, had no other reason for slaying His own Son than that "he wished to do so" because he could not "evade" the reasons for doing so. But the reasons given are unconvincing. (see pp. 48-52) They resolve into this, that man must tread the path of suffering to develop the noblest and the saintliest therefore Christ must tread with him.

The true reason for the cross is found in Rom. 3:23-26. God is not a federation of the attributes of love, justice, omnipotence, omniscience, etc., any one of which can work independently of the other. God is love, justice, omnipotence, omniscience. The love of God in pardoning the sinner must satisfy God's just penalty of death for every sin. The omnipotence of God is seen in the fact that he could love and justly punish the sinner in himself, the true representative man, and thus pardon him without setting aside his righteousness. As God he could come to no other solution. By this kind of omnipotence God imposes moral obligations on man whom he has pardoned, while in the other, God's very example is immoral.

On page 179, 180 we read this statement, ". . . the spiritual penalty which Adam incurred for himself and all of us, as our representative and head, has been canceled by the sufferings and death of our glorious representative and head, the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven. . . . but men will not have to suffer the penalty which otherwise must have accrued to them, as members of a fallen race—fallen with their first parents and father—because Jesus put away that when he died. And thus it is that the multitudes of sweet babes, idiots, and others who belong to Adam's race, but have no opportunity of personal transgression, are able to enter without let or hindrance into the land where there entereth nothing which defileth." This means that we shall have to answer to God only for actual transgression; the guilt of original sin no longer exists; whereas Scripture plainly teaches that we are guilty in respect of both. See Romans 5:10-20, Eph 2:1-3 and Shorter Catechism Q. 18. The false conclusion concerning the salvation of infants and the mentally irresponsible grows out of the former. Scripture makes no such broad statements, and we, even in our desire to comfort the bereaved have no warrant to make the

promises of God so inclusive. Scripture promises the salvation of all the elect and of the elect only. See Rom. 8:29, 30; John 6:44 etc. God may elect all such individuals to salvation, but we have no way of knowing his all-wise and unerring counsel. Our comfort should rest not in a human explanation of a divine mystery, but in, "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

In explaining the phrase "in the end of the world" on page 178, Dr. Meyer states that God counts time in nine ages: before us we have the Age of Creation, Paradise, the World before the Flood, the Patriarchs, Moses; we live in the Age of the Gentiles; and we look forward in anticipation of the Age of the Millennium, Age of Regeneration and Restitution, Age of Judgment, and the Age in which the kingdom will be handed over to the Father. These are the ages of Dispensationalism which are to be rejected as an unscriptural division of the Grace of God as applied to man resulting in a god not the same yesterday, today and forever. Suffice it to say here that the text says that Christ came at the end of the ages while the explanation lists five ages to follow his coming, and that the last four events, here called Ages, are described as happening in rapid succession of one another in such expressions as "in the twinkling of an eye" and "fled away".

Though in these points we disagree with Dr. Meyer's interpretation, we consider this one of the splendid books of expository sermons we have read, and we do not hesitate to urge all to read it and allow the Holy Spirit to bring home to the heart the fine applications of Scripture which Dr. Meyer so aptly makes.

—E. Clark Copeland

LECTURES ON THE LAST THINGS, by William Hendriksen. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1951, pp. 65, \$1.50.

Dr. Hendriksen, professor of New Testament Exegetical Theology (Calvin Seminary) is an able and popular Bible teacher and lecturer on various subjects, particularly on the Second Coming of Christ and the book of Revelation. He is the author of various articles in periodicals and several books such as **MORE THAN CONQUERORS** (a commentary on Revelation), **BIBLE SURVEY**, and **THREE LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION**.

This book is produced by the publishers to make more widely available three lectures on the Second Coming of Christ which "have been enjoyed and appreciated by thousands who have heard Dr. Hendriksen deliver them to capacity crowds." (quotation from the publishers' preface.)

The first lecture deals with the sign of His coming and is an explanation of Matthew 24:1-31 and related passages. In the introduction the author shows how the error of superficial sensationalism has led men to enjoy speculation about the future but sadly to neglect their present duty as children of God, and how the error of indifference has led men to be unconscious of their peril and unconcerned about the doctrine of the last things. The body of the lecture deals first with Mistaken Signs: the appearance of false Christs, wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes. These things will occur over and over in the history of the world to the end of the ages to illustrate the goodness and sovereignty of God (Rom. 11:22, 25). Second, he deals with Two Preliminary Signs: a) the preaching of the Gospel, the rule of the Messiah over the hearts and lives of men, in the whole world. This does not mean that every person will receive a chance to be saved, but that the Gospel will be given as a testimony sometime during the course of history to every nation, and that its acceptance or rejection will be decisive—no second chance during an earthly millennial rule of the Lord. Compare Rev. 11 & 20 where the order is (1) witness to the nations, (2) Satan is loosed but he cannot deceive the elect, and (3) then Christ appears on "a great white throne". b) The Great Tribulation for a brief period, vv 15-28. The author takes the very sound position that this is a specific tribulation immediately to precede the Second Coming typified by the desecration of the temple by Antiochus and the destruction of Jerusalem. This interpretation gives some meaning for the people to whom Jesus spoke, and John wrote, of the passages in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11. Third, the one Great, Final Sign. In the midst of the great disturbances of the natural universe perplexed men "shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30). So Dr. Hendriksen concludes with others that "the very appearance of the Son of man is itself the sign."

The second lecture is on "Our Lord's Return" and is an explanation of I Thess. 4:13-18 and related passages. The Second Coming will be sudden day of vengeance on men totally given to materialism, and at the same time a day of exuberant rejoicing for the children of God (II Thess. 1:7-10). **His Descent** will be open and manifest; every eye shall see (Rev. 1:7) and the announcement by the archangel and the sound of the trumpet will be heard even by the dead (I Thess. 4:16, I Cor. 15:52); the redeemed dead will be resurrected (I Thess. 4:14), the living saints will be changed (I Cor. 15:52) and together go forth to meet the Lord (I Thess. 4:17); the antichrist will be revealed and destroyed by the presence of the Lord; and the earth and heaven will be removed as a scroll is rolled up (Rev. 20:11, 6:14). All this will be done in a moment. There will be no opportunity for the Jewish

nation to accept the Lord and then preach the Gospel to the Gentiles who have not accepted the Lord. The **Resurrection** is God's giving to the old "kernel" a new body as it pleases him (I Cor. 15:35-38). It is accompanied by a change of the natural universe which is (1) a purging by fire (2 Pet. 3:7, 11, 12), (2) a rejuvenation (2 Pet. 3:13, Rev. 21:1-5), (3) an attainment of self-realization and complete liberty (Rom 8:18-22), and (4) a complete harmonization so that Isaiah 11:6-9 will reach ultimate fulfilment. (In this section the author explains that "the dead in Christ shall rise first" means, according to the context, simply before the living saints are transformed to meet the Lord, and that it cannot mean that there will be first a resurrection of the saints and a secret rapture of the saints later followed by a resurrection of unbelievers.) The **Wedding of the Lamb** (I Thess. 4:17, 18) will be the joyous going forth of the saints (resurrected and transformed together) to meet the Bridegroom and to remain ever with him. It will be a terrible day for those who have rejected the Gospel (Rev. 6:15-17). The two-fold harvest is to be carried out by the angels (Rev. 14:14, Matt 24:31). But the central figure of the day is the Lord himself going forth in the forefront to meet his own. "It is the day of his marriage. And the wedding-feast will last not one or two weeks, nor seven years, but throughout all eternity. It will be the climax of that entire process by means of which the bridegroom, Christ, comes to his bride the church. It is the goal and purpose of the ever-increasing fellowship and communion between the Redeemer and the redeemed." p. 43.

The third lecture is entitled "By the Sea of Crystal" and is an explanation of Revelation 15:1-4 and related passages. The author states these three signs in Revelation that must be taken together. (Note the American Standard Version which follows the original Greek for 12:1 "a great sign was seen in heaven", 12:3 "another sign", and 15:1 "another sign".) The first sign is the woman, symbolizing the church, of whom is born a Son, Jesus Christ. The second sign is an ugly dragon waiting to destroy the seed of the woman, but he is not permitted to do so. The dragon symbolizes Satan who continues to wage a terrible conflict against Christ by drawing men after himself against the followers of Christ. Chapter 15 shows us what is to happen to those who follow the Dragon. They refuse to heed the trumpets of warning (chapters 8 & 9) so that the bowls of wrath are now poured out upon them. Upon the announcement of this we are shown in verse 2 what is the lot of those who have followed Christ. The life of the Church Triumphant is the subject of this lecture. The Crystal Sea, the third symbol, (better translated the transparent sea) is the revelation of the righteous providences of God. When the Church Militant (Rev. 7:1-8; 14 & 15)

has completed its witness, being kept by the power of God from the wrath of Satan so that not one has been lost, becomes the Church Triumphant, the judgments (providences) of God become crystal clear (Rev. 15:4). As the saints then review the righteous acts of God they sing the song of their deliverance as Israel sang when they had crossed the Red Sea and that song is the Song of the Lamb.

These lectures are a potent message out of God's Word arousing men to a certainty of the Judgment Day and of the necessity of being prepared for it beforehand, for there will be no time or opportunity for Jew or Gentile to hear the Gospel and repent when Christ comes; and they hold out to the saints the eternal Kingdom of Righteousness, when, robed in Christ's righteousness, they shall be brethren with Him in the Kingdom of Glory and sing His praises throughout all the ages of the ages.

They especially appeal to the serious reader by their freedom from sensational date-setting, striking assertions of great events soon to be seen, and cold indifference to the eternal verities of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come.

—E. Clark Copeland

**THE GOSPEL: THE UNIFICATION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS FROM THE AMERICAN STANDARD EDITION OF THE REVISED BIBLE**, by Thomas G. Dietz. Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 255 Jefferson Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids 3, Mich. 1951, pp. 186. \$3.00.

The Holy Spirit has in the Gospels given us four different accounts of the life and work of our Lord. Though they vary, the central figure of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son in the flesh, striding through them gives them unity. There is therefore a great deal to be gained in a combination of the four accounts into one chronological story. Many attempts have been made to harmonize the materials of the Gospels from Tatian's "Diatessaron" (c. 170 A. D.) to the present. The author of "The Gospel" has combined into one chronological account the story of Jesus Christ as found in the four Gospels. Using the American Revision he has unified the entire text of the four Gospels inserting each word, phrase, or passage into its most probable chronological position without repetition and making a smoothly reading text without supplying a single word not in the original. Thus he has preserved the purity of the text and given us the clarity and simple beauty of a continuous story.

The author has carefully outlined the life of Christ, dividing it into six parts: The Thirty Years of Preparation; The Year of Obscurity, From the Baptism to the beginning of the Galilean Ministry; The Year of Popularity, From

the opening of the Galilean Ministry to the Crisis at Capernaum; The Year of Opposition, Third period of Galilean Ministry and the Perea Ministry; Passion Week; Forty Days of Resurrection Life. Each part is carefully dated and subdivided into chapters and the chapters into incidents of the Gospel narrative. This is all clearly outlined in the Table of Contents so that the reader can readily locate any topical section of the Gospel he wishes.

By turning to the index he can readily locate any section of the Gospels by chapter and verse. The index lists the Gospels by chapter and verse consecutively as they appear in the text.

"The Gospel" is arranged in paragraph form throughout. Each incident is set off by a centered title in bold type. The date and location of each incident is given in parentheses under the title. All scripture references are noted in the

right-hand margins, and changes of text are marked by a star. Valuable footnotes on variant readings, original Greek meanings, etc., are conveniently numbered and placed at the bottom of the page.

In reading this unified Gospel the reporter has been impressed as never before by the flowing account and the climactic effect of the Gospel. Jesus Christ stands out in a unique way imperceivable in the separate accounts. The evangelists fade into the background, but the account is fortified by their individual contributions.

We would not suggest a substitution of the unified Gospel for the original separate accounts, but certainly every Scripture reader, especially pastors and Bible teachers will greatly profit by the use of "The Gospel."

—E. Clark Copeland

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## Books Received

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

THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES, by Oswald T. Allis. The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 525 Locust St., Philadelphia 6, Pa. Pp. x, 355. \$3.75.

A HARMONY AND COMMENTARY ON THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL, by Frank J. Goodwin. Baker Book House, 1019 Wealthy St., S.E., Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 1951, pp. 240. \$2.50.

WHAT IS BOUND TO HAPPEN, by William J. McKnight. Meador Publishing Co., Boston, Mass. 1951, pp. 317. \$3.00.

THE INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE OF THE GOSPEL, by Cornelius Van Til. The Tynedale Press, 39 Bedford Square, London, W.C. 1, England. 1950, pp. 40, paper cover. 2 shillings.

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## Williams' New Testament

By the Rev. Lester E. Kilpatrick

THE NEW TESTAMENT, A TRANSLATION IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE, by Charles B. Williams. Moody Press, 153 Institute Place, Chicago 10, Ill. 1950, pp. 575. \$3.00.

The New Testament, a Translation in the Language of the People, by Charles B. Williams, was copyrighted in 1937. However, its publication by the Moody Press, Chicago, in 1950, has introduced it to a wide new audience.

It is perhaps more successfully a New Testament in the language of the people of our own day than any of those prepared by committees, including the Revised Standard Version which appeared in 1946. And it has the added advantage over this last, that the point of view of its

translator is that of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.

Perhaps the most outstanding contribution to a popular understanding of the New Testament is in his rendering of the verbs. Two illustrations of such are given on the dust jacket to promote the sale of the volume. Matt. 16:19 and 18:18, passages by which Roman Catholics try to sustain their doctrines of the priest forgiving sins, read: "Whatsoever you forbid on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven". Then the passage from 1 John 3: 8,9, which as read in the Authorized Version is a mainstay of those who hold to perfectionism, reads: "Whoever practices sin belongs to the devil . . . No one born of God makes a practice of sinning."

Such passages are apt to be impressive to the reader sufficiently acquainted with the Bible and Christian doctrine to be aware of some of the passages difficult of interpretation. However, it is possible that for those who are not so far advanced in the study of the Scriptures, there will be other passages which will be more striking. Matt. 7:7 reads: "Keep on asking, and the gift will be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and the door will open to you". Mark 2:13: "He went out of the town again and along the seashore, and all the people kept coming to Him and He kept teaching them". Luke 12:22: "Stop worrying, then, about life, as to what you will have to eat, . . .". 1 Pet. 1:12: "The angels long to take a peep into these things". 1 Pet. 2:1: "So once for all get rid of all malice, deceit. . .".

It is not only in the translation of verbs that Mr. Williams excels. He has succeeded, in several cases, in making a distinction between two Greek words which have been translated in the AV, and even in the ARV, by the same English word. Jesus, in His question directed to Peter (John 21:15-17), "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me. . . ?" used the same word for love the first two times He questioned him, but the third time He used a different word, the same word with which Peter each of the three times answered the question. It was this change of word the third time Jesus asked the question that grieved Peter, a fact not discernible in the AV. Williams distinguishes the two words by translating the first, "Are you **devoted** to me?" and the other, "Yes, Lord, you know that I **tenderly love** you". Greek students may not agree that this best expresses the distinction between the words, but at any rate it shows that there is a distinction. Also, in Matt. 20:22, the deeper Greek word for "to know" is signified in Jesus' answer to the request of the mother of James and John that they be privileged to sit on Jesus' right and left hands in His kingdom, with "You do not **realize** what you are asking for."

Illustrations of translations, not only with striking but with happy expressions, might be multiplied. Questions that are asked in such a way that the Greek shows that a "no" answer is expected, are asked in this form in the English, as in John 6:67. The AV says, "Will ye also go away?" Williams says, "You too do not want to go back, do you?" Where the Greek sets a pronoun in an emphatic position in a sentence, Williams seeks to show the emphasis, as in John 4:10, "If you knew just what God has to give and who it is that said to you 'Give me a drink', **you would have been the one** to ask Him, and He would have given you living water." Simple and direct is Mark 8:2, "My heart goes out in pity for these people. . .".

Although in general this work is excellent

and dependable, there are some few rather obvious grounds for criticism. In the first place, verse numbering has been completely omitted. If the book is to be studied in connection with one of the older, more generally accepted versions — and it would be unwise to suggest that this or any other translation by a single individual replace those former — this is a decided handicap. The fact that footnotes are used—three to a dozen on each page, and in terminology and abbreviations requiring considerable acquaintance with critical New Testament literature for understanding them — indicates that the work is intended for study, rather than for mere popular reading. Some sort of verse numbering would have been a great aid, as the AV verse numberings are cited in the notes.

It may be mentioned that a note on Matt. 23:12 states, "V. 13 om. by the two best MSS", but the verse Williams actually omits from the text is verse 14 instead of 13.

The idiom used in this translation is definitely American and up-to-date. In at least one instance, 1 Co. 11:9 (and in the similar expression in 1 Cor. 12:13, 16) a phrase is used, expressive, it is true, but termed "slang" by Webster's Dictionary: "I never stuck a single one of you for a cent"; "I never stuck you for financial support". (The AV says, "I myself was not burdensome to you"). The "vessels" of the five wise virgins are "oilcans". The modern phrase used by Williams throughout the New Testament instead of the oriental expression "gird up the loins", is "tighten the belt". This, it would seem, is ill-chosen in view of the very common use to which this phrase is currently put, namely, "to restrict one's diet and living expenses".

Perhaps it is not out of place to mention the perceptible bias in translation toward the Baptist doctrine of baptism. John the Baptist baptized "in", not "with", water (Matt. 3:11). In Mark 7:4 there are considerable differences in the ancient manuscripts. Some omit "couches" or "tables" from the list of things ceremonially washed by the Jews, some include them, a matter a little incongruous if the washing were by immersion. Williams omits the reference to couches without comment. Some manuscripts speak of the Jews washing themselves after being in the market—as in the AV—others, of washing the things brought from the market. It seems doubtful to suppose that the Jews would have in their homes facilities adequate for immersing themselves after each visit to the market. Williams prefers to understand this washing as of things brought from the market. Some manuscripts use the word **baptize**, some **sprinkle**. Williams translates "wash" but in a note says, "Either **sprinkle** or **dip**", apparently equating the word "baptize" with dipping or immersion, something Reformed theologians decline to do. They contend that the

word "baptize" means "to wash ceremonially", without regard to the mode. Thus, Williams appears to follow uniformly the Baptist bias in his translation, where there is any manuscript evidence on which scholars may differ.

In the Gospel of John the word most commonly used for miracle is a Greek word, the primary or leading thought of which, according to both Thayer and Abbott-Smith, is "a sign". The AV translates it in John 2:11, as often thereafter, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee", but the ARV and also the RSV translate this word as "sign". Williams generally translates it as "wonder-work", though in a note he says, "Grk., sign, the usual term for miracle in Jno." But when the word occurs in combination with a word that means "a wonder" he translates the former as "sign", as the AV, the

ARV and the RSV. John 4:48, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will never believe", and Acts 8:13, "So Simon himself came to believe too, and after he was baptized he continued to be devoted to Philip, and he was always thrilled at seeing so great signs and wonder-works continuously performed." It would seem, in view of these two latter instances, and in view of John's stated purpose in writing his gospel, to give proofs or signs of Christ's deity, that there should be a note explaining why in other cases he translates this word as "wonder-works".

In spite of these strictures, which do not affect the cardinal nature of the Scripture, this reviewer considers this a translation that is sound with regard to the doctrine of inspiration. It will certainly freshen one's interest in New Testament reading.

## **Blue Banner Question Box**

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

### **Question:**

Was Christ conscious of His deity during His infancy?

### **Answer:**

The relation between the divine and the human in the consciousness of our Saviour is a mystery which cannot be completely explained. Even the relation between soul and body in a mere human personality is highly mysterious and baffles all analysis. Far more mysterious and baffling is the relation between the divine and human natures of Christ. This is something unique, for which there is no true parallel in our own consciousness; therefore we cannot fully comprehend it. As Christ's divine nature is INFINITE, it transcends, both in its being and relations, the power of the human mind to grasp.

The practically complete absence of Biblical data on the development of Jesus' human consciousness during His childhood should make us very cautious about positive assertions. Except for the general statement that He "grew," etc., we have only the incident in the Temple when He was twelve years old. In the absence of definite Biblical data, any conclusions we might frame would be largely speculative or inferential, by reasoning from known truths — a very hazardous procedure when we are dealing with that which is unique and transcends human experience and reason.

There must have been a distinction between our Lord's divine consciousness and His human consciousness. Only on this supposition can such

a text as Mark 13:32 be explained ("But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father"). Here our Lord disclaims knowledge of the day and hour of His own second coming. Obviously as God He must have been in possession of this information. Modernists would see in this text an indication that Jesus was a mere man, not divine. But the truth is certainly that Jesus IN HIS HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS, AS MAN, did not know the day and hour of His second coming.

The dual consciousness of Christ, while of course a highly mysterious subject, was long ago, after prolonged debate, affirmed by the Church in its rejection of the Monothelite heresy. Monothelitism ("one-will-doctrine") denied that Christ has a divine will AND a human will, and by this denial it imperilled the doctrine of the two natures of the Redeemer. The Church rightly rejected Monothelitism as a heresy, and affirmed that Christ has TWO wills, a divine and a human. —J. G. Vos

### **Question:**

Was it necessary for Christ to read the Old Testament Scriptures in order to know His Father's will?

### **Answer:**

This question is properly subordinate to the question discussed above concerning the relation between the divine and the human in the consciousness of Jesus Christ. Certainly as to His

human consciousness, Jesus increased in knowledge by reading and studying the Old Testament Scriptures. We are told that He "grew in wisdom", implying an INCREASE in wisdom, which of course can refer only to His human nature. On the other hand, in Matt. 11:25-27 Christ claims a unique, absolute, exhaustive, reciprocal knowledge of God the Father. This clearly must refer to His divine consciousness—it is a knowledge of the Father that reaches back to all eternity. John 1:1-3 and 17:5,8, 24 should also be noted in this connection.

Again, we must remember that the relation between the divine and the human in the personality of the Redeemer is highly mysterious, it is among the deep things of God, and we should not expect to understand it. Our wisdom will consist in a very close adherence to the statements of Scripture, which we should accept with a childlike faith, without stumbling over the rational paradoxes which are involved. When God and man, the Infinite and the finite, the Creator and the creature, are united in a single personality, it is inevitable that this union should be highly mysterious to finite, created beings like ourselves, and that it should transcend all our powers of logical analysis.—J. G. Vos

**Question:**

If God has from eternity elected certain persons to be saved, do they need our prayers for their salvation?

**Answer:**

This question arises out of a misunderstanding of the nature of God's decrees. When God has decreed that anything shall come to pass, He has decreed both the final result and also the means by which it is to be brought about. Many people misunderstand the doctrine of election by supposing that God has merely decreed that certain persons shall be saved, without providing for the means by which this is to be accomplished, as if these persons would be saved in some magical or mysterious way without the ordinary means of preaching, repentance, faith, etc. If we once clearly understand that when God ordains an END He also ordains THE MEANS THERETO, the difficulty suggested in this question will not arise.

When God ordains a person to be saved, or "elects" that person unto eternal life, He also ordains the means thereto; for example, that that person should be born in a land where Christianity is known, that he should hear the preaching of the Gospel, that the Holy Spirit should in due time convict him of sin and lead him to faith in Christ, that others should instruct him in the way of salvation and pray for him, that the Christian Church should by its ministrations

help him in the way of life, and finally that by the special grace of God that the person should persevere to the end. It will be seen that the final salvation of any individual is the result of a long chain of causes, having their ultimate origin in the eternal decree of God. To say, "John Brown will be saved because he is an elect person, therefore I do not need to pray for him" is as unreasonable as to say, "If I am to be in New York day after tomorrow I shall be there whether I go or not; therefore I do not need to pack my baggage, nor take the train." Prayer is one of the means which God uses to bring about the salvation of those persons whom He has elected from all eternity, just as railway trains are one of the means by which people are transported from place to place.

Moreover, as only God knows who the elect are, we should certainly pray for unsaved persons, knowing that as long as they are out of Christ they are lost and dead in trespasses and sins and in danger of eternal death. None of the elect can ever perish, but the reason why they can never perish is because God is faithful to His own eternal purpose and will use adequate means to bring about their salvation. If we neglect to pray, we only show that we are not doing the will of God; we have failed, but God has not failed; He will use someone else as an instrument of His Holy Spirit in the work of redemption. The old illustration of the life-boat is fitting. A ship was wrecked in a storm, and the lifeboat on the shore was about to be launched. One of the crew, however, objected, saying, "No need; if they are ordained to be saved they will be saved, whether we help them or not; and if they are ordained to be drowned, they will be drowned, whether we help them or not. Why bother to launch the lifeboat in this storm?" But another member of the crew replied, "But it may be ordained that they are to be saved from perishing by means of our lifeboat. Therefore we must launch the boat without delay!"—J. G. Vos

**Question:**

What should a Christian think of H. G. Wells's "Outline of History"?

**Answer:**

H. G. Wells was a materialist, not a Christian, and therefore his OUTLINE OF HISTORY is written from a non-Christian point of view. Wells had no sympathy with, or even appreciation of, the Christian philosophy of history. He undertakes to explain the history of mankind as if there were no God.

The theory that mankind originated by evolution from a brute ancestry is dogmatically taught by Wells as accepted truth. In doing this, he stepped beyond the proper limits of a histor-

ian's work, which is to give an account of the life, experiences and activities of mankind, not to try to tell how the human race originated. The theory of evolution which H. G. Wells asserts so confidently, is of course in reality only a hypothesis. Men who speak of human evolution from a non-human ancestry as "a proved fact", as many do today, are either ignorant of the real status of the evidence, or else they are so prejudiced against the doctrine of Creation that they cannot evaluate the evidence rightly.

Of course a great deal of interesting information on many matters can be gained by reading Wells' *OUTLINE OF HISTORY*, and there is no reason why mature Christians, who are well grounded in their faith, should not read it, provided they do so with their eyes open and their mind functioning. It is not a suitable book for young people, whose convictions are not yet fully established and settled.

But why is there not a comprehensive, popular account of world history written by a Christian, from the viewpoint of the Christian philosophy of history? Why has no Christian writer produced a book comparable to H. G. Wells' *OUTLINE OF HISTORY* — something equally readable, equally interesting, equally well-organized and concise—on the basis of faith in the Triune God of the Bible? If there is such a book, the Editor of "Blue Banner Faith and Life" has never seen it.

The production of such a truly Christian "Outline of History" would greatly glorify God, prove of great benefit to Christian people, and serve as an important means of witness to the non-Christian public. Why does no one undertake it? Why does not some Christian with historical knowledge and literary ability devote, say, ten years of his life to such a task? Why do not Christian people to whom God has committed unusual financial resources encourage and support such a work? Is God to be glorified only by evangelism and missions, and not by a true interpretation of His works in history?

A noted orthodox theologian has said that the person who has physics without God will also have religion without God. With equal truth we may assert that the person who is satisfied with history without God will eventually — unless prevented by the intervention of divine grace — be content to have a religion without God. The God of the Bible is also the God of history from beginning to end, or else He is not really God at all. He is God everywhere and in everything, or He is God nowhere and in nothing. The modern notion of confining God to the sphere of "religion", while the entire fields of history and science are turned over to a God-less philosophy, can tend only toward atheism or pantheism. That Christian people seem, for the most part, quite satisfied to let non-Christians write their history books for them, is a very bad sign of our times. It is a sin

that needs to be repented of. Many Christians of today have much too narrow an idea of what glorifying God really involves. — J. G. Vos

**Question:**

Where can I purchase a copy of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*?

**Answer:**

Send \$1.50 to Mr. Chester R. Fox, Treasurer, Trustees of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 209 Ninth St., Pittsburgh 22, Pa., for a copy of *THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA*. This volume contains the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Larger Catechism* and the *Shorter Catechism*, as they were originally formulated by the Westminster Assembly, without the changes which have been made in these standards by some denominations. — J. G. Vos

**Question:**

What is meant by "moderate Calvinism"? I read of a minister who believes in "moderate Calvinism" but rejects "double predestination". He is said to accept the Westminster Confession of Faith.

**Answer:**

Being a Calvinist is like being a member of the human race; you either are one, or you aren't. It is not a matter of degrees like being educated, being artistic or being public spirited. You can be more educated or less educated; but when it comes to being a Calvinist, either you are one, or you aren't.

"Double predestination" means simply that God has, from all eternity, foreordained the final destiny of all mankind, not only the saved but also those who will finally be lost. Since it is a basic doctrine of Calvinism that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q. 7), and since "whatsoever comes to pass" includes the damnation of the wicked as well as the salvation of the righteous, all Calvinists must necessarily believe in "double predestination".

No one who really accepts the Westminster Confession of Faith can reject the doctrine of "double predestination", for the Confession explicitly teaches this doctrine: "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death" (Chapter III, Section 3; compare III.7).

The standard, orthodox Calvinism of the great Reformed creeds (such as the Westminster Confession of Faith) is called "extreme Calvinism" or

"hyper Calvinism" by some people who do not accept its doctrines. Their own position, by way of contrast, they call "moderate Calvinism". Those who speak this way will also add that while they believe in "moderate Calvinism" they also believe in human freedom and responsibility. Thus confusion is compounded, and the impression is given that the standard Calvinism of the Westminster Confession of Faith denies human freedom and responsibility.

Another example of theological confusion is the statement heard from time to time that "Calvinism teaches God's sovereignty and Arminianism teaches man's freedom and responsibility, and we have to take BOTH Calvinism and Arminianism to get the whole truth." A greater error could hardly exist. The truth is that standard Calvinism teaches BOTH God's sovereignty and man's freedom and responsibility, without trying to solve the rational paradox between these two truths (Westminster Confession of Faith, III.1); whereas Arminianism tries to solve the paradox by DENYING God's sovereignty in the interests of man's freedom and responsibility. At the points of difference between them, Calvinism and Arminianism are mutually CONTRADICTIONARY systems. If one is true the other must be false. To speak of these two systems as mutually complementary is the height of theological ignorance and folly.

For the sake of clearness, a few simple definitions may be added here. These definitions concern only the points of God's sovereignty and man's freedom and responsibility; they are not intended to cover all features of Calvinism and the deviations from it.

1. Hyper Calvinism: The belief of those who affirm God's sovereignty but deny man's freedom and responsibility.

2. Calvinism: The belief of those who affirm both God's sovereignty and man's freedom and responsibility.

3. Arminianism: The belief of those who affirm man's freedom and responsibility but deny God's sovereignty.

Unfortunately confusion abounds because many who are really Arminians call themselves "moderate Calvinists", while they label standard orthodox Calvinism "Hyper Calvinism". No man who denies that God has foreordained ALL that comes to pass (including the final destiny of all His creatures) can properly be called a Calvinist, whether "moderate" or otherwise.

— J. G. Vos

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Hating still, in deadliest measure,  
 Who that rising sceptre own,  
 Marring all their pomp and pleasure  
 With the shadow of a throne!  
 True, they kneel with feigned behaviour,  
 Myrrh and frankincense will bring;  
 Priest and Prophet own the Saviour,  
 But — they crucify the King!  
 Wouldst thou hail an earthly Master,  
 Then the world would love its own!  
 Grasp thy banner-truth the faster,  
 See that no man take thy crown!  
 Hope thou not, then, earth's alliance;  
 Take thy stand beside the Cross;  
 Fear, lest by unblest compliance,  
 Thou transmute thy gold to brass!  
 Steadfast in thy meek endurance,  
 Prophecy in sackcloth on—  
 Hast thou not the pledged assurance,  
 Kings one day shall kiss the Son?  
 Oft thy foes may triumph o'er thee;  
 Tread thy carcass in the street;  
 Sing aloud the hate they bore thee—  
 Thou shalt stand upon thy feet!

Life through all thy veins returning,  
 In the sight of those who doomed—  
 And the Bush, for ever burning,  
 Never — never — be consumed!  
 Now unto the hill-tops get thee  
 Whence the sunrise we descry;  
 Nightly on thy watch tower set thee,  
 For His coming draweth nigh!  
 Tell the nations of the glory  
 Through the blackness we discern;  
 Sound a trumpet with the story  
 Of the King who shall return!  
 Call to Judah in her blindness;  
 Bid benighted Israel hear;  
 Drop the word of truth and kindness  
 On the heathen's palsied ear!  
 Trim thy lamp, the night-hours cheering;  
 Wash thy robes from every stain;  
 Watch, to hail the glad appearing  
 Of the Bridegroom and His train!  
 Haste! thy coming Lord to greet!  
 Cast thy crown before His feet!  
 Only, may His quest for thee  
 Find thee — what He made thee — Free!

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